

ON ORDER



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ON ORDER
ST. AUGUSTINE'S
CASSICIACUM DIALOGUES,
VOLUME 3

Translation, Annotation, and Commentary by

Michael P. Foley

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*In grateful memory of
Fathers Ernest L. Fortin, A.A., and Matthew L. Lamb,
inspiring teachers who sparked, fanned, and guided
my love of these dialogues.*

Noverim me, noverim te.

May I know myself, may I know Thee.

—*Soliloquies* 2.1.1

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PREFACE

My goal in translating the four Cassiciacum dialogues of St. Augustine is to introduce the serious English-speaking student to an extraordinary tetralogy that is relatively underestimated and prone to misappropriation. Accordingly, this translation aspires to be as literal as is reasonable.

A literal translation, in which Latin words are given their closest approximation in English and in which the same English words are generally used for their Latin equivalent, suffers from several drawbacks. First, it is cumbersome. Trained in rhetoric, Augustine chose words not only for their meaning, but for their resonance; unfortunately, any melliflence or connotations that go with that resonance are compromised in translation. Second, it is disconcerting. Certain styles or conventions popular in Augustine's time, such as the earthiness adorning even the most sublime of passages, are no longer in favor. Nowadays, for instance, grown men do not generally speak of fleeing to the nursing bosom of Lady Philosophy (see *Against the Academics* 1.1.4). Third, an absolutely consistent literal translation is impossible when translating a language with fewer than sixteen thousand words into one with more than thirty times that number. Latin's modest vocabulary

encourages an author working in that language to use one word several different ways whereas an English author is freer to use a different word each time. To translate, then, the same Latin word with the same English word in every instance can be misleading, and it clanks against the Anglophonic ear. But not to translate certain terms consistently, despite its oddity in English, would be to forgo perhaps vital clues the author has left in his text—for a language's apparent weaknesses can turn out to be hidden strengths in the hands of the right wordsmith.

In an attempt to overcome these difficulties, I adopted the following strategy. First, I allowed the goal of a literal translation to be trumped by the canons of good prosody when the literal meaning was virtually nonsensical and when a freer translation posed no threat to understanding the intellectual content of the work. When Augustine says in *Against the Academics*, “Don’t look . . . for something that is difficult to find anywhere among the peoples (*gentium*),” he is using a classical figure of speech, where *gentium* means “on earth” (1.2.6); hence, it is translated accordingly. Second, when I do depart significantly from the literal sense of the text, I acknowledge it in the Notes so that the reader may retain some access to the original wording. And third, I employ a Translation Key. When a significant Latin term can be translated several different ways, I note its variants; and when there is only one English word for two different Latin words, I designate one of the English words with an asterisk (*) and pair it with only one of the Latin words to distinguish it from the other (here I am inspired by Hippocrates Apostle’s translations of Aristotle). Augustine, for instance, uses both *animus* and *anima* for the soul, and so the former appears as “soul” and the latter as “soul*.” Both the annotation and the Translation Key, incidentally, are intended for readers making a close study of the text who may not be proficient in Latin.

If, however, these aids become a distraction from reading and enjoying the dialogues, readers should ignore them. Tools that are not helpful should be placed back into the box.

Yet despite the aforementioned drawbacks and the extra effort that must be made to overcome them, a literal translation remains advantageous for one simple reason: it alone liberates readers from what has been called the tyranny of the translator. Animated by the commendable goal of easy comprehension, translators are often tempted to paraphrase loosely in order to make the meaning of texts more digestible or palatable to a contemporary audience. Such translations, it is claimed, save readers from the disorientation that would ensue from an unmediated encounter with an alien world-view. Free translations of this sort constitute a kind of well-intentioned paternalism.

There is a thin line, however, between being paternalistic and being patronizing, and translators who do not faithfully reproduce a text into another language unwittingly take a condescending attitude, it seems to me, both to the authors they are translating and to the readers for whom they are translating: to authors, because their ideas are implicitly treated as inferior to those that are currently popular; and to readers, because it is assumed that they have neither the desire nor the capacity to wrestle with the work as originally crafted.

The antidote to this condescension, as a twentieth-century political philosopher once noted, is for the translator to “conceive of himself as a medium between a master whose depths he has not plumbed and an audience of potential students of that master who may be much better endowed than is the translator.” This model works well for translating the writings of St. Augustine. As Augustine himself reminds us in *On the Teacher*, in order to know the meanings of words, we must first know the realities to which they point;

and as he discusses in *On Christian Doctrine*, both the mode of ascertaining meaning and the mode of communicating it once it is ascertained are difficult to carry out. Some of the realities to which Augustine points are indeed difficult to grasp, especially in dialogues that, he stresses, deal with a subject only the rarest type of human being can comprehend (see *On Order* 1.1.1). It therefore behooves translators of Augustine to approach their task with special care and humility, even a sense of unworthiness.

Humility is an important quality for readers as well. Rather than approach these ancient texts as possibly interesting monuments to a quaint or benighted chapter in world history, I earnestly recommend that we read them as if our very lives depended on them, as if they were our only chance of escaping the shadowy cave into which historical happenstance or our own shortsightedness has placed us. I do so from the conviction that a great book offers the hope of freeing us of the prejudices that from our earliest days we have sucked up like mother's milk or into which our dissolute living has placed us (see Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 3.1.2). What we learn might not, in the final analysis, be any less fallible than our own opinions, but the only way we will know for certain is if we let authors speak for themselves, listening with one sincere assumption: that they have something worthwhile to say. Perhaps then and only then will we be able to graduate from milk to meat.

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TRANSLATION KEY

The following table shows the translations of several key terms in Augustine's early dialogues, first in English-Latin and then in Latin-English. Exceptions to the rules given here are mentioned in the annotation of each work. As mentioned in the Preface, when there is only one English word for two different Latin words, I designate one of the English words with an asterisk and pair it with only one of the Latin words to contradistinguish it from the other.

<i>English</i>	<i>Latin</i>
to approve	In Academic thought, when assent to something as true is impossible, the wise man may approve (<i>approbare</i>) of certain things as plausible or probable so that he may have a ground for action (see <i>Against the Academics</i> 2.5.12).
to assent	The wise man, according to Academic skepticism, should give his assent (<i>assentiri</i>) only to that which he absolutely knows to be true (see <i>Against the Academics</i> 2.5.11–12).

to know	Augustine uses several Latin verbs for “knowing” or “becoming acquainted with,” such as <i>noscere</i> , <i>cognoscere</i> , and <i>novisse</i> . These usually refer to a knowledge of passing, temporal things, but sometimes, because they are fairly generic terms, they can also be used to designate knowledge of the highest and eternal things.
to know*	<i>Scire</i> is the verb that is generally, though not always, used to designate the highest and most secure kind of knowing (see <i>On the Happy Life</i> 2.7, <i>Soliloquies</i> 2.1.1).
knowledge	<i>Cognitio</i> is most often a generic term for knowledge.
knowledge*	<i>Scientia</i> usually refers to the highest kind of knowledge, that is, the grasp of eternal realities such as the truths disclosed in the liberal arts. See <i>On the Immortality of the Soul</i> 1.1: “Everything that the soul knows (<i>scit</i>), it has within itself; nor does knowledge (<i>scientia</i>) contain anything other than that which pertains to some discipline, for discipline is the knowledge (<i>scientia</i>) of anything whatsoever” (see also <i>Against the Academics</i> 1.7.19).
measure	<i>Modus</i> , which is also translated as “limit,” is a key concept in the dialogues, especially in <i>On Order</i> . In <i>On the Happy Life</i> 4.34, Augustine describes God the Father, the First Person of the Trinity, as the <i>summus modus</i> or “Supreme Measure.”
mind	<i>Animus</i> is also translated as “soul” or even “heart,” depending on context (see <i>Against the Academics</i> 2.2.3 and entry for <i>animus</i> below).
mind*	<i>Mens</i> , along with reason (<i>ratio</i>), is defined by Augustine as the ruling part of the soul (<i>animus</i>) (see <i>Against the Academics</i> 1.2.5). In <i>Soliloquies</i> 1.6.12–13 it is characterized as the “senses” or “eyes” of the soul* (<i>anima</i>), while reason (<i>ratio</i>) is the “looking” of the soul* and understanding (<i>intellectus</i>) is the “seeing” of the soul*.

opinion	In some respects the antithesis of knowledge or <i>scientia</i> , opinion is that from which the philosopher, especially the Academic skeptic, wishes to be free (see <i>opinio</i> below).
to perceive	<i>Percipere</i> is usually used in reference to basic sensory activities rather than higher acts of understanding. It can, however, designate comprehension of an intelligible reality, as when one “perceives” the truth or falsehood of a definition (see <i>Against the Academics</i> 3.9.21).
probable	<i>Probabile</i> , mostly translated as “probable,” is associated with the Academic doctrine of probability or plausibility (see <i>probabile</i> below).
to sense	<i>Sentire</i> is usually used in reference to either bodily sensation or the mental awareness and use of the bodily senses. It is usually translated as “to sense” or “to feel,” though context sometimes compels other variations, such as “to judge” at <i>Against the Academics</i> 1.3.8.
sense, sensation, etc.	<i>Sensus</i> is translated, depending on context, as “senses,” “sensation,” or “sense-perception.” <i>Sensus</i> can refer either to the five bodily senses of sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell or the mental faculty that enables people to use their senses for seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling (see <i>Against the Academics</i> 1.1.3, <i>Soliloquies</i> 2.2.3); in one case, Augustine uses <i>sensus</i> for the capacity to understand (<i>On the Happy Life</i> 4.25). Augustine regrets that he did not differentiate between physical and mental <i>sensus</i> by adding “bodily” to the former kind (see <i>Retractations</i> 1.1.2; <i>Soliloquies</i> 1.6.12, 2.2.3).
soul	<i>Animus</i> is also translated as “mind” or even “heart,” depending on context (see <i>Against the Academics</i> 2.2.3; see also entry for <i>animus</i> below). <i>Animus</i> is used only for human, that is, rational, souls.

soul*	<i>Anima</i> is that which gives life to the body or flesh (see <i>Confessions</i> 10.7.11). All plants and animals as well as humans have <i>anima</i> or this principle of life (see <i>Soliloquies</i> 1.2.7). One of Augustine's goals in the <i>Soliloquies</i> is to prove that the <i>anima</i> of a human being is immortal.
understanding	<i>Intellectus</i> is also sometimes translated as "intellect." In <i>Soliloquies</i> 1.6.12–13, <i>intellectus</i> is defined as the "seeing" (<i>visio</i>) of the soul* (<i>anima</i>), while mind* (<i>mens</i>) is the "senses" or "eyes" of the soul* and reason (<i>ratio</i>) the "looking" of the soul*. In <i>On the Immortality of the Soul</i> 6.10, <i>intellectus</i> is similarly defined as the "seeing" of the soul (<i>animus</i>). In <i>Against the Academics</i> 3.19.42, the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son, is the Divine Understanding.
verisimilar	<i>Verisimile</i> is also translated as "similar to the true" or "like the true." It is a technical term employed by the Academic skeptics, reputed to be synonymous with "plausible" or "probable" (see <i>Against the Academics</i> 2.5.12).

Latin

English

<i>anima</i>	"Soul*" is that which gives life to the body or flesh (see <i>Confessions</i> 10.7.11). All plants and animals as well as humans have <i>anima</i> or this principle of life (see <i>Soliloquies</i> 1.2.7). One of Augustine's goals in the <i>Soliloquies</i> is to prove that the <i>anima</i> of a human being is immortal.
<i>animus</i>	"Mind," "soul," or even "heart" (see <i>Against the Academics</i> 2.2.3), depending on the context. In <i>On the Immortality of the Soul</i> , Augustine writes that in humans, reason is either <i>animus</i> or in <i>animus</i> (2.2) and that when we reason, it is <i>animus</i> that is doing it (1.1). The best or "ruling" part of <i>animus</i> in humans is mind* (<i>mens</i>) or reason (<i>ratio</i>) (see <i>Against the Academics</i> 1.2.5). In the <i>Confessions</i> Augustine writes that to <i>anima</i> belongs sensation as well as the interior sense that correlates sensory data and of which <i>animus</i> makes use (10.6.10–10.7.11).

<i>approbare,</i> <i>approbatio</i>	To “approve” or “give approval.” In Academic thought, when assent to something as true is impossible, the wise man may approve of certain things as plausible or probable so that he may have a ground for action (see <i>Against the Academics</i> 2.5.12).
<i>assentiri,</i> <i>assensio</i>	To “assent” or “give assent.” The wise man, according to Academic skepticism, should give his assent only to that which he absolutely knows to be true (see <i>Against the Academics</i> 2.5.11–12).
<i>cognitio</i>	Most often, a generic term for knowledge.
<i>comprehendo</i>	To “comprehend” or “grasp,” either by the senses or by the mind (depending on context). According to the Stoics, when a mind truly comprehends something, it has such a clear impression of it that it is completely different in every way from a false impression. This gives rise to an irresistible conviction in the knower’s mind that the impression is true (see <i>Against the Academics</i> 2.5.11).
<i>fallor</i>	“To be mistaken” or “to be deceived,” depending on context. In the <i>Soliloquies</i> , Reason defines <i>fallax</i> as something that is deliberately deceitful rather than merely untrue or fictitious (2.9.16), but this definition is not adhered to throughout the dialogues as a whole.
<i>intellectus</i>	“Understanding,” “the understanding,” or, sometimes, the “intellect.” In <i>Soliloquies</i> 1.6.12–13, <i>intellectus</i> is defined as the “seeing” (<i>visio</i>) of the soul* (<i>anima</i>), while mind* (<i>mens</i>) is the “senses” or “eyes” of the soul* and reason (<i>ratio</i>) is the “looking” of the soul*. In <i>On the Immortality of the Soul</i> 6.10, <i>intellectus</i> is similarly defined as the “seeing” of the

soul (*animus*). In *Against the Academics* 3.19.42, the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son, is the Divine Understanding.

mens “Mind*,” along with reason (*ratio*), is defined by Augustine as the ruling part of the soul (*animus*) (*Against the Academics* 1.2.5). In *Soliloquies* 1.6.12–13 *mens* is characterized as the “senses” or “eyes” of the soul* (*anima*), while reason (*ratio*) is the “looking” of the soul* and understanding (*intellectus*) is the “seeing” of the soul*.

modus “Measure” or “limit” is a key concept in the dialogues, especially in *On Order*. In *On the Happy Life* 4.34, Augustine describes God the Father, the First Person of the Trinity, as the *summus modus* or “Supreme Measure.”

noscere,
cognoscere,
novisse “To know,” either as a knowledge of passing, temporal things or as a more generic term for knowing that could include knowledge of the highest and eternal things.

opinari, opinatio,
opinio, opinator “To form an opinion” or “to opine,” “forming an opinion,” “opinion,” “opiner,” respectively. A technical term in Academic thought, an opinion should never be formed by the wise man, although he may hold various positions or make decisions on the basis of things that he approves as plausible or probable. In the Cassiciacum dialogues, the Latin phrase *ut opinor* (in my opinion) is fairly common and may not have a technical connotation.

percipere “To perceive,” usually used in reference to basic sensory activities rather than higher acts of understanding. It can, however, designate comprehension of an intelligible reality, as when one perceives the truth or falsehood of a definition (see *Against the Academics* 3.9.21).

- probabile* A critical term for the Academics in their defense against the Stoic charge of *apraxia*, namely, that their skepticism leads to inactivity. In Academic thought, *probabile* signifies something that is “plausible,” “persuasive,” or “approvable” rather than something that is certainly true to which one can give full assent. It is allegedly synonymous with “verisimilar.” *Probabile* is mostly translated as “probable,” but it should not be confused with the modern notion of probability as a form of statistical likelihood.
- scientia* “Knowledge*” usually refers to the highest kind of knowledge possible, that is, the grasp of eternal realities such as the truths disclosed in the liberal arts. See *On the Immortality of the Soul* 1.1: “Everything that the soul knows (*scit*), it has within itself; nor does knowledge (*scientia*) contain anything other than that which pertains to some discipline, for discipline is the knowledge (*scientia*) of anything whatsoever” (see also *Against the Academics* 1.7.19).
- scire* “To know*.” *Scire* is the verb that is generally, though not always, used to designate the highest or most secure kind of knowing (see *On the Happy Life* 2.7; *Soliloquies* 2.1.1).
- sensus* *Sensus* can refer to either the five bodily senses of sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell or the mental faculty that enables people to use their senses for seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling (see *Against the Academics* 1.1.3; *Soliloquies* 2.2.3). In one case, Augustine uses *sensus* for the capacity to understand (*On the Happy Life* 4.25). He regrets that he did not differentiate between physical and mental *sensus* by adding “bodily” to the former kind (see *Retractations* 1.1.2; *Soliloquies* 1.6.12, 2.2.3).

<i>sententia</i>	Most often, a “position” (a stance in thought or debate), but also a “notion,” “statement,” “viewpoint,” and “decision” (especially an official juridical decision).
<i>sentire</i>	Usually, “to sense” or “to feel,” though context sometimes compels other variations. It is used in reference to either bodily sensation or the mental awareness and use of the bodily senses.
<i>verisimile</i>	“Verisimilar,” “similar to the true,” or “like the true.” It is a technical term employed by the Academics, reputed to be synonymous with “plausible” or “probable” (see <i>Against the Academics</i> 2.5.12).
<i>visum, videri</i>	<i>Visum</i> is the past particle of <i>videre</i> (to see). It sometimes takes on the technical meaning of an “impression” in Stoic epistemology and is translated as such (see <i>Against the Academics</i> 3.9.18). The verb <i>videri</i> is translated as “seems” or “appears” and has to do with the realm of appearances or percepts that are not necessarily real or true.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE CASSICIACUM DIALOGUES

AUGUSTINE AT CASSICIACUM

In the autumn of A.D. 386, St. Augustine retired to the country villa of his wealthy friend Verecundus, located somewhere north of Milan in a place called Cassiciacum. He had brought with him several of his acquaintances and loved ones: his friend Alypius, his mother Monica, his illegitimate son Adeodatus, his brother Navigius, his cousins Lartidianus and Rusticus, and two spirited pupils named Licentius and Trygetius. There, Augustine not only recovered from the chest pains that had compelled his recent resignation as a teacher of rhetoric, but he began to reflect more deeply on the faith he had come to accept as true. The conversations held during this time of “fruitful leisure,” interrupted occasionally by farm work and violent poultry, were allegedly preserved with the help of stenographers who were hired largely for practical reasons: to spare Augustine’s health by reducing his need to speak and to provide a record for those who were not present. Later, Augustine edited the transcriptions with the help of his co-retreatant Alypius. Rather than preserving the discussions verbatim or arranging them chronologically, the two friends fashioned dialogues along pedagogical and

thematic lines. The result of these labors is the tetralogy of *Against the Academics*, *On the Happy Life*, *On Order*, and the *Soliloquies*.¹

What was Augustine hoping to achieve at Verecundus's villa? Certainly, he was preparing for his baptism and initiation into the Catholic Church, which would take place in Milan the following Holy Saturday on April 24–25, 387. Augustine had converted to Christianity in the late summer of 386, an event that he vividly recounts in book eight of the *Confessions*; but his actual reception into the Church would take time. One of the interesting aspects, then, about the Cassiciacum dialogues is that they were written by a mere catechumen, a candidate for baptism. Because of the early Church's so-called *disciplina arcani*, or "discipline of the secret," being a catechumen in the late fourth century meant not experiencing all of the Church's practices and teachings. Augustine the catechumen may have engaged in advanced theological speculation at Cassiciacum, but he probably did not know the wording to the Apostles' Creed, which was taught to catechumens only a few weeks before their baptism. And he may have known that the Eucharist was the bread of life, but he had probably never seen the Eucharist, since catechumens were dismissed from Mass after the homily.² On the other hand, Augustine profited much from listening to the sermons of St. Ambrose, from his socializing with the intellectual elite of Christian Milan (such as Manlius Theodorus, to whom he dedicates *On the Happy Life*), and from his own studies. Consequently, even though he was not yet a Christian layman, Augustine was well equipped for his first written venture into what is now sometimes called philosophical theology.

But more than prepare for his own baptism, Augustine wanted to lead others to the same breakthroughs that had brought him to where he was. This aspiration is evident in his solicitude for his students Licentius and Trygetius, as well as in his appeals to Romanianus and

Zenobius, the two friends to whom he dedicates *Against the Academics* and *On Order*, respectively. It is not difficult to infer that Augustine is also eager to assist his readers in the same way.

Those breakthroughs of Augustine's, as I have called them, are more aptly described as a "conversion," or turning around, and following the narrative order of the *Confessions*, they may be roughly identified as belonging to one of three kinds.³ In book seven of the *Confessions*, Augustine describes an "intellectual" conversion that was instigated by a reading of the Platonists; in book eight, he recounts a "moral" conversion that finally freed him from his addiction to the pleasures of the flesh; and in book nine, he touches upon a "religious" conversion that formally "bound" him to God in baptism and enabled him to experience, together with his mother Monica, the so-called Vision of Ostia.

The *Confessions* was written two decades after the Cassiciacum corpus, but the same three kinds of conversion are present in Augustine's early thought and can therefore serve as a useful reference point for interpreting the dialogues. The most conspicuous of the three at Cassiciacum is intellectual conversion, the cognitional revolution whereby one is able to differentiate between sensible and intelligible reality, that is, between that which can be grasped by any of the five bodily senses and that which is grasped by the mind or intellect alone. Contrary to our daily commonsensical assumptions that privilege the tangible, visible, audible, olfactible, and gustable, the intellectually converted mind recognizes that the reality of physical things is caused by something that is not physical but can be grasped only by our intelligence, far removed from the senses and even from physical images of any kind. This revolution in thinking, which ascends from sensible data to realities not intrinsically conditioned by space, time, or matter, is crucial because it alone enables one to understand, however dimly,

the two things that Augustine identifies in the *Soliloquies* as most worth knowing: God and the soul.

Moreover, intellectual conversion is made possible by a special “return to ourselves” whereby we recognize our own minds and our own desire to know as intelligible rather than sensible realities.⁴ Erik Kenyon identifies this return to oneself as the not-so-hidden agenda unifying all of Augustine’s dialogues: behind every “first-order debate” about a topic (skepticism, happiness, theodicy, etc.) is a “second order” that consists of an “inquiry into inquiry.” The Cassiciacum dialogues, Kenyon goes so far as to argue, “look foremost” not to a set of answers about first-order issues but “to the act of inquiry itself: The fact that we can inquire at all tells us various things about ourselves. By reflecting on our own act of inquiry, we are put in a position to improve how we go about inquiring” because reflection on our inquiry yields a discovery of “cognitive norms of thought” operative in “most if not all acts of rational inquiry.” Such a discovery clears the mind of errors such as materialism and serves as a guide for further investigation.⁵ The liberal arts, which come up frequently at Cassiciacum, are instrumental in these purging breakthroughs because their aim, according to Augustine, is to point to eternal, intelligible realities and to canons of reason that competently direct human inquiry.

Yet although intellectual conversion through a return to one-self is crucial to grasping reality as it truly is, such a conversion is an insufficient condition for acting responsibly and justly. “And what did it profit me when I read and understood all the books of the arts which they call liberal,” Augustine asks in the *Confessions*, “while I remained the vile slave of evil desires?” Besides a conversion of one’s intellect or understanding, a conversion of one’s behavior or mores needs to occur that enables one not only to know the good but to do the good, to feel and act in

a way that is consistent with what is right. It is Augustine's concern for moral conversion at Cassiciacum that explains his attentiveness to "the order for living," his advice to his pupils on how to live well, and his sharp criticism of them when they fail to do so. It also explains why Reason, Augustine's mysterious interlocutor in the *Soliloquies*, probes Augustine's heart with embarrassing questions designed to gauge whether he has suffered any moral relapses.⁶

Moral conversion begins the life of ethical excellence and makes one fit to have the best kind of friendships. That said, neither intellectual nor moral conversion satisfies the deepest yearnings of the human mind and heart. Something more is needed, both as a completion and grounding of these conversions and in order to bring the human person to ultimate happiness. Hence the need for religious conversion, which in biblical terms is the replacement of one's heart of stone with a heart of flesh (see Ezek 36:26) that enables one to love the Lord God with one's whole heart, whole soul, and whole strength (see Deut 6:4–5). Religious conversion is a surrender to divine love. It is "religious" in its modern meaning as ordered toward a formal and communal worship of God, but it is also "religious" in its ancient meaning as a binding (*religio*) of the soul to God. For Augustine, both senses are operative in the sacrament of baptism; and for Augustine, such a binding in the Christian religion does not involve a restriction but an expansion of one's freedom as well as a perfection or completion of the other two conversions, for in addition to knowing the good and doing the good, the individual is now capable of fully loving the good. "Without doubt," Monica concludes in the second dialogue, "this is the happy life, the life that is perfect. And we must presume that we who are hurrying to it can be brought to it by a firm faith, a lively hope, and an ardent charity."⁷

By being attentive to Augustine's overarching goal at Cassiciacum of intellectually, morally, and religiously converting his audience, readers can better appreciate the various twists and turns that the dialogues take. And these three kinds of conversions can even act as a gauge for the similarities and differences between the *Confessions* and the writings from Cassiciacum. Rather than trace Augustine's alleged move away from Neoplatonism to orthodox Christianity as many have tried, it may be more fruitful to ask whether or to what degree Augustine's thinking changed on the importance of each conversion or their ordering to each other.⁸ For instance, on the question of whether intellectual conversion is necessary in order for one to be relatively happy in this life, *On Order* would seem to answer in the affirmative, but the *Confessions* would seem to answer in the negative. And as to whether one needs to be morally converted before one can undergo an intellectual conversion, *Against the Academics* and *On Order* would seem to answer yes despite the fact that in the *Confessions* these conversions are narrated in the reverse order.⁹

THE DIALOGUE GENRE

The Platonic Template

Augustine chose the philosophical dialogue as the means of goading his readers to this triple conversion. To understand why, it is necessary to gain a better appreciation of this peculiar genre. The dialogue form as developed by Plato may be described as a way of effecting a sort of ceasefire in what Socrates calls "the old quarrel between philosophy and poetry."¹⁰ Poetry, when conceived broadly to include all forms of narrative, holds considerable sway over the hearts of men and women by dint of its power to stir their emotions and imagination. Poetry thus becomes a major source of

“values” for a people, functioning as the lens through which its followers filter, interpret, and evaluate their experiences. This reliance on the poets’ authority and their fiction has the subtle effect of deterring men and women from independent and rational inquiry, the result being that more attention is paid to the poet’s book than to the book of the world. Poetry therefore tends to be at odds with philosophy—that way of life which seeks a knowledge of the nature of things free of both opinion and authority. The concrete manifestation of this antagonism is a popular hatred of the philosopher (as we see in the trial of Socrates at Athens) and a philosophical censure of the poet (as we see in Socrates’s criticisms of Homer). Further, because it generally appeals to the lowest and basest passions, poetry would seem to have a dubious effect on the moral development of its readers or hearers.

The Platonic dialogue, on the other hand, remains faithful to Socrates’s way of life while successfully overcoming his reservations about poetry. The philosophical dialogue does not have the overpowering pathos of an epic or tragedy, a restraint that keeps readers’ minds less lulled and more alert. Moreover, the dialectical quality of a dialogue, in which a single question often begets several contradictory answers, places on readers a certain onus to figure out the dialogue’s true import, to sift through the various answers and scrutinize them closely. Rather than be hypnotized by charm and beauty, readers are prompted by the dialogue to be perceptive and rational.¹¹

This prompting may be said to consist of three dimensions. The first dimension of breadth or horizontality, of back-and-forth, requires readers to connect what they are reading now to what has gone before and to modify their impressions in light of what comes next. The second dimension of verticality, or up-and-down, requires readers to connect the narrative to the realities up to which they

are pointing as well as to be cognizant of tensions or hints that are percolating below the surface. Finally, the third dimension of depth, from there-to-here, requires readers to discover or verify things for themselves, not in a relativistic or subjectivist way, but in light of the narrative clues and “cognitive norms of thought” (to borrow Kenyon’s phrase) that are immanent in their own ability to know. Indeed, it is this third dimension—which in ocular vision gives depth perception—that can lead to self-knowledge.

The three-dimensionality of a philosophical dialogue is thus designed to bring readers to a state of knowing or discovery. But is it also designed to conceal? A philosophical dialogue can fall into anyone’s hands, including the hands of someone for whom certain truths, at least at this stage in his or her life, would only do harm.¹² Further, since all political society (even that of an enlightened democracy) rests on dogmatic assumptions that must remain more or less publicly unquestioned for the sake of civic stability, philosophers must exercise considerable caution lest their philosophizing undermine the opinions necessary for a vibrant polity.

Consequently, it has been speculated that authors like Plato wrote in such a way that the more dangerous, destabilizing aspects of philosophy were carefully kept from the general readership and revealed to only a minority of readers through various clues in the text. A single dialogue could therefore have two different “messages”: an “external” one for the philosophically challenged and an “internal” one for the philosophically inclined. In antiquity, these two different teachings came to be known as “exoteric” and “esoteric,” respectively. Conceived thus, the philosophical dialogue may be compared to a tamper-proof aspirin bottle: its real content can be obtained only by those who are mature enough to figure out the directions, while the rest are kept from something that would only damage their health.¹³

The Augustinian Dialogue

Whatever conclusions one may wish to draw about a “secret teaching” in the writings of ancient philosophers, it cannot be denied that the Cassiciacum dialogues are self-consciously situated within a broad tradition of philosophical *poesis* that includes the possibility of esotericism. Augustine was keenly aware of the three-dimensional, protreptic value of the dialogue genre. In *On Order* 1.11.31 he mocks those who pay no attention to what in a dialogue “is being explained and accomplished” (the vertical dimension) as well as those who ignore the whence and “whither of the discussants’ efforts” (the horizontal). Augustine also emphasizes readers’ independent discovery of the truth vis-à-vis the texts (depth perception). As he tells Romanianus in *Against the Academics*, everything accomplished in the dialogues will remain a mere opinion in the mind of a reader rather than genuine knowledge until the reader enters “entirely into philosophy” and verifies the truth personally (2.3.8).

Moreover, as his interpretation of Cicero and the Academic skeptics attests, Augustine also knew of the esoteric possibilities of philosophical literature. He even appears to have appropriated some aspects of esoteric writing. Like Plato and Cicero, Augustine draws a line between the very rare kind of human being who can understand reality as it truly is and the vast majority who do not, and he likewise recognizes the danger in teaching the truth to those who are not ready for it. But there is one event separating Augustine and the philosophers that might explain how he differs from them: the Incarnation. God’s humbling Himself and taking the form of a servant allows the carnal multitude for the first time to “return to their very selves and even gaze upon their home-land without the bickering of disputations.” The divine Word becoming

human flesh does not eliminate the fallen world's hatred of the light, and thus a careful reserve in expressing the truth is still necessary. But it does place a certain responsibility on the believer to bear witness to the truth and to avoid incurring any suspicion that the good news being preached is concocted. For Augustine, having an "exoteric" message that is meant to deceive nonphilosophical readers, even if well intentioned, is incompatible with the demands of the Gospel.¹⁴

Augustine's principled opposition to mendacity does not mean, however, that his dialogues are entirely veracious. In the *Soliloquies*, Augustine notes that not all falsehoods are lies: joke tellers, for instance, are not considered liars because their intention is not to deceive, and the same holds true for comic play-wrights. Augustine himself admits that he can be ironic in these works. Overtly playful elements abound, such as the discussion in *On Order* about whether it is permissible to chant sacred music while answering the call of nature, but others are more veiled. A distant disciple of Augustine, St. Thomas More, was characterized as feigning seriousness so well when he was joking that his listeners had difficulty knowing when he spoke "in sport" and when "in good earnest." One wonders whether the same could not be said about Augustine at Cassiciacum. Key to any philosophical dialogue is its comic quality, a trait no doubt partially due to the philosopher's bemused indifference to the petty things, such as money or health or recognition, that most human beings regard with inordinate seriousness: a truly great soul, Cicero reminds his son, "holds as trivial the things that to the many seem to be outstanding and important." But more fundamentally, the dialogue's comic structure forces readers to get the joke, to discover on their own the knowledge being sought, and thus experience the delight of comprehension. Or put differently, with its beguiling three dimensions the dialogue

is an ideal vehicle for exercising and provoking readers to the insights that induce or prepare for conversion. And this spiritual exercise includes mental curveballs that put us through our paces and render us sharper by befuddling us and prompting us to consult our own intelligence and the world that is. The Cassiciacum dialogues may not contain “noble lies,” but they may contain noble untruths to test and challenge us.¹⁵

Reading a Cassiciacum Dialogue

At the very least, the dialogic character of the Cassiciacum corpus requires us to approach it as we would any other dramatic narrative. Never, for example, can we assume that the opinions of the interlocutors are those of Augustine the author, and neither can we even take for granted that the opinions of Augustine the character are those of Augustine the author. In deliberate imitation of daily life, what a character chooses to say is often contingent on who is present and who is not, on what personal motives are operative, and on what has just transpired. Consequently, abstracting from the dialogue’s dramatic dimensions misleadingly reduces a subtle interplay of dynamics to a colorless series of propositions, thereby stripping the dialogue of a content that often lies in the penumbra of the text. As with any other narrative, a dialogue’s characters, setting, plot, and time—not to mention the various incidentals mentioned throughout—are crucial.

Uncovering the many meanings of the dialogue therefore requires being fully and almost urgently attentive to the action of the work. As with a theatrical play, the Cassiciacum dialogues are to be experienced as if they were transpiring before our very eyes. Augustine follows the common ancient convention of putting narrative interjections such as “he says” in the present tense, but

he amplifies this sense of presence with frequent exhortations to “pay attention” and “be here.” Even more, Augustine says that we should put ourselves *into* the text. We will learn many things, Augustine tells Zenobius, if we engraft ourselves onto, and “co-fit” ourselves into, these works.¹⁶

It also helps to read the dialogues together. Augustine wrote the tetralogy in such a way that the teachings of one are clarified or even modified by those of another. We have already mentioned that the Cassiciacum dialogues function as a kind of spiritual exercise for readers, and exercise suffers when parts of a workout program are cut out randomly. Oddly, history has been fairly deaf to this obvious fact. Of the manuscript traditions bequeathed to us from the Middle Ages, not a single one includes all four dialogues together. *Against the Academics* and *On Order* were generally paired with each other while *On the Happy Life* was relegated elsewhere. Finally, the *Soliloquies* was either published alone or with later compositions of Augustine, but never with any of the other three dialogues. This dismemberment of the Cassiciacum corpus continued into the twentieth century with most editions of modern translations. From this pattern of publication we may tentatively conclude that for the bulk of their existence and despite their author’s explicit intentions, the dialogues have not been read as a coherent unit. Consequently, one of the goals behind this present four-volume edition is to reunite what the accidents of history have put asunder.

Lastly, it is profitable to read the dialogues in order. Like several of Plato’s and Cicero’s dialogues, the Cassiciacum tetralogy is meant to be read in a particular sequence for the full effect. Intellectual, moral, and religious conversion begins with a rejection of skepticism, which deadens the desire for truth by preaching its unattainability (*Against the Academics*); progresses with an intensified desire to become happy and know God, who is the

Truth (*On the Happy Life*); turns on an understanding of God's order through the soul's coming to know itself (*On Order*); and is ratified with a more explicit affirmation of the soul's knowledge of itself and its participation in God (*Soliloquies*).¹⁷

AUGUSTINE'S SOURCES

Another constructive way to approach the Cassiciacum dialogues is with respect to the history out of which they emerged. Because of Augustine's numerous achievements over the course of his life, it is tempting to read the dialogues as primitive or even flawed anticipations of later works such as the *Confessions*, *On the Trinity*, and the *City of God*. Granted that Augustine's theology did indeed develop over time, this temptation must nevertheless be resisted, for the works at Cassiciacum are in their own right the culmination of a long and eventful intellectual journey. From his youth, Augustine had been schooled in the liberal arts. At the age of eighteen, he discovered philosophy and turned (briefly) to a study of the Bible; a year later, he read Aristotle's *Categories* and joined the Manichaeans; a year after that, he began teaching literature, rhetoric, and dialectic, first in his hometown of Thagaste and then in the thriving metropolis of Carthage. When he was about twenty-seven, his philosophical leanings inspired him to write his first book (now lost) called *On the Beautiful and the Fitting*. Approximately five years later, he became an Academic skeptic and then a Platonist; at about the same time, he was introduced to a circle of Christian intellectuals loosely centered around St. Ambrose. By the fall of A.D. 386, then, Augustine had spent years wrestling with the trivium and quadrivium, the dogmatic claims of the Manichaean sect, the disputations of various philosophical schools, and finally, his mother's faith. For the Augustine

who penned them, the Cassiciacum dialogues are in a sense mature writings, the fruit of more than a decade of determined germination.

Cicero

Augustine's journey to Christianity involved confronting a diverse assortment of intellectual forces, almost all of which appear in the dialogues in some form or another. The most obvious is Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B.C.), who, though often dismissed today as an intellectual dilettante, was held by Augustine to be a serious philosopher. Augustine's own passion for wisdom began with reading Cicero's *Hortensius* at the age of eighteen, and at Cassiciacum he continues to treat the *Hortensius* as foundational to the formation of the youths in his care. Further, with their cover letters, choice of setting, and use of long concluding speeches, the Cassiciacum dialogues bear an unmistakable resemblance to a Ciceronian, as opposed to a Platonic, dialogue. (Another indication is that Augustine, like Cicero and unlike Plato, casts himself as a prominent character with lines in his own dialogues.) Augustine himself admits the Ciceronian connection when in the *Confessions* he recounts a disagreement with his friend Alypius. As a sort of assistant editor, Alypius had wanted to omit the name of Jesus Christ from the dialogues so that they would be redolent of the lofty “cedars of the gymnasia,” an allusion to the setting of several of Cicero's dialogues; but Augustine opted instead for what he called the “Church's wholesome herbs.” The name of Christ remained, although it did not entirely eradicate the fragrance of cedar.¹⁸

Moreover, each of the first three Cassiciacum dialogues may be seen as a specific response to a work or cluster of works by Cicero. Augustine's *Against the Academics* obviously wrestles

with Cicero's *Academica*, while *On the Happy Life* engages Cicero's *On the Ends of Good and Evil Things* and the *Tusculan Disputations*, both of which address the *summum bonum* and the art of "living happily." Similarly, *On Order* is a development of the themes in Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods*, *On Divination*, and *On Fate*, which were intended to be read together. As with his use of the dialogue genre, Augustine's responses both build upon and move beyond their Ciceronian foundation. In *On Order*, for example, Augustine agrees with Cicero's critique of fate and superstition but replaces Cicero's insincere deference to Roman civil religion with a principled and unfeigned embrace of Christian teaching. And perhaps in a backhanded way it was Augustine's comfortable command of Ciceronian thought and composition that emboldened him to greater innovation with the *Soliloquies*, a dialogue that is unique in almost every way, from its neologic title to its sustained inner monologue and from its pioneering introspection to its thespian conceit. For as Augustine notes, it is after one masters something that one is eager to move on.¹⁹

The Platonists

But Augustine might never have been able to offer such a sustained engagement of Cicero or to overcome the philosophical skepticism of the school to which Cicero adhered were it not for the "Neoplatonists." This term is modern in origin, but it aptly signals a difference between the Platonists of the third and fourth centuries after Christ and Plato himself (427–347 B.C.). Whereas Plato, for instance, wrote only dialogues that enmeshed his metaphysical discussions in a political context, the Neoplatonists wrote abstract treatises or commentaries that were highly technical and often apolitical in nature. But whatever their differences with

Plato, the one Platonic insight that the Neoplatonists affirmed and expanded is the one that made all the difference to Augustine: the insight into intelligible reality wrought by intellectual conversion. After that insight, nothing would ever be the same: “When behold! Some fulsome books, as Celsinus puts it, as soon as they breathed forth upon us good Arabian [fragrances] and as soon as they dribbled just a few drops of their most precious ointment onto the tiny flicker, they enkindled an incredible, Romanianus, an incredible (and beyond what perhaps even you believe about me—what more can I say?—beyond what I as well believe about myself!), an *incredible* conflagration.” The incredible conflagration of which Augustine speaks is the intellectual conversion mentioned above, which yields a rare kind of knowledge of one’s own understanding or knowing as incorporeal or immaterial. This self-knowledge plays a role in all four dialogues, but it is especially prominent in *On Order* and the *Soliloquies*. And it also had a profound albeit implicit impact on Augustine’s understanding of the three divine persons in the doctrine of the Trinity.²⁰

It should be noted that scholars are not entirely certain which Neoplatonists influenced Augustine the most or, for that matter, how much of Plato Augustine ever read. Curiously, unlike his use of Cicero and the poets (see below), Augustine never directly quotes his Platonic sources. His writings betray a deep familiarity with several of the tractates of Plotinus (A.D. 204/205–270), but the influence of Porphyry (A.D. 232/234–305) and possibly others cannot be overlooked either. Regardless, Augustine’s debt to Plato or the Neoplatonists, no matter how great, does not imply that his own thought is reducible to them. Perhaps the best analogy for the relationship of St. Augustine to his classical sources is that of a skilled musician riffing off different melodic phrases in a way that is not beholden to their composers’ intentions.²¹

The Poets

Augustine's sources were not limited to the philosophical. The assortment of Roman scholars and historians from which Augustine draws includes Aulus Gellius, Apuleius, Celsus, Pliny, Quintilian, Sallust, Seneca, Tacitus, Varro, and Vitruvius. Moreover, the old quarrel between philosophy and poetry reemerges at Cassiciacum, with Augustine mustering Latin authors on both sides of the battle. A tragic love story by Ovid (43 B.C.–A.D. 17) occasions a dispute between Augustine and Licentius, and lines from the plays of Terence (195/185–159 B.C.) frequently reinforce the dialogues' comic character. The writings of Horace, Plautus, and even Lucretius are alluded to. Motifs from classical mythology are not uncommon either: Hector, Andromache, Hercules, Achilles, Medusa, Mount Helicon and the Muses, Scylla and Charybdis, Daedalus, and especially Proteus are all mentioned.

But the most important poet at Cassiciacum is Vergil (70–19 B.C.), whom the retreatants read daily and who appears to be viewed by Augustine as a poet with philosophical promise, either someone who in his own way had built a bridge between philosophy and poetry or whose verses could be used for that purpose—or perhaps, it was simply the case that the privileged status that Vergil's poems enjoyed in contemporary Roman life made them virtually irresistible. Whatever the reason, of all the poets at his disposal, Augustine appears most eager to “repurpose” Vergil by treating his work as an opportunity for ruminating on Christian truth.²²

Throughout the dialogues and regardless of the poet in question, Augustine evinces a keen awareness of the power of poetry on its readers' emotions and judgment and its claims on their allegiance. Yet he refrains from treating poetry as an enemy; instead,

he employs a variety of techniques to channel or “convert” the power and beauty of the poets in a direction more open to philosophy and the Christian faith. The dialogues themselves—which, as we have already noted, are innovative not only philosophically and theologically but literarily as well—are the most impressive result of this endeavor. Augustine’s own dialogic *poesis* is his ultimate and most eloquent answer at Cassiciacum to the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry.

Lastly, Augustine’s brocading the dialogues with Greco-Roman poetic fancies serves the additional purpose of establishing this Christian author as well educated and familiar with the literary canon that was the staple of Roman high society. Although Augustine later came to regret many of his nods to classical literature, his generous use of ancient poetry and his well-crafted prosody were part of a common patristic strategy to use the literary arts of Christianity’s detractors against them.²³

The Christians

The disagreement of Augustine and Alypius over the inclusion of Christ’s name might give the impression that the Christian dimension of the dialogues can be excised with only a few cosmetic changes and is therefore superficial at best. Lending support to this conclusion are the cover letters to *Against the Academics* and *On Order*, which exhort their recipients to “philosophize” or “return to themselves” but make no mention of the Christian God.

Such a view, however, would be misleading. Although they are not explicitly catechetical or apologetic, and although they frequently appeal to reason without a direct connection to divine revelation, the Cassiciacum dialogues have a pervasively Christian content. Not only is the group portrayed as praying daily and holding discussions on God and Jesus Christ, but Augustine consis-

tently aligns the dynamic of human knowing with the processions of the divine persons of the Trinity as understood by orthodox Christianity.²⁴ Augustine may call *On the Happy Life* more religious than the others (1.5), but all of the dialogues involve an interplay between, and an integration of, faith and reason.

It should also be noted that even though he was operating under the constraints of the discipline of the secret, Augustine already had at Cassiciacum a significant exposure to Christian thought. He knew the four canonical Gospels (or at least parts of them), several Psalms (which he prayed daily), and several sections of the Epistles of St. Paul. As he recounts in the *Confessions*, he was deeply influenced by the sermons of St. Ambrose (337/340–397) as well as by Marius Victorinus, the story of whose conversion to Christianity profoundly affected Augustine. In fact, it was Victorinus's translations of several Neoplatonic books that prompted Augustine's intellectual conversion around 385 or 386, and there is evidence in the Cassiciacum tetralogy that Augustine was also familiar with Victorinus's Christian writings on the Trinity. Finally, Augustine and Monica socialized with Christian intellectuals such as Manlius Theodorus, to whom he dedicates *On the Happy Life*.²⁵

As far as Christian or patristic literature goes, the Cassiciacum dialogues are fairly novel, especially with respect to diction. Mary Bogan counts more than thirty neologisms in the four works, a higher concentration than is found in Augustine's later writings. Augustine, for instance, coined the word "soliloquy" to designate his fourth dialogue, which is itself an unprecedented melding of a philosophical dialogue and a stage play: he also appears to be the originator of the theological expression "beatific vision." Even in the realm of the mundane, Augustine left his mark while at Cassiciacum: from what we can tell, he is the first author to describe what is known today as a cuckoo clock. Coupled with a

relative dearth of ecclesiastical terminology, with which he would become familiar only after his baptism and ordination to the priesthood, Augustine's semantic resourcefulness attests to an eagerness to communicate something of great importance and a slight uncertainty with how best to go about it. Even as a catechumen, Augustine could not wait to proclaim the Gospel from the Areopagus to the Seven Hills of Rome.²⁶

INTRODUCTION

On Friday noon, July the twentieth, 1714, the finest bridge in all Peru broke and precipitated five travelers into the gulf below. . . . By a series of coincidences so extraordinary that one almost suspects the presence of some Intention, [Brother Juniper, a] little red-haired Franciscan from Northern Italy . . . happened to witness the accident. . . . His glance fell upon the bridge, and at that moment a twanging noise filled the air, as when the string of some musical instrument snaps in a disused room, and he saw the bridge divide and fling five gesticulating ants into the valley below.

Anyone else would have said to himself with secret joy: “Within ten minutes myself . . . !” But it was another thought that visited Brother Juniper: “Why did this happen to those five?” If there were any plan in the universe at all, if there were any pattern in a human life, surely it could be discovered mysteriously latent in those lives so suddenly cut off. Either we live by accident and die by accident, or we live by plan and die by plan. And on that instant Brother Juniper made the resolve to inquire into the secret lives of those five persons, that moment falling through the air, and to surprise the reason of their taking off.¹

In Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, the missionary Brother Juniper tries to bolster the faith of his Indian converts by definitively answering an age-old question: Why are suffering and death "inserted into our lives" when there is an all-kind and all-powerful God? The collapse of a seemingly indestructible bridge that results in the death of five innocent people is an ideal example of "what lawyers shockingly call" an act of God, and in it Brother Juniper sees a "perfect laboratory" with "proper control" from which he can formulate historical and mathematical proofs in defense of divine providence.² The friar had thought "that it was high time for theology to take its place among the exact sciences, and he had long intended putting it there." This was his chance to "surprise" God's intentions "in a pure state."³ Yet Brother Juniper's optimism is not shared by the narrator, who concludes his introductory remarks by positing two alternatives: "Some say that we shall never know and that to the gods we are like the flies that the boys kill on a summer day, and some say, on the contrary, that the very sparrows do not lose a feather that has not been brushed away by the finger of God."⁴

THEODICY?

Wilder's contrast reflects the dichotomy between two different worldviews acutely felt in the time of St. Augustine. By the autumn of A.D. 386, when Augustine wrote *On Order*, Christianity had gained decisive victories over the polytheistic cults of ancient Greece and Rome; but with that victory came new dilemmas. When one's gods are those of Mount Olympus, it is natural to think of the divine as either indifferent to human affairs or even inclined at times to harmful interference. And even if the gods could be kind, their influence was limited: not even the father of

the Greco-Roman pantheon, Zeus or Jupiter, could claim omnipotence to execute his will perfectly. The prevalence of evil in the world could easily be explained by the fact that there was no almighty, all-good God in charge.

But when an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God exists, as the Christian Gospels proclaim, there would seem to emerge what logicians call an inconsistent triad, where of three propositions, only two at most are true. For if God is omnibenevolent, then it would seem that He is not omnipotent, since evil exists despite His goodwill toward humanity. And if God is omnipotent, then it would seem that He is not omnibenevolent in allowing evil to exist.

The Judeo-Christian teaching concerning its Lord therefore gives rise to the problem of theodicy, the reconciliation of God (*theos*) and justice (*dikê*). Although Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) was the first to coin the term, the field of inquiry to which it points is as old as Christianity itself, for the problem of theodicy is an inevitable consequence of orthodox Christian doctrine. Augustine himself would revisit the topic several times during his life and in most of his major writings (including the *City of God* and the *Confessions*), yet it is the dialogue *On Order* that marks his first attempt at this thorny issue. More than that, *On Order* is the only work by Augustine exclusively devoted to the topic, and although this dialogue is by no means the first instance of a Christian author reflecting on the moral evils of humans and angels as well as “natural evils” such as disease and natural catastrophes, it is arguably the first full and explicit Christian work on the subject. On the other hand, depending on one’s definitions, *On Order* may not qualify as “theodicy” at all but as a “defense,” for it does not aspire to the more ambitious goal of specifying what reasons God has for allowing evil to exist.⁵

MATHEMATIZATION VERSUS SELF-KNOWLEDGE

This much can be said: In some respects, Augustine's approach to the "great question" of "whether the order of divine providence includes all things good and evil"⁶ is not unlike that of other theodiscists and apologists. With St. Irenaeus of Lyons more than a century before him, Augustine stresses the importance of viewing evil and imperfections not vis-à-vis this or that part of reality but in relation to the whole. Things that are ugly or wicked up close and in themselves can contribute to the greater excellence of a larger unity. The example that Augustine gives in *On Order* are the jumbled little stones of a mosaic, which when scrutinized inches away look chaotic and disfigured; but when viewed from the right distance, their role in a single and harmonious beauty becomes clear.⁷

But it is in answering the question of how one arrives at the right distance that Augustine's originality is most evident. There was a great temptation among the rationalists of the Enlightenment to mathematize all the sciences in order to give them a comprehensive view of the whole, to subject all objective inquiry to a numerically or geometrically quantifiable and univocal method or standard. The hope was that in so doing, the same precision and certainty evident in mathematics could characterize all of the other disciplines. Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz thus became, each in his own way, a proponent of a *mos geometricus* that could be applied to all reality. Their confidence even rubbed off on devout believers eager to profit from the "exact sciences." In *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, we learn that Brother Juniper's method was inspired by the doubts of an atheist and that the prospect of mathematical "proof, tabulated proof . . . was bright and exciting within him." One of the Franciscan's earlier schemes, for instance, was to

compile a complete record of when the Prayers for Rain were used and to compare the results.⁸

Although Augustine was fond of mathematics (as his discussion of numbers in *On Order* makes clear), he does not commend a one-size-fits-all *mos geometricus* but an understanding of God and evil grounded in self-knowledge. “When I saw that the matter was difficult to understand and that those with whom I was doing this could barely be brought to a satisfactory perception by means of a disputation,” he writes in the *Retractations*, “I decided instead to talk about the order of study by which one can advance from the corporeal to the incorporeal.”⁹ Augustine’s modest summary, written decades later, makes the concluding sections of *On Order* sound like an admission of failure or a consolation prize for an aborted mission. Yet in his introduction to the dialogue, Augustine explicitly traces any and all successful resolutions in theodicy to the inquirer’s personal attainment of self-knowledge. The chief cause of the inability to reconcile God’s goodness and evil’s existence, he tells Zenobius (to whom he has dedicated the dialogue), “is that man is unknown to himself.” Augustine continues: “Yet in order for someone to come to know himself, he needs the great habit of withdrawing from the senses and of collecting his soul into itself and holding itself there. Those reach such a stage who either sing by solitude or heal by the liberal disciplines certain wounds of opinion that the course of daily life inflicts.”¹⁰ A liberal arts education, the very “order of study” on which Augustine expatiates in the second part of *On Order*, is not a meager substitute for theodicy but an important first step to self-knowledge; and self-knowledge is the key to a limited but more reliable theodicy.

Moreover, the kind of self-knowledge that Augustine enjoins is the product of intellectual conversion—that reorientation of the

intellect whereby one recognizes the intelligibility and incorporeality of one's own mind.¹¹ Know your own knowing, Augustine seems to be saying, and you will understand the right distinctions and find "the right distance" from which to surmise and handle the conundrums of theodicy. Or in Augustine's words, the soul that has "returned to itself" now "understands what is the beauty of the whole [*universitas*], which in fact comes from the word 'one' [*unum*]."¹² Augustine has chosen his wording carefully. Self-knowledge does not yield a knowledge of the whole but a knowledge of the beauty of the whole, that is, of that which unifies the whole and makes it lovely. Unlike the grand promise of modern rationalism to know the whole as in a single mathematical equation, the Augustinian "turn to the subject" purports to discover only that which makes the whole whole, that fundamental unity "by which this world is held together and ruled."¹³ While this turn certainly does not answer all of our questions about the whole, it is, Augustine contends, sufficient for the purposes of theodicy more broadly defined; and it is certainly more attainable. The mind, for instance, may never know *what* the number of stars in the universe is, but it does know *that* the number will be either odd or even. The kind of self-knowledge Augustine is advocating in *On Order* has a largely heuristic value: by delving into the contours of human knowing, it eliminates a number of false options in theodicy and anticipates the broad outlines of the right resolution so that one may more effectively work toward it.

EVIL

Another reason self-knowledge is important is that without it, one can never come to terms with the nature of evil; and without a proper understanding of evil, there can be no understanding of

how it relates to divine providence. Evil is an elusive intellectual quarry. As Augustine recounts in the *Confessions*, it took him years to arrive at the astounding conclusion that evil is not a substance or a thing but the privation of a good.¹⁴ Evil is nothing, or, better yet, it is a subtraction, for it is not absence per se but absence where presence is expected. Moral evil is a kind of unreality created not by God (who creates only what is really real) but by humans insofar as their turn away from God in every act of sin is a detraction from divine law and the world that is. Sin diminishes rather than augments the sinner's soul, and it diminishes the original goodness of God's order—though not to such an extent that this order is ultimately foiled or eliminated, and not in such a way that God cannot bring a greater beauty or goodness out of it. Humanity's "creation" of evil is nothing more than its limited destruction or impoverishment of God's creation.

In *On Order*, Augustine is not content to elucidate a metaphysically and logically coherent account of evil or privation but to induce in readers an "Aha" moment that enables them to see for themselves what it is that their minds are doing when they grasp objective lapses in intelligibility or departures from being. The only thing more difficult than understanding being is understanding nonbeing, for understanding nonbeing involves understanding the fact that with nonbeing there is nothing to be understood. This experience is frustrating to the mind, which is designed to know and be satisfied by being and being alone.¹⁵ As Augustine explains later in his life, there is a significant difference between knowing according to the form or essence of a thing (*notitia secundum speciem*) and knowing according to privation (*notitia secundum privationem*).¹⁶

Despite the difficulty of knowing according to privation, the effort is worthwhile because, as Augustine states in *On Order*, "much ruin is brought to the mind by what [one] doesn't see with

the mind.”¹⁷ When the mind fails to “see” surds and other deficiencies in intelligibility, it mistakes unreality for reality and brings ruin upon its understanding of things. Consequently, and as a part of their training, Augustine prods his students to a knowing according to privation by inquiring into topics such as the “nature” of folly.¹⁸ Like evil, folly is a privation of a good (wisdom) lacking any intrinsic intelligibility of its own. Once his pupils truly understand the insight involved in understanding folly, they will have less difficulty in understanding evil.

MOTION

Another theme to emerge from Augustine’s theodicy is that of motion. Readers living in the wake of Newtonian physics are accustomed to think of motion as a purely physical phenomenon that occurs within an absolutized grid of time and space. According to Newton, motion, which he formulated in terms of the idealized state of a body in a vacuum, tells us little or nothing about the nature of a body itself. Yet as Simon Oliver convincingly argues, before Newton and the divorce of physics from metaphysics, motion was a much broader and richer category.¹⁹ Indeed, for thinkers like Plato and Aristotle, self-knowledge or knowledge of the soul was primarily a matter of knowing a certain kind of mobility. In ancient philosophy, motion was not only from here to there but also a tending toward something else that the thing being moved lacked.²⁰ Motion can be ontological and teleological as well as locomotive—that is, it can tell us something about a thing’s essence and its ultimate perfection or purpose.

In *On Order*, Augustine identifies three types of motion, all of which, it may be argued, are analogically related: motion according to place, motion not according to place, and “stable motion,” a kind

of changeless motion, as strange as that is to say, which Augustine associates with God.²¹ Understanding the latter two types of motion is challenging, and not only for those unduly influenced by Newtonian physics. When Augustine repeatedly tries to lead his pupil Licentius from an understanding of local motion to nonlocal, Licentius only fumbles in response.²² Augustine's persistence with Licentius is a testimony to the importance he attaches to an understanding of nonlocal motion as constitutive of the ongoing ascent to wisdom.²³

COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

Theodicy or defense, self-knowledge, evil, and motion are serious and abstruse topics, but in *On Order* they are approached playfully. Augustine's interrogations of his pupils are often impish, as when he stuns an innocent Licentius by accusing him of blasphemously lumping folly with God.²⁴ Some of the humor is more blatant. The most amusing scene is when Licentius and St. Monica are both answering the call of nature in adjacent stalls. When Licentius starts chanting a psalm verse with gusto, the rather strict matron Monica chides him for doing so in such a profane location.²⁵ There is also a whimsical exchange between Augustine and his straight man—mother (who gets the last laugh) over whether women can be philosophers.²⁶

Such levity provides comic relief from tense moments in the dialogue—as when Augustine breaks down in despair over his students' uncharitable behavior²⁷—but it also serves to highlight another motif of *On Order*: the choice between comedy and tragedy as ways of life. All of the Cassiciacum dialogues show an abiding interest in what Socrates called the ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy.²⁸ In *On Order*, that interest extends to Socrates's more specific quarrel with tragedy. Tragedy's focus on

the dark, menacing inscrutability of the cosmos allegedly leads the soul away from self-knowledge and from that contemplative activity that the Greeks called *theoria*. The laughter of comedy, on the other hand, parallels the delight of discovery and comprehension that characterizes the life of the wise man, and thus it can be used as a vehicle for self-knowledge.²⁹

In *On Order*, the quarrel between tragedy and comedy crystallizes in the quarrel between Augustine and Licentius over the latter's newfound enthusiasm for the tragic love story of Pyramus and Thisbe.³⁰ Augustine endeavors to turn Licentius away from tragedy and toward a philosophically friendly comedy by instructing him to turn the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe into a virtuous satire of the young lovers' lust. Augustine's multipronged solution to the ancient quarrel between tragedy and comedy is one of the more intriguing parts of the dialogue.

CO-FITTING INTO THE CHAIN

To assist the reader in the comic quest for wisdom and self-knowledge, Augustine has left several beguiling clues in the text. In the cover letter, he promises Zenobius that he will attain all the precious kinds of knowledge mentioned earlier if he "engrafts" himself onto and "co-fits" himself into "the very order" of the work.³¹ The word "co-fit" is an unusual neologism that appears only one other time in the dialogue, where Augustine mentions the catastrophe of poorly educated or feeble-minded individuals trying to comprehend "the harmony and co-fittingness of things."³² Juxtaposing the two statements, we can see that Augustine is implying that grasping the interconnectedness of being can be achieved by grasping the interconnectedness of this dialogue. As if to confirm this hypothesis, Augustine leaves a telling example, again in the

cover letter. In his description of the soul's coming to know itself, he uses the image of a circle, in which its radii, no matter how innumerable or long, all converge at the center.³³ The image is instructive on its own terms, but it is further demonstrated in a delightfully subtle way: the passage appears in the central paragraph of the cover letter, with the word "center" appearing in the exact middle.

If indeed there is a kind of mirroring of the text and the reality it signifies, a statement appearing later that calls *On Order* a "chain of writing"³⁴ is more than just a casual metaphor: it is a blueprint. A closer examination of the first half of the dialogue provides evidence for this claim. Recurring motifs—such as mice, autumn leaves, the changing use of "to move," or the "whither" and "whence" of various questions—look forward and backward in such a way that they constitute links between the separate segments of the dialogue. This interlocking gradualism is not unlike the liberal education that Augustine advocates in the second half of book two and that is described, significantly, as reason's being drawn by "a certain natural chain into the society" of the rational.³⁵ And it is evocative of the notion of a "great chain of being" that has attracted philosophers throughout the ages.

Recognizing these patterns in the text is certainly not the only way to appropriate the intellectual conversion Augustine is advocating. The progression from reading the sensible world to reading the soul to reading—albeit remotely—God Himself is stated clearly enough throughout. But what the silent pedagogy adds is another step that can aid in this difficult conversion, wherein exercising one's mind on the knotty parts of the text enables one to unravel the same problems found in the world. The more proficiently we can co-fit ourselves into the dialogue's recurring, interlinked schemes, the better we will discern first the patterns of the universe and then *the* pattern by which the universe is made one.

RESPONSE TO CICERO

Augustine's engagement of these themes does not occur in a vacuum. Although much philosophical content is taken from Plotinus's *Enneads*, Augustine's main literary model is a trilogy of Cicero's: *On the Nature of the Gods*, *On Divination*, and *On Fate*. The notion of divine providence was important to Cicero because if it is rejected, there will be no incentive to pray to the gods, and the nation's political fiber will decay.³⁶ On the other hand, a fatalistic providence undermines belief in free will, which could have disastrous moral consequences. Cicero therefore wished to steer a middle course between these two extremes yet without compromising philosophy, the love of wisdom. His solution in these dialogues is to be something of a surgeon, removing certain beliefs from the body politic, such as the Stoic notion of the gods as great balls of fire or Epicurean portrayals of them as indifferent deities, while delicately trying to keep his incisive remarks from extending to traditional Roman religion, which is clearly more vulnerable to rational criticism. Since his goal is limited to saving the old religion for civic use while freeing the reader from philosophically slipshod conclusions, Cicero is content to cast strong doubts on any attempt to answer the question definitively and to leave it at that.

Augustine is motivated by a different set of priorities. Whereas Cicero wishes to moderate religion in the service of the city, Augustine wishes to promote religion in the service of God.³⁷ And whereas Cicero seeks to avoid two conflicting dangers to the healthy republic—openly despising the gods on one hand and believing “old women's superstitions” on the other³⁸—Augustine seeks to avoid two conflicting threats to genuine piety: the opinion that God cannot conquer evil and the opinion that He causes it.³⁹ Augustine's focus on the truths of the mystical body of Christ rather than the

concerns of the body politic accounts for his operating on a grander, more ambitious scale.⁴⁰ The order that binds all things together might be difficult to find and even more difficult to communicate, but it remains among the things most sought after by men and women of high character for one simple reason: it solves the plaguing riddle of how God can be said to care for human affairs in the midst of evil's salient sway.⁴¹ If this riddle is not answered properly, either of the two impious opinions cited above—that God cannot conquer evil or that He causes it—will reign.

By the close of *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, Brother Juniper's pious Cartesian effort to prove God's plan has not gone according to plan. The hapless friar arrives at erroneous conclusions about the meaning and significance of the victims' lives and even ends up on the wrong side of the Spanish Inquisition. Wilder never tells us the reason why the Inquisition condemns Juniper's work, but we may hazard a guess. Although it may be true that "either we live by accident and die by accident, or we live by plan and die by plan," it is not true that humans can "surprise" God and discover that plan on their own, not even with an ostensibly foolproof method at their disposal. Brother Juniper did not and could not succeed in knowing the heart of another person (let alone five), and he was rash in thinking that he could sneak up on the divine mind. There is a more fruitful and less presumptuous way of discovering the soul and God—and although its aims are more modest, the results are more substantial. Had the misguided Franciscan read *On Order*, he might have discovered how better to justify the ways of God to man.

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BOOK ONE

1.

1. To pursue and grasp the order proper to each and every thing,¹ and then indeed to see or explain the order of the whole by which this world is held together and ruled²—that, Zenobius, is extremely rare and difficult for men to do.³ Moreover, even if someone could do these things, he might not also be able to show it, for he would have to find a disciple who has been made worthy for such divine and hidden matters by a meritorious life or by a certain habit of education. And yet there is nothing that men of superior ability—men who look upon the rocks and storms of this life⁴ with heads held as high as they can hold them—more avidly long for and are more eager to hear and learn about than how it is that God cares for the human when so much perversity is dispersed everywhere in human affairs that it hardly seems attributable to divine management, let alone to that of some servant (assuming that such power could ever be given to a servant).⁵

On account of this, [the position] is put forth that it is “necessary” for those who care about such things to believe either that divine providence does not reach all the way to these last and

nethermost areas,⁶ or that surely all evil deeds are committed by the will of God. Both positions are impious, but more so the latter. For although it is not only extremely ignorant but extremely dangerous for the soul to believe that anything has been abandoned by God,⁷ nevertheless, not even among the very men [who believe this] is anyone ever blamed for something he was unable to do. Indeed, an accusation of negligence is much more pardonable than an accusation of malice or cruelty. And so, it is as if reason (not unmindful of piety) is compelled to hold either that these earthly realities of ours cannot be administered by the divine or that they are neglected and disdained, rather than hold that they are governed in such a way that every complaint about God may be rendered harmless and blameless.

2. But who is so mentally blind that he would hesitate to ascribe to divine power and governance whatever reason there is in moving bodies independent of human arrangement and will?⁸ Unless perhaps, it is [mere] chance that forms the limbs of each of even the tiniest animals in dimensions so calibrated and fine; or perhaps the person who denies that something was done by chance can show that it was done by something besides reason; or perhaps at any rate, all because of some trifles of vain opinion we shall dare to divorce from Majesty's most hidden decision what we marvel at throughout the whole of nature as having been ordered in each and every single thing, human skill in no way being adequate to the task.

And here is something that raises even more questions: the fact that the parts of a flea are wonderfully and distinctly arranged,⁹ yet at the same time human life is tossed and turned by the flux of innumerable disturbances. But along this line of thought, if someone could see so little that in viewing a mosaic his gaze could take in no more than the span of one little tile, he would criticize the artisan as ignorant of order and composition. And he would

have the impression that the assortment of little stones was in disarray from the fact that those inlaid pieces, harmonizing into the splendor of a single beauty, could not be seen and surveyed by him all at once. The same thing happens with less educated men who are not able to comprehend and consider with their feeble minds^{*10} the whole harmony and co-fittingness¹¹ of things. If something offends them—because it is magnified by their way of thinking—they conclude that everything is haunted by a massive deformity.

3. The greatest cause of this error is that man is unknown to himself. Yet in order for someone to come to know himself, he needs the great habit of withdrawing from the senses¹² and of collecting his soul into itself and holding itself there.¹³ Those reach such a stage who either singe by solitude or heal by the liberal disciplines certain wounds of opinion that the course of daily life inflicts.

2.

The soul thus returned to itself,¹⁴ it understands what is the beauty of the whole [*universitas*], which in fact comes from the word “one” [*unum*].¹⁵ And for this reason, the sight of that beauty is not granted to the soul^{*} that wanders around among many objects and avariciously chases after poverty, a poverty that it does not know can be avoided only by separation from the multitude.¹⁶ (And by this I do not mean the multitude of men, but the multitude of everything that sensation touches.) Nor should you be surprised that the more the soul tries to embrace plurality, the more it ends up suffering from neediness. For example, regardless of how large a circle is, it has only one midpoint (which geometers call the κέντρον)¹⁷ at which all [lines] converge; and although the parts of an entire circumference can be divided an infinite number

of times,¹⁸ there is still nothing else except that one midpoint by which all the other parts are evenly measured and which rules over all, so to speak, by a kind of law of equality. Indeed, if you wish to move away from this point into one part or another, [you will find that] the more you wander into plurality, the more you lose everything.¹⁹ Thus, the soul that is spread out from itself is ripped apart by a certain immensity and worn out by a veritable begging, since its own nature forces it to seek everywhere that which is one, but the multitude does not permit the soul to find it.

4. But surely you, my dear Zenobius, will understand what sort of things I have just said, and you will understand what stands out as *the* cause of the error of souls* and how all things harmonize into one and are perfected despite the fact that sins should nevertheless be utterly avoided.²⁰ For I know your potential: I know that your soul is a lover of every kind of beauty, without the immoderation and sordidness of lust. In accordance with divine law, this sign in you of a wisdom to come restrains pernicious desires that would cause you—once you had been seduced by false pleasures—to abandon your case. Nothing more vile and dangerous could be found than such a collusion.²¹ You will understand these things, believe me, when you dedicate yourself to education (by which the soul is purged and cultivated), for by no means before the soul is ready are the divine seeds entrusted to it.

For of what sort of thing the whole is and what order it demands, or what reason promises to studious and good people²² and what kind of life we your dearly beloved are living, and what fruit from a liberal leisure we are gathering,²³ these books—which are sweeter to us by your name than by our achievement—will, I imagine, teach you quite well, especially if in choosing the better part, you wish to engraft yourself onto and co-fit²⁴ yourself into the very order about which I am writing to you.

5. Now when a pain in the gullet had forced me to give up teaching,²⁵ I—who (as you know^{*}) was already trying to take refuge in philosophy even without any such necessity—immediately went to the villa of our very good friend Verecundus. What should I say, that it was to his great joy? You know very well of his remarkable benevolence toward all of mankind, and especially toward us. It was there that we discussed among ourselves whatever seemed advantageous. And, of course, we made good use of the pen so that everything would be recorded, which seemed to me to be conducive to my health. For when some trouble or another with speaking slowed me down, no immoderate contentiousness crept into the disputation.²⁶ At the same time, if we wanted to commit anything to writing [permanently], there would be neither the need to state it differently nor the effort of having to recollect what was said.²⁷ Investigating these matters with me were Alypius, my brother Navigius, and Licentius, who has become unexpectedly and wonderfully dedicated to poetry. Also, the army had returned to us Trygetius, who has fallen in love with history like an old soldier. And we had already entered quite a bit in the books.

3.

6. But one night, when out of habit I had awoken from sleep, I was considering quietly within myself the things that come to the mind^{*} from I know not where.²⁸ Because of my love of discovering the truth, this had already turned into a routine for me, so that wide awake—provided such concerns were present—I would think about something for almost either the first, or certainly the last, half of the night. Nor did I allow the youths' schoolwork to call me away from myself, because they did so much during the day that it seemed excessive to me if they were to spend any

part of the night working on their studies. They also had a rule from me: that they discuss something among themselves besides their books, and that they habituate their soul to be at home with itself.²⁹

Therefore, as I said, I was awake, when behold the sound of the water flowing behind the baths took me by the ears and rendered me more attentive than usual. It seemed quite strange to me that the same water rushing over the stones was making first a rather distinct noise, then a more muffled one.³⁰ I began to ask myself what the cause could be. I admit that nothing was coming to mind when Licentius struck his bed with a nearby piece of wood to frighten away some troublesome shrews, and in this manner indicated that he was awake.

“Licentius,” I said to him, “have you noticed—for I see that your Muse has lit you a light for studying at night—how this channel sounds irregular?”³¹

“This isn’t news to me,” he replied. “Once, when I was longing for quiet after being woken up, I pricked up my ears for fear that rain was threatening,³² and that water of yours was doing what it’s doing now.”

Trygetius agreed. He was now awake, lying in his bed in the same room, unknown to either of us. For it was dark, which is practically a necessity in Italy even for the wealthy.

7. Therefore, as soon as I saw that our school—or rather the portion of it that was present, for Alypius and Navigius had gone into town—was not asleep even at this hour, I [felt] that I was being prompted by the running water to say something about it.

“What does it seem to you,” I said, “is the cause of the sound alternating this way? For we don’t reckon that anyone at this hour, either by crossing or by washing something, is disrupting the flow each time.”

“What do you think,” Licentius said, “if not the leaves of some kind that in autumn fall abundantly and without interruption and are shoved into the channel’s straits until at some point they are overcome by and give way to a surge that has been putting pressure on them and has now broken through, at which point they are collected and compressed all over again? Or it could be something else caused by the irregular fall of the floating leaves that likewise has the power of holding back the current and then releasing it.”

This seemed probable to me (having nothing else), and praising his intellectual aptitude I confessed that I myself had come up with nothing, even though I had been asking for some time why it was so.

8. Then there intervened a brief period of silence.

“You were right,” I said, “not to have been wondering about anything and to be inwardly occupying yourself with Calliope.”³³

“Right,” Licentius said. “But just now you have certainly given me something worth wondering about.”

“What on earth is that?” I asked.

“That you,” he said, “have wondered about such things.”

“From where,” I said, “does wonder usually arise, or what is the mother of this vice,³⁴ if not an unusual thing outside of the manifest order of causes?”³⁵

“I accept ‘outside of the manifest,’” he said, “for it seems to me that nothing is done outside of order.”

I was lifted up here by a livelier hope than I am used to when I ask them something.³⁶ For the young man’s mind, which had turned to these subjects only yesterday, had conceived a matter of such importance—and so suddenly!—even though the question about these things had never been raised before in our presence.

“Well done!” I said. “Well done. You have most definitely perceived a great deal and ventured a great deal. And believe me:

this far surpasses Helicon, whose summit you're striving to reach as if it were heaven.³⁷ But I very much want you to stand by your opinion, for I shall attempt to undermine it."

"I beseech you, leave me alone to myself right now," he said, "for my mind is really intent on something else."

Now here I began to fear no small thing—namely, that after having been thoroughly bowled over by the pursuit of poetry, he was now being snatched far away from philosophy. And so I said to him: "I'm annoyed at you. Singing and howling in every kind of meter, you pursue those verses of yours that are trying to erect between you and the truth a wall more monstrous than the one between your lovers, for they used to breathe to each other through a tiny ingrown crack."

For at that point he had begun to sing about Pyramus.³⁸

9. Because I had spoken with a voice more severe than he had been expecting, he was silent for a while. And I had already left the undertaking behind and had returned to myself (not foolishly wishing in vain to capture what had already been captured), when suddenly he said:

"I, by my disclosure, as if I were a shrew,³⁹ was not said more appropriately in Terence than I can now say about myself. But perhaps that ending can be sensibly turned into its opposite. For he had said, 'Today I'm lost'; yet today, perhaps, *I* may find. For assuming that you don't despise the fact that the superstitious are also accustomed to prophesy with mice,⁴⁰ if I warned by my racket that mouse or shrew (which told you that I was awake) that if it had any sense it would return to its own bed and rest with itself,⁴¹ why shouldn't *I* be warned by that racket of your voice to philosophize rather than sing? For it is—as I have begun to believe by your daily demonstrations—our true and firm dwelling. Therefore, if it's not a nuisance to you and if you think that it ought to be done, ask

what you wish. I will defend, however much I can, the order of things, and I will assert that nothing can be done outside of order. For my mind has drunk it in and absorbed it so much that even if someone were to overcome me in this disputation, even this I would attribute not to accident but to the order of things. For it's not the matter itself but Licentius who will be overcome."

4.

10. Rejoicing once more, I gave myself back to them. Then I said to Trygetius: "How does it seem to you?"

"I too very much favor order," he said, "but I'm uncertain nonetheless, and I long for so great a matter to be discussed with the utmost care."

"Then let that side have your support," I said, "for I reckon that your uncertainty is something you also have in common with Licentius and myself."

"I'm utterly certain of this sentiment," said Licentius. "For why should I hesitate to demolish the wall⁴² of whose mention you have made before it's fully built? Poetry surely cannot turn me away from philosophy as much as a distrust of finding the truth."

Then Trygetius said in joyful words, "We now have something more: Licentius isn't an Academic. For he used to defend them most zealously."⁴³

"Please," he said, "don't mention these things now lest this cunning and captious thing⁴⁴ twist and break me away from I know not what divine reality that has begun to show itself to me and before which I stand agape, gazing eagerly."

Here, perceiving my joys overflow much more abundantly than I ever dared even to hope for, exultant I turned toward Licentius and poured forth:

“‘May God the Father make it so!’⁴⁵ If we follow where He commands us to go and where to make our dwelling,⁴⁶ He who now gives an omen and glides into our souls will lead [the way]. For Apollo isn’t ‘high’ who, excited by the odor of incense and the calamity of cattle, satisfies madmen in caves, in mountains, and in groves.⁴⁷ But there really is another, *the* other, who is lofty and truth-telling and—O why do I go round with words?—the Truth Itself. As for His ‘seers,’⁴⁸ they are whoever can be wise. Therefore let us approach, Licentius, as worshipers depending on piety, and with our footsteps let us put out the pernicious fire of smoky desires.”⁴⁹

11. “Please,” he said, “question me now [to see] whether I can untangle so great a matter as this (whatever it is) both with your words and mine.”

“First, answer me this,” I said. “How is it that it seems to you that the water is flowing the way it is not randomly but by order?⁵⁰ The fact that it glides over wooden channels and is brought to a place for our use can pertain to order. For it was made by men using reason, that by its one path they might drink and wash at the same time; and because of the favorable locale it followed that the channel be made just so. However, the fact that those leaves, as you say, fell in such a way that what we wondered about came about: by what order of things and not rather by chance shall we possibly reckon it done?”

“As if indeed,” he said, “it can seem to anyone who very clearly considers how nothing can be done without a cause that they should have fallen or could have fallen other than the way they did. What do you want me to chase down now: the position of the trees and branches as well as the very weight of the leaves, inasmuch as nature has placed any on them? What about the fickleness of the air by which they fly or the gentleness with which they descend, as well as their various twists and turns according to the

condition of the sky, their weight, their shape, and all the other innumerable and more obscure causes—what do they have to do with my search? Those things are hidden from our senses, utterly hidden.⁵¹ Yet what is sufficient for the question being broached—and which is in some unknown way *not* hidden from the mind—is this: nothing is done without a cause.⁵²

“For an annoying inquisitor⁵³ may go on to ask: ‘What was the cause of the trees being put here?’ I will answer that men were following the fertility of the soil. ‘What if the trees aren’t fruit-bearing, and what if they sprang up randomly?’ And here I will answer that we see too little; for nature, which has produced them, is never random. What more need I say? Either let me be taught that something can be done without a cause, or start believing that nothing is done except by a certain order of causes.”

5.

12. “Although,” I said to him, “you may call me an annoying inquisitor (for I, who have attacked you lest you go on speaking with Pyramus and Thisbe, can scarcely help being otherwise), I shall still continue to seek answers from you. That nature of yours, which you wish to be seen as ordered, for whose good did it produce those very trees of yours that don’t bear fruit, to say nothing of all the other innumerable things?”

And as he was thinking about what he might say in reply, Trygetius said, “Surely the benefit of orchards isn’t proffered to men in fruits alone, is it? How many other benefits are there that come about from shade, from wood, and lastly from the foliage and leaves themselves?”

“I implore you,” Licentius said, “I don’t wish to respond to his questions with these answers. For there are innumerable things

that can be brought forth which aren't beneficial to men; or at least their benefit is so hidden or faint that it can't be dug up and defended by men, especially by us.⁵⁴ Rather, let *him* teach us how something is done that a cause will not have preceded."

"We will look at those things later," I said. "For it's not necessary for me to be a teacher now when you, who have already professed to be certain about so great a matter, have still not yet taught me anything—I who am so keen to learn and have for this reason alone been keeping vigil day and night."

13. "Whither are you sending me?" he said. "Or is it that I follow you more lightly than those leaves follow the wind that throws them into the running water, so that it isn't enough for them to fall unless they are also pulled along? For what else could it be when Licentius teaches Augustine those things that are at the midpoint of philosophy?"

"I implore you," I said, "I don't want you to degrade yourself so much or to extol me. For in philosophy I'm a boy as well,⁵⁵ and when I ask questions, I don't very much care through whom He may answer me—He who accepts me as I complain every day, He whose seer I believe you will in fact some day be (nor perhaps is this 'some day' far off). But still, others also far removed from studies of this sort can teach something when they are drawn, as if by a chain of questions, into the fellowship of discussants. Moreover, this 'something' isn't nothing. Or don't you see (I shall very gladly make use of your comparison) that the very leaves which are carried by the winds and float on the waves are somewhat resistant to the stream rushing them onward and that they remind men of an order of things, at least if what you're defending here is true?"

14. Here, leaping out of bed with joy, he exclaimed: "Who can deny, O great God, that You administer all things by order? How

all things hold together!⁵⁶ How by fixed⁵⁷ successions are they nudged into their own grooves!⁵⁸ How great and how many are the things that have been made, that we may speak of them! How great are the things that have been done, that we may find You! For the fact that we awoke, that you noticed that sound, that you asked yourself the cause, that you didn't find the cause of so little a thing—whence all this, unless it flows and is drawn out of the order of things? Even the shrew comes forth so that I may be brought forth awake. Lastly, even your very discussion (perhaps it isn't by your doing, for no one has in his power what may come to mind*) is thus encircled in some unknown way so that it may teach me what I ought to answer you.

“I ask you, for example: assuming that what we've been saying will to some extent gain a reputation among others (having been committed to writing, as you have arranged),⁵⁹ is it not the case that it will seem so great a thing that, had some great seer or Chaldean⁶⁰ been consulted about it, he should have responded long before it happened? If he had, he would be called so divine, he would be carried so far away by the praises of all that no one would dare ask him why a leaf has fallen from a tree or whether a wandering mouse was troublesome to a man who was lying down. For has any one of them ever told of such things to come, either by himself at some time or another or when compelled to by someone seeking counsel?

“And yet, if he were to tell of some celebrated book from the future, and he were to see it come about necessarily (for in no other way could he foretell it),⁶¹ then indeed any flittering about of leaves in a field, anything that a worthless little critter does in a house, is just as necessary in the order of things as this writing. For [this work] is made up of these words that could neither have come to mind* nor have proceeded from the mouth and committed to posterity

without the preceding worthless things.⁶² Now then, please, let no one ask me why something is done. It suffices that nothing is done, nothing is born, that isn't generated and moved by some cause."

6.

15. "It appears, young man," I said, "that you don't know how many things have been said against divination and by what caliber of men.⁶³ But answer me now—not whether something may be done without a cause, for I already see that you don't want to answer it—but whether this order you have been defending seems to you to be something that is good or something that is evil."

And he, mumbling under his breath, said: "You haven't asked the question in such a way that I'm able to pick one or the other. For I see here a certain middle course,⁶⁴ since order seems to me to be neither good nor evil."

"What at least," I said, "do you reckon is the opposite of order?"

"Nothing," he said. "For how can something be the opposite of the thing that has seized the whole, possessed the whole? For whatever is the opposite of order will by necessity exist outside of order; yet I see nothing exist outside of order. It's therefore proper to reckon that nothing is the opposite of order."

"Then isn't error the opposite of order?" Trygetius asked.

"By no means," [Licentius] said, "for I see no one err without a cause. Yet a series of causes is enclosed in an order. And error itself is not only begotten by a cause, but it even begets something the cause of which it is.⁶⁵ On which account, insofar as it's not outside of order, it can't be the opposite of order."

16. And as Trygetius remained silent, I was unable to contain myself for joy because I was seeing that the youngster, the son of my dearly beloved friend, was also becoming my son; not only this,

but he was also now rising and growing into a friend of mine; and that he of whose zeal for even the middling disciplines I had despaired was coming full force into the midpoint of philosophy as if he regarded it as his very own possession.⁶⁶ While I was silently wondering about this and bubbling up with glee, suddenly, as if seized by a certain idea,⁶⁷ he exclaimed: “O if I could only say what I want to say! I beg of you, wherever you are: Words, come to my aid! Both goods and evils are in order. Please believe me, for I don’t know how to explain it.”

7.

17. I marveled and was silent. Trygetius, however, as soon as he saw that the man—whose drunkenness, as it were, had worn off⁶⁸—had become somewhat affable and amenable to conversation, said to him: “What you say, Licentius, seems to me absurd and plainly foreign to the truth; but I ask that you be patient with me a little and not bear down on me by shouting.”

“Say what you will,” [Licentius] said, “for I do not fear that you can carry me from what I see and almost hold.”

“Would that,” [Trygetius] said, “you weren’t so far afield from that order which you defend, and that you weren’t being carried away by so much carelessness (to put it mildly) regarding God! For what more impious a thing could be said than that evils are contained in order? Certainly God loves order.”⁶⁹

“Indeed He loves it,” he said. “From Him it flows and with Him it is. And if anything can be more appropriately said of a thing so sublime, please think it over by yourself. For I’m not fit to teach you those things now.”

“What is there to think of?” Trygetius said. “I’m taking in precisely what you say and there’s enough in it for me to understand. For you

definitely said that evils are contained by order and that this order flows from the supreme God and is loved by Him. From which it follows that evils are from the supreme God and that God loves evils.”

18. Because of this conclusion I began to fear for Licentius. But he, sighing from the difficulty of the words, and not at all searching for what he should answer but rather how he should present the answer, replied:

“God doesn’t love evils precisely because His loving evils isn’t a part of order. And therefore He loves order a great deal because through it He doesn’t love evils. But are these evils themselves capable of *not* being in order, even though God doesn’t love them? For this itself is the order of evils: that they not be loved by God. (Or does this order of things seem minuscule to you, that God both loves goods and does not love evils?) And so there are no evils (which God doesn’t love) outside of order, and yet He loves order itself. For loving goods and not loving evils is the very thing that God loves, and this is part of a grand order and a divine arrangement. This order and arrangement, because it protects the harmony of the whole by this very distinction,⁷⁰ happens in such a way that even evils are necessary.⁷¹ Thus there is a way in which out of ‘antitheses’⁷² (and this is also pleasing to us in speech),⁷³ that is, out of opposites, that the beauty of all things is simultaneously formed.”

19. After this he was silent for a brief moment.⁷⁴ Then, suddenly rising up to where Trygetius had his bed,⁷⁵ he said: “Now I ask you, please: *Is God just?*”

Trygetius kept very quiet. As he afterwards recounted, he was marveling at—and was suddenly terrified by—his schoolmate and close acquaintance’s statements, which had been breathed on by a new inspiration.

While he was silent, Licentius followed thus: “For if you answer that God isn’t just, look at what you’re doing, you who were

accusing me a little while ago of impiety. If, however, God is just, as is handed down to us and as we ourselves perceive by the necessity of order itself, then He is certainly just by distributing to each its own.⁷⁶ But what distribution can be spoken of where there is no distinction? Or what distinction, if all things are good? Or what can be found outside of order, if by the justice of God its own is rendered to each according to the merits of [different] goods and evils? But we admit that God is just. Therefore the whole is enclosed in order.”

Having said these things, he sprang back onto the bed, and now in a gentler voice (since no one would say a word to him) asked, “You answer me with nothing? Indeed, you who compelled me to all that?”

20. “‘Now a new religion has begun in you, I grant,’ ”⁷⁷ I said to him. “But during the day, which already seems to be returning (unless that is the brightness of the moon draping the windows), I shall give what will seem to me to be the right responses. At the same time, Licentius, we should be silent now, lest oblivion swallow up the great things you’re saying. For when would our writing not demand that these things be committed to it?⁷⁸ I will tell you exactly what I’m sensing; I will dispute against you as much as I can; and if you conquer me, no greater triumph could be given to me. But if your weakness—which, since it isn’t well fed on an education in the disciplines, will perhaps be unable to uphold so great a God—if your weakness should yield either to cleverness or to some sharp error belonging to the men whose role I shall try to play, then this very [defeat] will impress upon you what great strength you must acquire in order for you to return to Him more firmly.⁷⁹ At the same time I want this disputation of ours to proceed in a more polished way,⁸⁰ since I do not owe it to someone with crass ears.

“For our dear Zenobius often discussed with me many matters concerning the order of things, yet I could never satisfy him when he inquired into the sublime, either on account of the obscurity of those realities or on account of the constraints of time.⁸¹ In fact he was so consistently impatient with my frequent procrastinations that he goaded me with a poem, and a good poem at that (whence you might love him all the more), in order to compel me to answer him more carefully and eloquently.

“But neither could it be read to you then—since you were far removed from the study of those things—nor can it be read to you now, since his departure was so sudden and upset by that well-known tumult⁸² that none of those matters could come to our minds*. Now as it happens, he had decided to leave [the poem] with me so that I might respond to it; and many reasons have now converged as to why this discourse of ours should be sent to him. First, because we owe it to him. Next, because it’s proper that the sort of life we are now leading should be made known to someone who has been so kind to us. And finally, because he yields to no man in rejoicing over your potential. For when he too was present (on account of how close he is to your father⁸³ or rather to all of us), he had taken careful note of certain sparks of your intellectual aptitude and was very worried, not so much that these sparks would be inflamed by my care⁸⁴ as they would be extinguished by your carelessness. And when he learns that you’re also keen on poetry, he will wish you so much joy that I already seem to see him exulting.”

8.

21. “You certainly won’t do anything that would please me more,” he said. “But whether you will laugh at my fickleness and boyish levity or whether it’s truly happening in us by some divine

will and order, I wouldn't hesitate to say to you all that I have suddenly become quite averse to those verses. Something (I don't know what) has at this moment shone brightly on me with a different, a far different, light.⁸⁵ Philosophy is more beautiful, I admit, than Thisbe, than Pyramus, than that Venus and Cupid, and all such loves of this kind." And with a sigh he gave thanks to Christ.

I took these things—what shall I say—gladly? Or what shall I not say? Let each take it as he wishes: I don't care, except that perhaps I was rejoicing immoderately.

22. In the meantime, after a little while, the day showed itself. They arose, and I wept and prayed a great deal. As I was doing so, I heard Licentius singing, exuberantly and garrulously, that prophetic verse: "O God of hosts, convert us: and show Thy face, and we shall be saved."⁸⁶ Now yesterday after dinner, when he had gone outside for the requirements of nature,⁸⁷ Licentius had been chanting [the same verse] a little more loudly than our mother could bear, since such words were being chanted repeatedly in *that* place. For he was saying nothing else, having recently drunk in that mode of chant; and as usual, he was loving the unusual melody.⁸⁸ She scolded him, this most religious woman (as well you know*), on account of the fact that this place was inappropriate for chant. To which he had replied jokingly, "As if indeed, were some enemy to confine me here, God would not hear my voice!"

23. Therefore, in the morning, when he had come back alone (for both [youths] had gone out for the same reason), he approached my bed and said: "Tell me the truth, and thus may whatever you want be done to us: What is your estimation of me?"

And taking the youngster's right hand, I said: "What my estimation is, you perceive, you believe, you understand. Nor do I

consider it to be in vain that you chanted so long yesterday for the God of hosts to show Himself to you once you had been converted.”

And remembering with wonder, he said: “What you’re saying is both great and true. For the fact that I was just called away so reluctantly from the trifles of my poem and that it now disgusts me and fills me with shame to return to it moves me not a little, so completely am I being carried up into certain great and wonderful things! Is this not truly being converted to God?⁸⁹ At the same time I also rejoice that a scruple of superstition thrown at me for chanting such words in such a place was thrown in vain.”⁹⁰

“Nor does this displease me,” I said. “I reckon that it pertains to order, that we may also learn something from it. For I see that both the location which offended her and the nighttime are congruent with that chant. For from what things do you reckon we pray to be converted to God and see His face if not from a certain muck of the body and its filth, and likewise from the darkness in which error has enveloped us?⁹¹ Or what else is it to be converted if not being turned from the immoderation of vices and lifted up to Him by virtue and temperance? Or what else is the face of God than the very Truth for which we pine and for the love of which we render ourselves clean and beautiful?”

“It cannot be said better!” he exclaimed. Then in a more subdued voice,⁹² as if in a whisper, he added, “See, I beseech, how many things have occurred, such that I believe something is now happening with respect to us by quite a favorable order.”

24. “If you care about order,” I said, “you must return to those verses. For an education in the liberal disciplines (if, of course, moderate⁹³ and concise), produces lovers more lively, more persevering, and better groomed for embracing the truth; and as a result they more ardently desire, more consistently pursue, and finally, more sweetly cling to that which is called, Licentius, the happy

life.⁹⁴ When this is mentioned, all men rise up and pay attention to your hands, as it were,⁹⁵ to see whether you have anything you can give to the needy and to those hampered by various diseases.⁹⁶ Yet when wisdom begins to admonish them to bear with the physician and to allow themselves to be cared for patiently, they fall back to their rags.⁹⁷ And wasted away by the warmth of those rags, they more gladly scratch the itchy scab of pestiferous pleasures than endure and submit to the physician's advice (which for a little while is hard and burdensome on their diseases) and be restored to the sound state of healthy men and to the light. And so, content with the name of the supreme God and with sense-perception as if it were a handout, they live as wretches, yet they live. But that best and most beautiful Spouse seeks other men—or, to speak more truthfully, other souls*, as long as they animate a body—now worthy of his marriage bed,⁹⁸ for whom it isn't enough to live, but to live happily. Go, therefore, in the meantime, to those Muses. Nevertheless, do you know* what I would like you to do?"

"Command whatever you like," he said.

"Where," I said, "Pyramus and that woman of his kill themselves upon each other, as you were about to sing⁹⁹—in the very anguish with which your poem should be rather furiously set alight, you have an excellent opportunity. Satirize the curse of that filthy lust and those poisoned fires as a result of which those pitiful events take place. Then, rise up wholeheartedly in praise of love pure and sincere,¹⁰⁰ the love by which souls* gifted in the disciplines and fair in virtue are joined to understanding through philosophy,¹⁰¹ and which not only escape death but even enjoy to the fullest the happiest life."¹⁰²

Here he was silent, and after nodding his head in consideration of the matter for a while, he left.

25. Then I arose as well. And after we rendered our daily vows to God,¹⁰³ we started to go to the baths (which was a good place to hold a disputation and home to us any time when, on account of a gloomy sky, we could not be in the field)¹⁰⁴—when behold, in front of the door we noticed two barnyard cocks beginning an exceedingly bitter fight. It pleased us to turn our attention to it. For what do the eyes of lovers not canvass, where do they not wander, lest some signal be given from somewhere by the beauty of reason¹⁰⁵ that, moderating¹⁰⁶ and governing all knowing* and unknowing things,¹⁰⁷ draws its followers, gaping at it with yearning and amazement, and commands that it be sought wherever and in whatever way? For whence or where can it not give a sign? In the case of those roosters, one could see strained heads jutting forward, plumage standing on end, furious thrusts, extremely wary parrying. And in every motion of the animals (which had no share of reason), there was nothing unsightly—because of course there was another Reason from above moderating everything. Finally, there was the victor's very manner: the proud song and the limbs collected into one like an orb, as if in haughtiness of domination. On the other hand, there was the sign of the conquered: hackles plucked from the neck; in carriage and in cry, all deformed;¹⁰⁸ and for that very reason, in some way or another beautiful and well harmonized to the laws of nature.

26. We asked many questions: “Why do all roosters behave this way? Why do they do it for the sake of ruling the females that are subject to them?” And then, “Why did the very sight of the fight lead us for a while from that higher consideration of ours to the pleasure of the spectacle?” “What is in us that seeks many things removed from the senses?” “On the other hand, what is it that is seized by the invitation of those very senses?”

We were saying to ourselves: “Where is there not law? When is the rule of command not owed to the one who is better? Where is

there not a trace of regularity?¹⁰⁹ Where is there not an imitation of that beauty most true? Where is there not measure?”¹¹⁰ And so admonished by all this that there should be a measure to our watching, we proceeded to where we had intended to go. And there, as best we could—but still diligently, for the events were recent, and when could such remarkable things ever escape the memory of three enthusiasts?—we brought together in this part of the notebook all of our night-study’s little achievements.

In order to spare my health I did nothing else that day,¹¹¹ except that I had a daily custom of hearing half a book of Virgil with them before dinner. For at all times our chief consideration was nothing else but the measure of things,¹¹² of which no one can disapprove. But to be aware of it when one is doing something zealously is extremely difficult and rare.

9.

27. Then, the next day, very early in the morning, we eagerly assembled at the usual place and took our seats.¹¹³ And with both of them attentive to me, I said: “Be here, Licentius, as much as you can, and you also, Trygetius; for no small thing is being set in motion: we are inquiring into order. Why should I now copiously and ornately praise order to you, as if I were a fixture in that school from which I’m glad to have left any which way I could?”¹¹⁴ Accept this, if you will—no, make it so that you will, because it seems to me that nothing can be more truly or briefly said in praise of it than this: ‘Order is that which, if we keep it in this life, will lead us to God, and which, unless we keep it in this life, we won’t come to God.’¹¹⁵ And unless my mind deceives me with respect to you, we already anticipate and hope that we will come to Him. Very carefully, therefore, should we turn this question of ours over and over and untangle it.

“I wish that the others who usually take part with us in this business were present.¹¹⁶ I wish, if it could be done, that not only they but everyone—or at least our close acquaintances—whose intellectual aptitude I always admire, were now here with me and as attentive as you are. Or at least I wish that just Zenobius himself were here. While he was struggling with this great matter, I never received him at a leisure proportionate to the importance of the subject.

“But because this isn’t happening, they shall read our work.¹¹⁷ For we have already undertaken not to lose the words spoken about these things and to bind together the very things themselves that escape the memory by a chain of writing, as it were, so that they may be recovered. And thus, perhaps the very order that procured their absence was requiring it, for surely you all are rising up with a more uplifted mind to [the challenge of] so great a matter because it’s placed on us alone to carry it through to the end. And when those for whom we care the most read it, if something moves them to disagree, this disputation of ours will produce other disputations for us, and this very succession of discourses will be engrafted into the order of instruction.¹¹⁸ But now, as I had promised, and insofar as the matter allows, I will oppose Licentius, who already has almost finished the whole case, to see if he can steadily and firmly fortify it with a wall of defense.”

10.

28. Here, when by silence, countenance, eyes, and limbs suspended and motionless I perceived that they were sufficiently excited by the importance of the matter and aflame with the longing to hear, I said: “Therefore, Licentius, if it’s all right with

you, collect within yourself whatever strength you can, hone whatever acumen you have, and sum up what this order of yours is with a definition.”¹¹⁹

Then, when he heard that he was being compelled to come up with a definition, he shuddered as if he had been sprayed with cold water and, gazing at me with a very troubled countenance and simpering from sheer nervousness (which happens), he said: “What kind of a thing is this? What does it look like to you, like I’m nodding ‘yes’? I don’t know by what adventitious spirit you believe me to be inspired.”¹²⁰

Then suddenly animating himself he said, “Or maybe, something *is* with me.”

For a little while he was silent, so that whatever notion of order that was in him might be brought together into a definition. Then, lifting himself up more, he declared: “Order is that through which all things that God has ordained are guided.”¹²¹

29. “What?” I said. “Doesn’t God Himself seem to you to be guided by order?”

“Of course He does,” he said.

“Therefore God is guided,” Trygetius said.

“So what?” Licentius said. “Do you deny that Christ is God, who comes to us by order and says that He was sent by God the Father?”¹²² If, therefore, God sent us Christ by order and we don’t deny that Christ is God, then God not only guides all things but is guided by order.”

Here Trygetius, now hesitating, said: “I don’t know how I should take that. For when we name God, it’s not as if Christ Himself comes to mind* but the Father. But when we name the Son of God, then He occurs to us.”

“A fine thing you’re doing,” Licentius said. “Shall we therefore deny that the Son of God is God?”

Here, although it seemed dangerous to respond to him, Trygetius nonetheless gathered himself up and said, “And this One is indeed God, but we still properly call the Father God.”

“Hold yourself together better,” I said to him, “for the Son is not improperly called God.”

But Trygetius became upset by a sense of piety,¹²³ and when he did not want even his words to be written down,¹²⁴ Licentius began to insist that they remain—no doubt in the manner of boys, or rather of men and of (O the horror!) almost everybody—as if indeed the case were being set in motion among us for the sake of glory!¹²⁵ When I scolded his emotion with rather harsh words, he blushed;¹²⁶ and when I noticed Trygetius laughing and rejoicing at his being disturbed, I said to both of them:

“This isn’t the way you act, is it? Are you not moved by the fact that we are oppressed and overwhelmed by tons of vices and the darkness of ignorance? Is this your recent attentiveness and ascent toward God and truth over which a little while ago I, fool that I am, rejoiced? O if you would see, even with eyes as bleary as mine, in what dangers we lie and what a diseased madness this laughing of yours indicates!¹²⁷ O if you would see, then how quickly, how suddenly, and over how much longer you would turn it into weeping! Wretches, do you not know where we are? It is the common lot of all foolish and unlearned minds to be submerged, but wisdom doesn’t extend a helping hand to those who are submerged in one and the same way.¹²⁸ There are some, believe me, there are some who are called on high, others who are let loose into the depths.

“Do not, I implore you, double my miseries. Let my own wounds be sufficient for me.¹²⁹ That they may be healed, I beg God almost daily with weeping;¹³⁰ nevertheless, I often convince myself that I’m too unworthy to be healed as quickly as I want. Do

not, I implore you. If you owe me any love, any affection; if you understand how much I love you, how much I make of you, how much I'm troubled by concern for your mores; if I'm worthy not to be disregarded; and finally, if, God as my witness, I do not lie when I say that I wish for nothing more for myself than I do for you, then repay the kindness. And if you gladly call me teacher, then pay me the fee: be good."

30. Here, when tears had imposed a limit on me, I could speak no more. Licentius, taking it very badly that everything was being written down, then said: "What, I beseech you, have we done?"

"And still, you don't even admit your sin?" I asked. "You don't know that I used to be sorely aggravated in that school¹³¹ because the boys were being spurred on, not by the usefulness and beauty of the disciplines, but by the love of an utterly vain praise, so that some of them weren't even ashamed¹³² to recite other authors' words and to receive applause (O lamentable evil!) from the very ones whose words were being recited. And so, although I imagine that you two have never done such a thing, you're nevertheless trying to introduce and implant into philosophy, and into the life that I rejoice at last to have embraced, a pest lowest in rank yet more injurious than all the others—that of toxic emulation and vain boasting. And perhaps because I'm frightening you away from that vanity and sickness of yours, you will be more sluggish in the pursuit of learning;¹³³ and having been driven back from the fire of windy fame, you will become frozen in the torpor of idle ignorance. Wretched am I, if even now I will have to endure the kind of people from whom vices cannot depart without being replaced by other vices!"

"You will approve of how much we clean up our act in the future,"¹³⁴ said Licentius. "Only we implore you, by all that you love, to pardon us and to order that all those things be deleted, so that at the same time you may also be economical with the tablets,

which we don't have just now. Indeed, not one of the many things we have discussed has been transcribed into the books."¹³⁵

"Absolutely not," said Trygetius. "Let our punishment remain, so that the very fame which entices us may, by its own scourge, deter us from loving it."¹³⁶ But we will sweat buckets to make sure that this work becomes known only to our friends and close acquaintances."¹³⁷

He agreed.

11.

31. In the meantime mother came in and asked what progress we had made, for the topic was known to her as well. When I had ordered that, in accordance with our practice, her entrance and question be written down, she said: "What are you doing? In those books that you read, can it be that I have ever heard of women also being brought into this kind of disputation?"

"I don't care much," I said to her, "for the judgments of the proud and ignorant, who rush into reading books like they rush into greeting men. For they aren't thinking about the caliber of the men but of the kind of clothes they wear and how much they glitter with the pomp of possessions and wealth. And in the writings [they read], they don't pay much attention either to the whence of the question or the whither of the discussants' efforts, or to what is being explained and accomplished by them."¹³⁸

"Nevertheless, even among these people there are some whose minds are not to be disdained, for they are sprinkled with the seasoning of a humane cultivation and are easily led through gilded and decorated doors into the inner sanctum of philosophy."¹³⁹ Consequently, our ancestors (whose books I see by our reading sessions are known to you)¹⁴⁰ made sufficient provision for them.

And in this day and age, one man—to pass over others—who is most distinguished by his intellectual aptitude, by his eloquence, by the marks and gifts of fortune¹⁴¹ and above all, by his mind*—one man, Theodorus, whom you know well, is making it so that both now and in the coming generations no class of men may rightly complain about the writings of our time.¹⁴²

“But if my books fall into the hands of some who, upon reading my name, don’t say ‘Who’s this fellow?’ and throw away their copy, but being either curious or overly studious will disregard the piddling quality of the threshold and proceed to enter into it—*they* won’t be vexed at my philosophizing with you, nor perhaps will they look down on any of the people whose conversation is mixed in with my writings. For such men aren’t only free—which is a precondition for any liberal discipline and much more so for philosophy—but they were born into the upper class of their community.¹⁴³ And the writings of very learned men also contain shoemakers who philosophized and professions much less fortunate.¹⁴⁴ Yet these [shoemakers, etc.] have shone with the light of such intellectual aptitude and such virtue¹⁴⁵ that there is no way, under any condition, that they would want to trade places with any nobility of this kind whatsoever, even if they could.¹⁴⁶ Nor, believe me, will there be any shortage of fine men to whom this very thing (your philosophizing with me) will be more pleasing than if they found something else here, be it winsome or weighty. For there were among the ancients women who philosophized, and your philosophy is much more pleasing to me.¹⁴⁷

32. “Now so that you may not be uninformed of anything, mother, this Greek word from which philosophy takes its name is called the ‘love of wisdom’ in Latin. Hence even the divine Scriptures, which you strongly embrace, do not command that all philosophers, but only the philosophers of this world, be shunned

and ridiculed.¹⁴⁸ That there is another world far removed from these eyes, which the intellect of a few healthy men behold, Christ Himself sufficiently indicates: He doesn't say 'My kingdom is not of the world' but 'My kingdom is not of *this* world.'¹⁴⁹ For whoever reckons that *all* philosophy should be shunned wants nothing else than for us not to love wisdom. I would therefore disdain you in my writings if you did not love wisdom; but I wouldn't disdain you if you loved it tolerably well, and much less if you loved wisdom as much as I. But when indeed you love it much more than you love me (and I know how much you love me), and when you have advanced so far into it that already you aren't frightened either by the dread of accidental harm or death itself (which is extremely difficult for the most learned men, as all confess it to be the supreme citadel of philosophy),¹⁵⁰ shall I not gladly dedicate myself to you even as your disciple?"

33. At this point, she told me in a pleasant and devoted way that never had I lied so much.¹⁵¹ And when I saw that we had spilled so many words that they should have been written down (but we had already reached the limit of a book) and that there were no tablets left, I decided to postpone the question, so that at the same time I might spare my gullet. For the things that seemed necessary for me to spew onto those youths had disturbed it more than I had wished.

But when we had begun to leave, Licentius said to me, "Remember how many and how necessary are the things—things that are to be taken up by you on our behalf—that are being furnished through this most hidden and divine order, without your even knowing it."

"I see," I said, "and I'm not ungrateful to God. And I assume that you yourselves, who notice these things, will for that very reason be better."

This was my only business for the day.

BOOK TWO

1.

1. After an interval of just a few days, Alypius came. The sunrise was utterly brilliant, and the splendor of the sky and a pleasant temperature (insofar as that is possible in those places during the winter) beckoned us to descend upon the meadow, which we used quite often and with some familiarity.¹ Our mother was also with us, whose intellectual aptitude and soul, aflame for things divine,² I had previously observed after living with her for a long time and after careful consideration. In particular, during a certain disputation on no small matter (which I held on my birthday with my fellow banqueters and which has been collected into a little book),³ her mind* had appeared to me so great that nothing seemed better suited to true philosophy.⁴ Consequently, I decided to arrange it so that when she had more than enough leisure, she would not be absent from our conversation. All of this you know from the first book of this work.

2. Therefore, when we had sat down together as comfortably as we could in the place I mentioned, I said to those two youths: “However much I have been angry at you for treating great things

childishly,⁵ still, it seems to me that this, through God's favor, has not happened without order. For the discussion in which I was drawing you out of your shallowness took up time in such a way that a very great matter seems to have been delayed for Alypius's arrival. Therefore, as I have already made him very familiar with the question and shown him how much progress we have made with it, are you ready, Licentius, to defend the case that you have taken up, that comes from that definition of yours? For I believe I remember your having said that order is that through which God guides all."⁶

"I'm as ready as I can be," he said.

"Then in what way," I said, "does God guide all by order? Is it not so that He guides even Himself by order? Or does He guide other things except Himself by means of order?"

"Where all things are good," he said, "there is no order. For the ultimate equality is that which needs no order."

"Do you deny," I said, "that all goods are with God?"

"I don't," he said.

"It follows," I said, "that neither God nor those things that are with God are administered by order."

He conceded that.

"What on earth?" I said. "Do all goods seem to you to be nothing?"

"No indeed," he said. "They truly exist."

"Where, then," I said, "is that statement of yours which you made, that all things which exist are administered by order and that nothing at all exists which is separate from order?"⁷

"But there are also evils," he said, "through which it has come about that goods are enclosed in order as well; for goods alone are not ruled by order, but goods and evils together. For when we say, 'All things that exist,' we certainly don't say, 'only goods.' From

which it follows that all things together which God administers are administered by order.”

3. “The things that are administered and guided,” I said to him, “do they seem to you to be moved, or do you reckon that they are immovable?”

“The things that take place in this world,” he said, “I admit are moved.”

“You deny that the rest are?” I said.

“The things that are with God,” he said, “aren’t moved; the rest, I imagine, are.”⁸

“Then when you reckon that the things which are with God aren’t moved,” I said, “but concede that the other things are, you show that all things which are moved aren’t with God.”

“Repeat that,” he said, “a little more clearly.”

It did not seem to me that he wanted this done because he was having difficulty understanding, but in order to seek some time to come up with what he should say.

“You said that the things which are with God aren’t moved,” I said, “but the others are. If, therefore, these things which are moved wouldn’t be moved if they were with God (because you deny that all things which are with God are moved), then it remains that the things which are moved are apart from God.”

He was still silent after I said these things, when at last he replied: “It seems to me that, in this world, if some things aren’t moved, they are with God.”

“This means nothing to me,” I said. “You admit, I imagine, that not all the things which are in this world aren’t moved. From which it follows that not all things of this world are with God.”

“I admit that not all are,” he said.

“Then is something without God?”

“No,” he said.

“Then all things are with God.”

Here, delaying, he said, “Please, I shouldn’t have said that there is nothing without God, for certainly, all things that are moved don’t seem to me to be with God.”

“Therefore this sky, which no one doubts is moved, is without God,” I said.⁹

“The sky,” he said, “is not without God.”

“Then is there something with God that may be moved?” I asked.

“I can’t explain what I perceive as I would like to,” he said. “Yet I ask that you all not wait for my words but with the most utmost acumen understand, if you can, what it is I’m trying to say. For nothing, it seems to me, is *without* God and, in turn, what is *with* God seems to remain unshaken. But I can’t say that the sky is without God, not only because I imagine nothing to be without God but because I reckon that the sky has something [about it] which isn’t moved, which truly either is God or with God—although I don’t doubt that the sky itself is turned and moved.”

2.

4. “Then please define,” I said, “what it is to be with God and what it is not to be without God. For if the controversy between us is one of words, it will be easy to disregard, provided that we see the thing itself which you have conceived in your mind*.”¹⁰

“I hate defining,” he said.

“Then what shall we do?” I said.

“You define, I beseech you,” he said. “For it’s easier for me to see in another’s definition what I don’t approve of than to explain something with a good definition.”¹¹

"I shall comply with your wish," I said. "Does it seem to you that what is ruled and administered by God is with Him?"

"This isn't what I had conceived in my mind," he said, "when I said that the things which aren't moved are with God."

"Then see," I said, "whether at least this definition pleases you: whatever understands God is with God."

"I concede that," he said.

"What then?" I said. "Doesn't it seem to you that the wise man understands God?"

"It does," he said.

"Therefore, when wise men are not only moved in a single house or city but moved by traveling or sailing through vast regions, how will it be true that whatever is with God isn't moved?"

"You have moved me to laugh," he said, "as if I would say that what the wise man *does* is with God. Rather, what he *knows* is with God."

"Does the wise man not know," I said, "his own book, cloak,¹² tunic, furniture (if he has any!), and other things of this kind, which even fools know well?"

"I admit," he said, "that to know a tunic and to know a cloak is not to be with God."

5. "Therefore," I said, "you're saying this: not all that the wise man knows is with God, but nevertheless, whatever belonging to the wise man is with God, the wise man knows."

"Excellent," he said. "For whatever he knows by our bodily sense-perception isn't with God,¹³ but what he perceives by the mind is. Perhaps I'm being audacious in saying more, but I will still say it; with you as my judges, let me either be confirmed or let me learn. For whoever knows only those things that the sense of the body touches,¹⁴ seems to me to be not only not with God, but not even with himself."

Here, I noticed by his countenance that Trygetius seemed to wish to say I know not what but out of shyness¹⁵ was being held back, lest he attack another soldier's post, so to speak. I gave him the opportunity to bring something forth if he wished, for Licentius was now silent.

And so Trygetius said, "It seems to me that absolutely no one knows those things that pertain to bodily sense-perception. For it's one thing to sense, another to know.¹⁶ Therefore, if we know something, I reckon that it's contained in the understanding alone, and by it alone can it be comprehended. From which it follows that if whatever the wise man knows through his understanding is with God, then all of what the wise man knows can be with God."

When Licentius had approved, he submitted something else that I could by no means disregard.

"The wise man is utterly with God," Licentius said, "for the wise man also understands his very self. This follows both from what I have learned from you—that what understands God is with God—and from what has been said by us—that what is understood by the wise man is with God. But that part of him through which he uses those senses of his (which, in fact, I don't reckon should be brought into the equation when we are calling someone wise), I admit that I don't know nor do I have any conjectures at all as to what it might be."

6. "Then you deny," I said, "not only that the wise man consists of body and soul* but also that he consists of a whole soul*, since it's a mark of insanity to deny that that part by which he uses the senses belongs to the soul*. For it isn't the eyes or ears themselves but something else (I don't know what) that senses through the eyes. And if we don't ascribe sense-perception itself to the understanding, we don't ascribe it to any part of the soul*.¹⁷ It remains

that it must be attributed to the body; however, it seems to me that nothing more absurd can be said than that."

"The soul* of a wise man," Licentius said, "having been thoroughly purged by virtues and now clinging to God,¹⁸ is also worthy of the name 'wise'; nor is it appropriate to call anything else of his wise. But—if I may speak this way—it's as if he has gotten himself clean of certain dirty rags and discarded clothes¹⁹ and has withdrawn away from them into himself; nevertheless, [these rags and clothes] are in the service of that soul*. Or, if one is to speak of this soul* in its totality, at least they serve and are subordinate to that part of the soul* which alone ought to be named 'wise'; it is in this subordinate part that I reckon even the memory itself resides. The wise man therefore uses this [part] as if it were a slave in order to give it these commands, and—once it has become tame and submissive—to place upon it the boundaries of law: so that while [this part] is using these senses, on account of those things that are no longer necessary for the wise man but for itself, it dare not extol itself, nor be haughty to its master, nor use those things that pertain to it indiscriminately and immoderately. For the things that pass away can pertain to the basest part [of the soul*]. Indeed, for what things is memory necessary if not for those things that pass away as if they were running away? Therefore the wise man embraces God and enjoys to the fullest Him who abides forever, for whose presence there is no waiting and of whose absence there is no fearing,²⁰ but by the very fact that He truly is, is always present.²¹ And, immovable and abiding in himself, [the wise man] cares in a certain way for his slave's peculium,²² so that like a frugal and diligent domestic servant he may use it well and keep it sparingly."

7. Considering this statement of his with admiration, I remembered that some other time I had briefly said this very thing in his hearing.²³ Then laughing I said: "Give thanks, Licentius, to this

slave of yours; had he not supplied you with something out of his own peculium, you would now perhaps not have anything to put forth. For if memory pertains to that part which submits itself as a maid-servant to be ruled by a good mind*,²⁴ it now aided you so that you could say this, believe me. Well then, before I return to that order, doesn't it seem to you that it's especially because of such things—that is, because of the noble and necessary disciplines—that the wise man has need of memory?”

“What need does he have of memory,” he said, “when he has and holds in his presence all of his things? For not even with sense-perception itself do we call memory to our aid with regards to that which is before our eyes. Therefore, the wise man, having all things before those interior eyes of his understanding²⁵—that is, gazing upon God Himself fixedly and immovably, with whom are all things that his understanding sees and possesses—what need does he have, I beseech, of memory? But seeing that I do need him in order to retain those things which I have heard from you, I'm not yet the lord of that domestic servant.²⁶ Rather, sometimes I serve him and sometimes I fight not to serve him. And I dare to claim my liberty, so to speak:²⁷ and if perhaps sometime or other I order him around and he submits to me and often makes me reckon that I have won, he so raises himself back up again in other matters that I lie wretched under his feet. Consequently, when we seek to learn from a wise man, I don't want you to name me.”

“Nor me,” I said. “Nevertheless, surely this wise man of yours can't abandon his own? Or by any means, when he guides this body, in which he holds that domestic servant of his subjugated by his own law, does he relinquish the duty of bestowing kindnesses on whom-ever he can and, above all, of teaching wisdom itself (which is most vehemently demanded of him)? And when he does this, in order to teach fittingly and to be himself less unfitted, he often prepares

something so that he may speak and dispute according to an arrangement;²⁸ and unless he has committed this to memory, it will necessarily be lost.²⁹ Therefore, either you will deny that the duties of benevolence belong to the wise man, or you will confess that some things of the wise man are preserved in his memory. Or does he perhaps commit some of his own things (which are still necessary to him not, indeed, for his own sake but nevertheless for the sake of his own) to that domestic servant for safekeeping, so that [the servant], as someone who is level-headed and a beneficiary of his lord's excellent discipline, may indeed safeguard not only what is needed for bringing fools to wisdom but what his lord has commanded him to safeguard?"

"In no way do I think," he said, "that anything from the wise man is committed to him, if at least the wise man is always intent on God, whether he's silent or speaking with men. But this slave, now well-trained, carefully keeps something to supply his lord during a disputation, which makes his own duty pleasing to his most just lord, as it were, under whose authority he sees that he is living. And he does this not by his own reasoning, as it were, but by that supreme law and supreme order which have prescribed it."

"I don't oppose any of your reasons now," I said, "so that instead what we have undertaken may be carried through to the end. But regarding this matter, we will carefully see how it stands some other time (for it is no small thing, or one to be exhausted by so small a discussion), when God Himself provides the opportunity by virtue of order.

3.

8. "What it is to be with God has now been defined.³⁰ And when I said that what understands God is with God, you even added something more: that whatever things are understood by the

wise man are there as well.³¹ In this matter I'm very much moved by how quickly you have placed folly with God. For if everything that the wise man understands is with God, and he can't eschew folly unless it's understood, then — this is impious to say — that pest will also be with God."

Rattled by this conclusion, they held themselves in silence for a while, when Trygetius said, "Let him respond too, upon whose most timely coming to this disputation we did not, I reckon, congratulate ourselves rashly."

Then Alypius said, "God forbid!³² Was it for this that my long silence was ultimately destined? But now the quiet is broken. I shall now endeavor to oblige this request one way or another after, however, I have first provided a future for myself and have obtained from you the promise that you demand nothing more from me than this response."

"By no means, Alypius," I said, "does it become your benevolence and kindness³³ to deny your voice, for which we have longed, to our discussion. But proceed for now: present what you have prepared. The rest will come out as this illustrious order now takes shape."

"Likewise," he said, "I should hope for better things from order, in the defense of which you have, for the time being, wished to make me a substitute. But if I'm not mistaken, you reckoned in your conclusion that they coupled God to this folly because they said that all things which the wise man understands are with God. Yet to what extent this is to be accepted, I now pass over. Note your reasoning a little. You obviously said, 'For if everything that the wise man understands is with God, and he can't eschew folly unless it's understood . . . '—as if indeed it were unclear that someone shouldn't be given the name 'wise man' until he avoids folly. And it has been said that the things understood by the wise

man are with God.³⁴ Therefore, when for the sake of avoiding folly, someone understands that same folly, he isn't yet wise. But when he has become wise, folly should not be counted among the things that he understands. It's for this reason (because the things that the wise man understands are yoked to God) that folly will rightly be separated from God."

9. "As is usual for you, Alypius," I said, "you have certainly answered acutely, but like someone who has been pushed into someone else's tight spot.³⁵ Yet because I imagine you still deign to be a fool with me, what shall we do if we meet some wise man who, by teaching and disputing, would gladly free us from so great an evil?

"Now as far as I can tell, I will first ask him to do nothing but thoroughly show me which kind [of thing] folly is, what it is, and what sort it is.³⁶ I wouldn't easily assert anything regarding you, yet [as for me,] folly detains me however much and for as long as I don't understand it. This man would therefore say (under your authority): 'In order for me to teach you this, you should have come to me when I was a fool; now, however, you can be your own teachers, for I no longer understand folly.' Now if indeed I were to hear this from him, I wouldn't be afraid to advise the man to be our companion so that together we could seek another teacher. For even if I don't fully understand folly, I still see that there is nothing more foolish than that answer.

"But perhaps it will be embarrassing for him either to abandon us so or to follow us. He will then grandly expatiate and exaggerate the evils of folly. But we, taking careful precautions for ourselves, will either listen attentively to a man who doesn't know what he is talking about, or we will believe that he knows* what he doesn't understand, or yet again folly has been coupled to God by the reasoning of your clients. But of the first two [possibilities] there is

nothing that I see which can be defended. There remains, therefore, the last one, which you don't want."

"I've never seen you resentful before," he said. "For if, as is the custom, I had received any reimbursement from these 'clients,' as you call them, I would be forced now to return it to them as long as you're being excessively tenacious about this reasoning. Therefore, let them be content with the fact that by my wrangling with you I have given them not a little bit of time to think. Or—if they are willing to heed the advice of a defense attorney who has been defeated, although indeed not through any fault of his own—let them cede you this point and be more cautious with the others."

10. "I shall not disregard the fact," I said, "that Trygetius, raising a ruckus, has been longing to say I know not what else in your defense. And with your kind permission—for perhaps you who have only recently intervened in this business have not been well-informed about it—I shall make certain to hear them patiently (which I had begun to do) as they prosecute their case themselves, now that their legal defense has been rescinded."

Then, as Licentius was now totally absent, Trygetius said: "Take it as you want and laugh at my folly. It doesn't seem to me that that by which folly itself is understood ought to be called understanding, for folly is either the chief or sole cause of *not* understanding."³⁷

"I can't easily refuse to accept that," I said. "For, although it moves me greatly (which Alypius senses) how someone can correctly teach what something is which he doesn't understand, and how much ruin is brought to the mind* by what he doesn't see with the mind* (for Alypius, certainly being attentive to this, was afraid to say what you said, even though he also knows of this opinion from the books of the learned)³⁸—nevertheless, consid-

ering bodily sense-perception³⁹ (for the soul* makes use of this very thing, and that is the only point of comparison of any sort with the understanding),⁴⁰ I'm led to say that no one can see darkness.

"That is why, if understanding is to the mind* what seeing is to sense-perception, and if even someone with eyes that are wide open, healthy, and clear can still not see darkness—then it isn't absurdly said that folly can't be understood. Nothing else, for instance, do we call 'the darkness of the mind*.'⁴¹ And no longer will it move me how folly, [although it] isn't understood, can be avoided. For as we avoid darkness with the eyes by the very fact that we do not wish *not* to see, so too let someone who wishes to avoid folly not try to understand it. Rather, let him regret that because of it he doesn't understand what *can* be understood, and let him sense that it's present to him, not because he understands it more but because he understands other things less.

4.

11. "But let's return to order, for Licentius may at any time be returned to us. For now, I ask you all this: whether it seems to you that whatever the fool guides, he guides by order. But do consider what snares this question has. If you say 'by order,' where will that definition be—'order is that by which God guides all things which are'⁴²—if whatever things even the fool guides, he guides by order? If, on the other hand, there is no order in the things that are guided by the fool, there will be something that order doesn't maintain. Now you don't want either of these [alternatives]. See to it, I beseech, that you not throw everything into disorder by the defense of order itself."

Here again Trygetius spoke, for the other one was still absent in every way.

“It’s easy to respond to your dilemma,”⁴³ he said, “but for the present a simile by which my opinion ought to be expressed and illustrated fails me. Yet I’m going to say what I feel; for you will do what you did a little while ago.⁴⁴ Now this mention of darkness has shed not a little bit of light for us on the obscure matter that I had brought forward. For the entire life of fools, even though it is, thanks to them, the least consistent and ordered of all, is still necessarily enclosed in the order of things through a divine providence; and as [there are] certain places,⁴⁵ so to speak, which have been arranged by that ineffable and sempiternal law,⁴⁶ this life is by no means allowed to be where it shouldn’t be. Thus it happens that someone who is narrow-minded, when considering only such a life, turns away as if repulsed by a massive deformity.⁴⁷ But if in lifting up and extending the eyes of his mind*, he should survey all things at the same time, he will find nothing that isn’t ordered and always classified and assigned to its own seat, as it were.”⁴⁸

12. “What great,” I said, “what wonderful answers God Himself—and, as I’m led more and more to believe, I know not what hidden order of things—gives to me through you all! For regarding the things that you’re talking about, I don’t understand how they may be spoken of when they aren’t seen or how you’re seeing them; thus I suspect them to be both true and sublime. You were seeking perhaps one simile for that opinion of yours, but already there occur to me countless examples that are leading me to complete agreement. What is more hideous than a hangman? What is more ferocious and cruel than his soul? But he holds a necessary place among the very laws themselves and is grafted onto the order of a well-moderated city. By his own soul is he destructive; by a different order is he the scourge of the destructive.⁴⁹ What can be spoken of that is more sordid, more inane, more bereft of decorum and full of turpitude than prostitutes, pimps, and other

pests of this kind? Remove prostitutes from human affairs, and you will throw everything into confusion with lust: put them in the place of matrons, and you will dishonor [the latter] with disrepute and disgrace.⁵⁰ And thus these kinds of people are most impure in life by their own mores, most vile in rank by the laws of order.

“Is it not so that in the bodies of animals there are certain parts you could not look at if you were to look at them only? Yet the order of nature has neither wanted them to be missing (because they are necessary), nor permitted them to be prominent (because they are unseemly).⁵¹ And by keeping to their places, these ill-formed parts concede the better place to the better parts. What was sweeter to us—because it was a spectacle quite appropriate for field and villa—than that fight and clash of the barnyard cocks which we mentioned in the previous book?⁵² What have we seen that was more abject than the deformity of the loser? And yet it was because of this very deformity that the more perfect beauty of the same contest came into focus.⁵³

13. “So it is with all things, I believe; but they need eyes.⁵⁴ Poets have delighted in what they call solecisms and barbarisms,⁵⁵ which, by changing the names, they prefer to call tropes and metaplasms rather than avoid these obvious defects.⁵⁶ Remove these from poems, and we will long for their sweet relishes. Amass a great many of them into one place, and I shall loathe the bitter, rotten, rancid entirety of it.⁵⁷ Transpose them into the prosaic language of public speech, and who will not order them to flee and retreat to the theater? Therefore order, governing and moderating these things, allows them to be neither at home with themselves too much nor strangers someplace else. Certain flat and seemingly unpolished speech, interspersed throughout, highlights the leaping and lovely passages.⁵⁸ If such speech is by itself, you throw it out as base. If, however, it’s missing, the beautiful passages don’t stand

out; they don't have mastery over their own districts and possessions, so to speak; their own brilliance gets in the way, and they confuse the whole thing.

5.

"Many thanks are owed here to order. Who does not fear, who does not hate feigned conclusions or those that creep along little by little, either by adding or subtracting, over to a false judgment?⁵⁹ Yet often in certain disputations, when these things have been put in their place,⁶⁰ they have such strength that through them deception itself (I don't know how) becomes sweet. But here, too, won't order itself be praised?

14. "Now in music, in geometry, in the movements of the stars, in the laws of numbers,⁶¹ order so dominates that if one longs to see its fount, its actual innermost sanctuary,⁶² so to speak, one must either discover it in these [disciplines] or be led through them to it without any error. Indeed, *if* one uses it moderately (for here, nothing is to be feared more than excess),⁶³ an education such as this rears a soldier or even a general for philosophy⁶⁴ such that he flies up to wherever he wants⁶⁵ and can reach (and lead others to) that Supreme Measure⁶⁶ beyond which he is neither able to, nor should he, nor does he, long to ask for anything. Now from [this vantage point], while he is being detained by these human matters, he may look down upon them and survey everything in such a way that it doesn't move him at all⁶⁷ why one man wishes to have children but doesn't, while another is tormented by the excessive fecundity of his wife;⁶⁸ why someone who is ready to bestow many gifts lavishly is in need of money, while a lean and mangy usurer sits on a buried treasure;⁶⁹ why extravagance scatters and disperses vast inheritances, while a tearful beggar barely gets a coin for the

whole day;⁷⁰ why honor raises up an unworthy man, while others with luminous mores are hidden in the crowd.

15. “These and other things in human life drive many men to the impious belief that we aren’t for the most part governed by any order of divine providence.⁷¹ There are others, however—pious and good and gifted with a brilliant intellectual aptitude—who can’t bring themselves to imagine that we are deserted by the Supreme God,⁷² yet they are so disturbed by the great murkiness and mixture of things,⁷³ so to speak, that they see no order. And wanting the most hidden causes laid bare to them, they often bewail their errors, even in poems.⁷⁴ Now who will easily respond to them if they should ask only this: ‘Why do the Italians always pray for fair winters, while in like manner our own poor Getulia always thirsts?’⁷⁵ Or where in our presence will any trace of this order be hunted down? But if I can give any advice to my own, insofar as it appears to me and insofar as I can sense it, I recommend that they be educated in all the disciplines. For certainly, by no other means can these matters be so understood that they become clearer than light.⁷⁶ But if they are either too lazy or preoccupied with other business or already too callous to learning, let them provide themselves with the protection of faith, so that He who permits no one who rightly believes in Him through the mysteries⁷⁷ to perish may by this chain draw them to Himself and free them from these horrible and much entangled evils.⁷⁸

16. “Twofold is the path we follow when we are moved by the obscurity of things: either reason, or certainly authority. Philosophy promises reason but it barely frees a tiny few. Nevertheless, it drives them not only *not* to disdain those mysteries, but to understand them alone as they should be understood. And that philosophy which is true and—if I may speak this way—genuine has no other business than to teach what is the principle-less Principle of all

things,⁷⁹ and how great an Understanding dwells in It, and What has emanated thence for our salvation without any degeneration.⁸⁰ The venerable mysteries—which liberate people by a sincere and unshaken faith (not confusedly, as some charge, or abusively, as many charge)⁸¹—teach that He is one God omnipotent, and that He is tripotent, Father and Son and Holy Spirit.⁸² Moreover, how great it is that for our sake so great a God also deigned to assume and bear this body of our race.⁸³ The more this appears to be vile, the more it's filled with clemency,⁸⁴ and the farther and more deeply removed it is from a certain pride of clever folks.⁸⁵

17. “In truth, from where does the soul* draw its origin? And what does it do here?⁸⁶ How much does it differ from God? What does it have of its own that alternates between either nature? To what extent does it die and how is it proved to be immortal?⁸⁷ How important do you reckon order is so that these things may be learned? Important in every way, to be sure—we will briefly speak later about this, if there is time.⁸⁸

“At the current moment, I want you to accept this from me: if one dares to rush into knowing these things blindly and without the order of the disciplines, one will become curious instead of studious,⁸⁹ credulous instead of learned, incredulous instead of cautious. And so, not only am I wondering where what you just said so well and so precisely in response to my questions came from, but I'm also being compelled to learn from it.

“Yet let's see how much progress your mind's hidden purposefulness can make.⁹⁰ And now, let the words of Licentius be returned to us: Licentius, who has been a stranger to this discussion,⁹¹ occupied for so long by I know not what care that I believe he will have to read these things of ours not unlike those of our close acquaintances who aren't present. But return to us, Licentius, I beseech, and make it so that you are wholly present here, for I'm talking to

you. You have in fact approved of my definition in which it was said what it means ‘to be with God,’⁹² and you wished to teach me (insofar as I’m capable of following) that the mind* of the wise man remains immovable with Him.⁹³

6.

18. “But this point moves me: how it is that—since it may not be denied that as long as this wise man of yours lives among men, he lives in a body—in what way it happens that, while his body is wandering hither and thither, his mind* remains immovable. For in this way you can say that when a ship is moved, the men who are on it are not, even though we admit that it’s being occupied and piloted by them.⁹⁴ And even if they were to direct it and make it go where they wished to by thought alone, still, when it’s moved, those who are onboard cannot *not* be moved.”

“The soul,” Licentius said, “isn’t in the body in a way that the body can command the soul.”⁹⁵

“I’m not saying that,” I said. “But even the rider isn’t on the horse in such a way that the horse commands him; and yet, although he guides the horse to where he wants it to go, it is necessary that when the horse is in motion, so is he.”⁹⁶

“He himself can sit immovable,” he said.

“You force us to define,” I said, “what it means to be moved, which if you can, I wish you to do.”

“Please let your kindness remain throughout,” he said, “for my request remains that you not ask me again whether I wish to define: when I’m able to do it, I myself will announce it.”⁹⁷

When he had said this, a boy from the house, to whom we had given this job, ran up to us and announced that it was time for lunch. Then I said: “This boy forces us not to define what it means

to be moved, but to present it to his eyes. Let's go, therefore, and let us pass from this place to another place: for, unless I'm mistaken, 'to be moved' means nothing else than that."

Here, after they laughed, we departed.⁹⁸

19. But as soon as we had refreshed the body, we took our seats in the usual place in the baths because a cloud had covered the sky.⁹⁹ And I said: "Do you therefore concede, Licentius, that motion is nothing else than a passing from place to place?"

"I do," he said.

"Do you therefore concede," I said, "that no one is in that place where he had not been and has not been moved?"

"I don't understand," he said.

"If something," I said, "had been in one place for a while and is now in another, do you concede that it has been moved?"

He assented.

"Then," I said, "could just the living body of some wise man be with us here in such a way that his soul is absent from here?"

"It could," he said.

"Even if he were to converse with us and teach us something?"

"Even if he were to teach wisdom itself," he said, "I wouldn't say that he is with us, but with himself."

"Not therefore in the body?" I said.

"No," he said.

"That body," I said to him, "which is without a soul—do you not admit that it's dead, whereas I had proposed a living body?"¹⁰⁰

"I don't know how to explain it," he said. "For I see that the body of a man can't exist if a soul isn't in it, and I can't say that wherever the body of a wise man is, that his soul isn't with God."¹⁰¹

"I will make certain that you do explain it," I said. "For perhaps because God is everywhere, wherever the wise man goes, he finds God, with whom he can be. Thus it is that we can't deny that he

passes from place to place (which is to be moved), and yet he is always with God.”

“I admit,” he said, “that the body makes a transition from place to place, but I deny that the mind* itself does, to which the name ‘wise’ is assigned.”

7.

20. “I cede that to you now for the time being,” I said, “lest this extremely obscure matter, which should be treated longer and more carefully, impede our present topic.¹⁰² But since we have defined what it means to be with God,¹⁰³ let’s see whether we can also know* what it means to be without God—although I imagine that this is now obvious. For it seems to you, I believe, that they who aren’t with God are without God.”

“If I could have the [right] words at hand,” he said, “I might be able to say something that wouldn’t displease you. But I ask you, bear with my inability to speak,¹⁰⁴ and with a quick mind* (as becomes you) anticipate the things themselves [to which the right words would have pointed]. For it seems to me that these people aren’t with God, yet God ‘has’ them.¹⁰⁵ And so, I can’t say that those whom God has are without God. Likewise, I don’t say that they are with God, for they don’t have God (since indeed we already decided a while ago during that most delightful discussion which we had on your birthday that ‘having God’ was nothing else than enjoying God).¹⁰⁶ But I admit that I dread these contraries of yours, how it is that someone is neither without God nor with God.”

21. “Don’t let these things of ours move you,” I said. “For where there is agreement about the reality, who won’t disregard the words?¹⁰⁷ Therefore, let us now return at last to the definition of order. For you said that order is that by which God guides all.¹⁰⁸

But there is nothing, as I see it, that God doesn't guide; and indeed it was on account of this that it seemed to you that nothing can be found outside of order."¹⁰⁹

"My opinion remains," he said, "but I already see what you're going to ask: whether God guides the things that we admit aren't guided well."

"Excellent," I said, "you have completely cast your eye into my mind*. But just as you saw what I was going to say, so too do I ask you to see what should be given in reply."

And nodding his head and shoulders, he said, "We are in trouble."

By chance my mother had come in at this question. And after some time in silence he requested that I ask it again. He had in no way noticed that earlier on Trygetius had answered the question.¹¹⁰

"What should I repeat for you or why should I do it?" I said. "'What is done,' they say, 'don't do.'"¹¹¹ Therefore I advise you instead at least to take the trouble to read the things that were said earlier, if you weren't able to hear them. I have willingly borne the absence of your mind from our discussion.¹¹² And for a long time I have endured your being this way so that I wouldn't impede those things which you were doing for yourself (things which you were concentrating on by yourself far away from us) and so that I could continue to pursue those things which this pen of ours wouldn't allow you to lose.

22. "I'm now seeking something that we have not yet tried to discuss through careful reasoning. For I remember that you said (back when I know not what order first produced this question on order) that God's justice is that which distinguishes goods and evils and renders to each his own."¹¹³ Indeed there is no more obvious definition of justice, as far as I can tell. And so, I would like you to answer whether it seems to you that God was ever unjust."

“Never,” he said.

“Then if God has always been just,” I said, “good and evil have always existed.”

“Absolutely,” mother said. “I see nothing else that may follow. For there was no judgment of God when there was no evil; and if at some time He did not render to the [various] goods and evils what was each their own, He can’t appear to have been just.”

“Then you think,” Licentius said to her, “that we should say that evil has always existed?”

“I dare not say that,” she said.

“Then what shall we say?” I said. “If God is just because He judges between goods and evils, when there was no evil, He was not just.”

Here, as they were silent, I noticed that Trygetius wanted to reply and so I gave him permission.

“By all means God was just,” he said. “For He could have distinguished good and evil if they had existed, and by the very fact that He could have, He was just. For when we say that Cicero investigated the conspiracy of Catiline prudently, that temperately he wasn’t corrupted by any gift by which he might spare the wicked, that he afflicted them justly with capital punishment by authority of the Senate, and that he bore with fortitude all the darts of his enemies and, as he himself said, the weight of envy¹¹⁴—it isn’t the case that those virtues of his wouldn’t have been in him had Catiline not prepared such great destruction for the republic. For in man virtue is to be considered in itself, not through some work of this sort. How much more so in God? (If, at least, within the constraints of words and things, it’s somehow permitted to compare one to the other).¹¹⁵ For—in order that we may understand that God has always been just—when evil, which He would separate from the good, [began to] exist, He made no delay in rendering to

each his own. Justice wasn't to be learned by Him then; but that which He always had was to be used by Him then."

23. When Licentius and my mother (in dire necessity) approved, I said: "What are you saying, Licentius? Where is that which you asserted so strongly, that nothing is done outside of order?"¹¹⁶ For it's the case that evil was born, but it's certainly not the case that it was born by virtue of God's order; rather, when it was born, it was included in God's order."

And he, marveling and taking it badly that a good case had so suddenly slipped from his hands, said: "Absolutely. I say that order began from the point from which evil began to exist."

"Therefore," I said, "if order began to exist after evil arose, the fact that evil itself exists did not happen by order. Order was always with God, and either there was always nothing that is called evil or, if it's discovered that it began at some point in time, because order itself is either good or from the good, then there never was and there never will be anything without order."¹¹⁷ And although something preferable occurred to me (I don't know what), it has slipped away by that infamous habit of forgetfulness,¹¹⁸ which I believe to have come about by virtue of order and according to the merit or degree or order of life."¹¹⁹

"I don't know how," he said, "an opinion that I now reject had escaped my notice. For I shouldn't have said that order began after evil was born. Rather, like the justice that Trygetius discussed, so too has order also been with God, but it did not come into use until after evils began to exist."

"You will end up back where you started," I said, "since what you want least of all stands unshaken. For regardless of whether order was with God or whether it began to exist from that time when evil also did, evil was still born outside of order. But if you concede this point, you will admit that something can be done

outside of order, which weakens your case and tears it to pieces. If, however, you don't concede the point, it begins to appear that evil was born by virtue of God's order, and you will acknowledge that God is the author of evils. And there occurs to me nothing more detestable than that sacrilege."

When I kept turning this over and unraveling it for him again and again (he was either not understanding or pretending not to understand), he had nothing to say and gave himself over to silence. Then my mother said: "I don't reckon that nothing can be done outside of God's order, because evil itself, which is born, is by no means born by virtue of God's order. But His justice, not permitting it to be disordered, drove it back and rounded it up into an order that it deserved."

24. Here, when I perceived that all of them were most zealously seeking God (each according to his own strength), but that we were not holding to the order of which we were in pursuit and by which one comes to an understanding of that ineffable Majesty,¹²⁰ I said:

"I pray you: if, as I see, you love order a great deal, then don't allow us to be backwards and disordered. For although a reason that is very much hidden promises to demonstrate that nothing is done outside of a divine order: still, if we were to hear some schoolmaster endeavoring to teach syllables to a boy to whom no one had first taught the alphabet,¹²¹ I'm not saying that he should be laughed at as a fool, but we would reckon that he should be chained up as a madman for no other reason, I imagine, than that he did not hold to the order of teaching. But no one doubts that many such things are done both by the ignorant, who are reprehended and derided by the learned, and by demented men, who don't even escape the judgment of fools. And yet a certain lofty discipline, far removed from even the suspicion of the multitude,¹²² promises to reveal to

the zealous minds that love only God and souls*¹²³ that even all these things of ours which we acknowledge to be perverse aren't outside of the divine order, the result being that a sum of numbers could not make us more certain.¹²⁴

8.

25. "This discipline is the very law of God that, remaining always fixed and firm with Him, is transcribed, so to speak, onto wise souls*, so that they know* how to live better and more sublimely insofar as they contemplate it more perfectly through understanding and guard it more carefully through living.¹²⁵ This discipline, therefore, commands those longing to know it to follow at the same time a double order, one part of which pertains to life, the other part to education.¹²⁶ Young people zealous for this discipline should therefore live in such a way that they abstain from the things of Venus;¹²⁷ from the allurements of belly and throat; from the immodest care and adornment of the body; from the pointless efforts of games; from the torpor of sleep and sloth; from emulation, disparagement, and envy; from the ambitions for honor and power; and even from the immoderate desire for praise itself. Let them believe that the love of money is the surest poison of all their hopes. Let them do nothing halfheartedly, nothing rashly.¹²⁸

"But with regard to the sins of their own [family and servants], either let them thoroughly drive out their own anger or let them curb it in such a way that it looks like it has been driven out.¹²⁹ Let them hate no one. Let them not be reluctant to cure any vices. Let them observe with great care that they not be excessive when they make legal claims or stinting when they forgive. Let them punish nothing that can't be made better; let them indulge nothing that can take a turn for the worse. Let them consider everyone over

whom they have been given power as one of their own. Let them serve in such a way that one would blush to order them around; let them order others around in such a way that it would be a delight to serve them.¹³⁰

“But with regard to the sins of others, let them not be a nuisance to someone who is unwilling. Let them shun enmities most cautiously, bear them most equitably, end them most quickly. Indeed, in every contract and contact with men, it is sufficient to keep this one commonplace proverb: Let them do to no one what they are unwilling to undergo.¹³¹ Let them not wish to administer the republic unless they are mature.¹³² On the other hand, let them hasten to maturity either during the senatorial age, or really during adulthood.¹³³ But whoever turns to these things late,¹³⁴ let him not think that none of these precepts applies to him, for certainly he will keep them more easily at a ripe old age.

“Moreover, in every life, place, and time, let them have friends or let them earnestly pursue having them. Let them yield to those who are worthy, even those not expecting it. Less are they to be concerned about the proud, far less are they themselves to be proud. Let them live in an appropriate and agreeable manner. Let them worship, think of, and seek God, supported by faith, hope, and charity. Let them desire tranquility and a reliable course for their studies and for the studies of all their associates and—for themselves and for those for whom this is possible—a good mind^{*135} and a quiet life.

9.

26. “It follows that I should speak about how the studious who have determined to live as I have said ought to be educated. In order to learn, we are likewise led by necessity in a twofold manner: by authority and by reason. Authority is first according to time,

reason according to the reality.¹³⁶ For what takes precedence in doing is one thing; what is more highly prized as desirable is another.¹³⁷ And so, although the authority of good men seems to be more salubrious for the ignorant multitude and reason certainly seems more fitting for the educated, nevertheless, because no man becomes experienced unless he has been ignorant and because no one ignorant knows in what manner he should present himself to his teachers and by what sort of life he may become teachable, it so happens that for those desiring to learn the good, the great, and the hidden, nothing except authority opens the door. Once someone has entered into it, without any hesitation he eagerly follows the precepts of an excellent life, precepts through which (only after he has become teachable) will he then learn: how much reason there is in the very things that he followed before [coming to] reason; and what reason itself is, which he, now firm and fit after the cradle of authority, now follows and comprehends; and what the understanding is, in which all things are—or rather, which is itself all things;¹³⁸ and what outside of all things is the principle of all things.¹³⁹ To which knowledge few come in this life, beyond which indeed even after this life no one can advance.

“However, those who are content with authority alone, who constantly apply themselves only to good mores and upright desires¹⁴⁰ while either disdaining the best liberal disciplines or not having the capacity to be educated in them—I don’t know how I can call them happy, at least while they are living among men.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, I firmly believe that as soon as they leave this body behind, they are liberated with more or less difficulty depending on the degree to which they lived more or less well.¹⁴²

27. “Authority is partly divine, partly human: but the true, firm, and supreme part is that which is called divine. In this part we should be apprehensive of the astonishing deceit of aerial

beings, who, through certain divinations and many powers over things pertaining to these bodily senses of ours, are accustomed with great ease to deceive souls* either curious about fortunes that will perish or greedy for fragile power or afraid of inane wonders.¹⁴³

“Therefore, the authority that should be called divine is that which not only transcends in sensible signs every human faculty, but, guiding man himself, also shows him how far it has lowered itself for his sake and commands him not to be held down by the senses (by which these wonderful things are seen) but to fly up to the understanding,¹⁴⁴ all the while demonstrating how many great things it can do here and why it does them and how little it esteems them. For it’s fitting that it teach its power by deeds, its clemency by humility, its nature by precept.¹⁴⁵ And all these things are being handed down quite secretly and firmly through the sacred realities by which we are being initiated and in which the life of the good is most easily purified, not by the runarounds of disputations but by the authority of the mysteries.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, human authority for the most part is deceptive. Yet it seems right that it is preeminent in those men who provide much evidence for their teachings (insofar as it’s grasped by the perception of the inexperienced) and who don’t live differently from how they prescribe one ought to live. Also, if some gifts of fortune should come down to them, they appear great by their use of them, greater by their contempt of them.¹⁴⁷ And it’s utterly and extremely difficult to lay blame correctly on someone for believing in those men who give the precepts of living [well].”

10.

28. “A grand image of life,” Alypius said, “you have not only fully but also concisely placed before our eyes. For although we gaze agape at your daily precepts, yet today you have rendered us

even more passionate and ardent for [that life]. I wish that not only we but also men as well (if it were possible) could now arrive at and cling to the same image: if only those words were as easy to imitate as they are wonderful to hear. For I don't know how the human soul—would that this be far from us!—proclaims these celestial things to be divine and utterly true when it hears them yet comports itself differently in its desire for them. As a result, it seems completely true to me that men must either be divine or not without divine aid in order to live in the way [that you have described].”

“You know* very well, Alypius,” I said to him, “that I did not discover these precepts of living (which, as always, please you a great deal), although they are expressed here in my own words according to the circumstances. For the books of great and almost divine men are chock-full of them.¹⁴⁸ I wasn't thinking that I should say this for your sake but for the sake of these youths of ours, lest they rightly disdain my authority, so to speak, in these precepts. In fact, I don't want them to believe me at all unless it's by my teaching and by giving a reason¹⁴⁹ (and I imagine that you also interjected your own remarks in order to make them excited about the importance of these things).¹⁵⁰ For it isn't difficult for you to follow these precepts, which you have seized onto with so great an appetite and have entered into with all the great vigor of your admirable nature; and consequently, you have brought it about that, as I am your teacher of words, you are my teacher of things.¹⁵¹ Now at the moment there is no reason to lie—or at least no opportunity; and I certainly don't reckon that you would become more studious by a false praise of you. Also, there are people here who know both of us, and this discussion will be sent to someone to whom neither of us is unknown.¹⁵²

29. “However, assuming that what you said isn’t different from what you think, I imagine that you believe that the good men who are dedicated to the best mores are fewer than seems probable to me. But many are entirely hidden from view, and of the many who aren’t hidden, their wonderful [qualities] are hidden.¹⁵³ For these things are in the soul, and the soul can’t be perceived by sensation;¹⁵⁴ and for the most part, as long as a man wishes to fit in with the conversations of vicious men, he says things which make it appear that he approves of or desires these things. He even does many things unwillingly, in order either to avoid the hatred of men or to tiptoe around their foolishness. And when we hear or see this, we have difficulty thinking of it other than what this sense-perception of ours is reporting. And thus it so happens that we [mistakenly] believe that many men aren’t what they themselves and their close acquaintances know them to be. And I would like you to be persuaded of this by certain great goods of the soul in our friends, which we alone know*. For this error is dependent upon the following cause, which is not unimportant: that not a few suddenly convert to a good and wonderful life, but until they become known by some illustrious deeds, they are believed to be what they used to be.¹⁵⁵ In fact, lest I go on further, out of those who had previously known these youths of ours, which of them could easily believe that they are now seeking great things so zealously, that at this age they are so suddenly proclaiming their hostility to [worldly] pleasures?¹⁵⁶ Let us therefore cast this opinion from our mind; for that divine assistance which, as it should be, you religiously placed in the last part of your statement, fulfills the office of its clemency through the whole of humankind more widely than many think.¹⁵⁷ But let’s return, if you please, to the order of our disputation. And since enough has been said about authority, let’s see what reason is up to.

11.

30. “Reason is a motion of the mind* capable of distinguishing and connecting the things that are learned,¹⁵⁸ the guidance of which only the rarest class of men can use to understand God or the soul* itself¹⁵⁹ (which is either in us or everywhere),¹⁶⁰ for no other reason than that it’s difficult for someone who has advanced in the activities of these senses of ours to return to himself.¹⁶¹ And so, although men try to do everything in accordance with reason in the very things that are deceitful, all of them (except for a tiny few) remain utterly ignorant of what reason itself is and what kind of thing it is. This seems strange,¹⁶² yet this is how the matter stands. What we have said suffices for the moment; for if I now desired to show you such a great thing as it should be understood, I would be as dimwitted as I would be arrogant, especially if I should profess to have already perceived it. Yet insofar as it has deigned to proceed in things that seem known to us, let’s track it down in the meantime, if we can, exactly as required by the discussion we have undertaken.

31. “And first let’s see where this word that is called ‘reason’ is usually used. For we ought to be especially moved by the fact that man himself has been defined by ancient wise men in the following way: ‘Man is an animal, rational and mortal.’¹⁶³ Here, once the genus that is called ‘animal’ has been established, we see added two differentiae¹⁶⁴ by which, I believe, man was to be admonished whither he should return to himself and whence he should flee.¹⁶⁵ For just as the soul’s* going forth is a fall down to mortal things,¹⁶⁶ so too ought its coming back be toward reason.¹⁶⁷ By one word—rational—is the soul separated from the beasts; by another—mortal—is it separated from the divine.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, unless it holds to the former, it will be a beast; unless it turns itself away from the latter, it won’t be divine.¹⁶⁹ But because very learned men are

accustomed to discern, with precision and finesse, the difference between the rational and the reasonable, this difference should by no means be neglected with respect to what we have begun.¹⁷⁰ For they said that what makes use of or can make use of reason is 'rational'; what is done or said according to reason, however, is 'reasonable.' And so we can say that these baths and our discussion are reasonable; however, either he who made them or we who are speaking are rational. Therefore, reason proceeds from a rational soul* into, it's plain to see, those things that either become reasonable or are called reasonable.¹⁷¹

32. "Therefore, I see two ways in which the power and force of reason can be brought even before the senses themselves: the works of men that are seen, and their words that are heard. In each case the mind* uses a twin messenger on account of the necessity of the body, one belonging to the eyes and the other to the ears.¹⁷² And so, when we see something formed with congruent parts, it's not absurd to say that it looks reasonable. Likewise, when we hear something harmonize well, we don't hesitate to say that it sounds reasonable.¹⁷³ However, there is no one who wouldn't be laughed at if he were to say, 'It smells reasonable,' or 'It tastes reasonable,' or 'It's reasonably soft'—unless, perhaps, there are things in them which men administered for some purpose, so that it was thus that they had a certain smell or taste or warmth or something else. For instance, someone considering the reason why something was done in such a way might say that a place where strong odors put serpents to flight smells reasonable; or that a cup which a physician has prepared is reasonably bitter or sweet; or that the mild bath which he has ordered to be drawn for a listless man is reasonably warm or tepid.¹⁷⁴ But no one entering a garden and lifting a rose to his nose would dare to speak in this way: 'How reasonably fragrant it smells!'—not if a physician were to command him to smell it (for

then it's said that it has been prescribed or given reasonably, but not that it smells reasonable), and not on account of the fact that the odor is natural. For however much food is seasoned by a cook, we can say that it's reasonably seasoned, but, according to the usage of speech, in no way is it ever said that it tastes reasonable when there is no extrinsic cause but is simply satisfying a craving at hand.¹⁷⁵ For if the person to whom the physician had given the cup were asked why he should experience it as sweet, then something else is being brought forward [to explain] why it's so, namely, the type of illness (which, indeed, isn't in the sense [of taste] but is in the body in a different way). Moreover, if someone who has been licking something (because he has been incited to do so by the stimulus of the palate) is asked why it's so sweet, and if he should answer, 'Because I like it,' or 'Because it delights me,' no one would call it reasonably sweet—unless perhaps its delight is necessary for something, and what he's nibbling on has been seasoned in a particular way for that very purpose.

33. "We hold, insofar as we have been able to investigate the matter, that there are certain traces of reason in the senses and—as far as sight and hearing are concerned—also in pleasure itself. To be sure, other senses usually lay claim to this name, not through their own pleasure, but on account of something else; and indeed it is characteristic of a rational animal to act for the sake of some end.¹⁷⁶ But as far as the eyes are concerned, what is usually called beautiful is what is said to be reasonable in the congruence of parts.¹⁷⁷ And as for the ears, when we say that a harmony is reasonable and that a melodious song is reasonably composed, it's then called by the proper name 'sweetness' [*suavitas*].¹⁷⁸ But we don't usually call beautiful things reasonable because their color entices us, nor do we usually call a sweet sensation [*suavitas*] in our ears reasonable when a plucked string [from a musical instrument]

resounds in our ears as if it were liquid and pure. It therefore remains for us to acknowledge that in the pleasure of these senses of ours, wherever there is a certain dimension and modulation, it pertains to reason.

34. “And so, as we closely consider the individual elements of this very building, we cannot but be offended that we see one door on the side and the other placed almost but not quite in the middle. Obviously, in manmade things, an asymmetry of parts that lacks any compelling necessity for being that way seems to inflict a certain injury, as it were, on sight itself.¹⁷⁹ On the other hand, the fact that the three windows (one in the middle, two on the sides) let the light in on the baths at equal intervals—how much that delights us who gaze upon it carefully, and how much it takes the mind into itself, is a manifest fact that doesn’t need to be opened up for you with a plethora of words. That is why architects themselves now designate this phenomenon with a word of their own—a ‘ratio’ [*ratio*],¹⁸⁰ and they say that parts arranged disproportionately don’t have ‘reason’ [*ratio*].¹⁸¹

“This [principle] extends far and wide and pervades nearly all human arts and works. Now in poems—in which we again say that there is a meter [*ratio*] which pertains to the pleasure of the ears—who does not sense that dimension is the maker of all this sweetness? But with an actor who is dancing, when all of his gestures are signs of things (to those watching carefully), even if a certain rhythmic motion of his limbs delights the eyes by that same dimension, the dance is still said to be reasonable because, prescinding from the pleasure of the senses, it effectively signifies and shows something. For if the actor were to do a winged Venus or a cloaked Cupid, even if he depicted it with a wonderful movement and placement of his limbs, it would appear that he wasn’t offending the eyes, but through the eyes he was offending the soul, to whom

these signs of things are being shown.¹⁸² On the other hand, the eyes would be offended if something weren't moved beautifully; for this would pertain to sense-perception, in which the soul*, by the very fact that it's united to the body, perceives pleasure.¹⁸³

"Therefore, sense-perception is one thing, [whatever comes] through sense-perception, another.¹⁸⁴ For a beautiful movement charms sense-perception, but a beautiful meaning in the movement charms, through sense-perception, the mind alone. This is noticed even more easily in the case of the ears. For whatever sounds pleasant pleases and entices the hearing itself; but what is signified well through the same sound is indeed brought by the messenger of the ears, yet it's for the mind* alone. And so when we hear these verses:

Why winter suns so haste
To dip themselves in Ocean, or what check
Retards the lingering nights,¹⁸⁵

we praise the meter in one way, the meaning in another; nor do we say with the same understanding that 'it sounds reasonable' and that 'it is said reasonably.'¹⁸⁶

12.

35. "There are, therefore, three classes of things in which something reasonable appears. One is in deeds directed to some end; the other is in speaking; the third is in delighting.¹⁸⁷ The first admonishes us to do nothing rashly, the second to teach correctly, the last to contemplate happily. The former is [to be found] in mores, the latter two in the disciplines that we are now treating. For that which is rational in us, that is, that which makes use of reason and either makes or follows reasonable things (since it was drawn

by a certain natural chain into the society of those with whom reason itself was held in common to it,¹⁸⁸ and since there couldn't be a very strong association of man to man unless they conversed and thus poured out, so to speak, their minds* and thoughts back and forth) saw that names¹⁸⁹—that is, sounds signifying something—were to be assigned to things,¹⁹⁰ so that men could use the sense [of hearing] as if it were an interpreter to join themselves to each other, since they couldn't perceive each others' minds.¹⁹¹ But they could not hear the words of those who were absent; reason therefore produced letters, having noted and distinguished all the sounds of mouth and tongue.¹⁹² However, it could have done none of this if the multitude of things seemed to go on infinitely without a certain fixed limit. Therefore out of dire necessity the usefulness of counting was noticed.¹⁹³ Once these two things were discovered, the profession of copyists and calculators¹⁹⁴ was born like a certain infancy of grammar, which Varro calls *litteratio* (what it's called in Greek I don't for the present satisfactorily recall).¹⁹⁵

36. "Having advanced, reason then noticed that of those same oral sounds which we have been talking about and which it had already designated with letters, there were some which, by modulating changes to the open mouth,¹⁹⁶ flowed clear and unmixed, as it were, from the pharynx without any friction; others, however, held a certain sound by a different pressure of the mouth; but the last sounds weren't able to come forth unless the first ones were joined to them. Accordingly, reason named the letters, in the order in which they have been presented, vowels, semi-vowels, and mutes.¹⁹⁷ Then it noticed syllables, and then words were broken down into eight classes and forms; and every one of their tropes,¹⁹⁸ usages,¹⁹⁹ and associations²⁰⁰ was distinguished with skill and finesse. From here, no longer oblivious to numbers and dimension, it raised the mind to the various pauses themselves of sounds and syllables;²⁰¹ and

hence it discovered that of the intervals of time by which long and short syllables are distended, some are double, others simple. It noticed these as well and arranged them into fixed rules.

37. “Grammar could now have been complete, but because by its very name it proclaims that it knows letters [*litterae*]²⁰² (from which it’s also called ‘literature’ in Latin),²⁰³ it came to pass that whatever was committed to writing [*litterae*] as worth remembering necessarily pertained to it.²⁰⁴ And so history—indeed one in name but infinite in subjects, many-sided, filled with more worries than with charm or truth—was added to this discipline.²⁰⁵ History is laborious not so much to historians themselves as to grammarians. For who can stand to have a man be seen as ignorant who hasn’t heard that Daedalus flew while he who made it up isn’t seen as mendacious, he who believed it not seen as a fool, and he who questioned it not seen as impudent?²⁰⁶ Or [what about the case] in which I usually have great pity for our close acquaintances who are accused of ignorance if they can’t answer the question ‘What is the name of Euryalus’s mother?’²⁰⁷ when they themselves don’t dare to call those who question them vain, dimwitted, and curious?²⁰⁸

13.

38. And thus, after it had completed and arranged grammar, reason was admonished to seek and attend to the very power by which it produced art. For reason not only organized and ordered [art] by defining, dividing, and connecting, but it also defended art from every encroachment of falsity.²⁰⁹ How, then, could reason pass on to other things to be crafted if it did not first distinguish, note, and organize some of its own devices and tools, so to speak,²¹⁰ and [go on] to produce that very discipline of disciplines which they call dialectic?²¹¹ This discipline teaches teaching, it teaches

learning: in it, reason itself shows itself and reveals what it is, what it wants, what it can do. It knows* how to know*;²¹² it alone not only wants to produce knowers*, but it also can. Yet as for those things that are rightly, usefully, and honorably recommended, because foolish men for the most part follow their own senses and habits and not that most genuine truth (which the rare mind sees), it behooved them not only to be taught insofar as they are capable, but to be stirred up often and to the utmost degree.²¹³ The part of itself (filled with more need than purity)²¹⁴ that would do this, its lap heaped high with treats that it would scatter to the people so that they would deign to be led for their own good, it called 'rhetoric.'²¹⁵ At this point, that part which in signifying things is called 'reasonable' was promoted to the liberal studies and disciplines.

14.

39. "From here, reason wished to take itself to the happiest contemplation of the divine things themselves. But lest it fall from on high, it sought steps [of ascent], and it built a path for itself through its own possessions and order.²¹⁶ For it longed for a beauty that, alone and unmixed, it could gaze upon without these eyes of ours; [yet] it was being impeded by the senses.²¹⁷ And so it turned its gaze a little to those very senses that, crying out that they had the truth, kept calling it back with an insolent clattering while it was hastening to move on to other things.²¹⁸ And first it began with the ears, because they were saying that it was their very own words from which reason had already made grammar and dialectic and rhetoric. But this most mighty power of discernment of ours quickly saw the difference between a sound and that of which it is a sign.²¹⁹ It understood that nothing else pertained to the jurisdiction of the ears than sound, and that this sound was threefold: either in the voice of

a living being, or in what is produced by blowing into musical instruments, or in what is produced by percussion.²²⁰ To the first pertain tragedians, comedians, or choruses of this kind and all those who sing entirely with their own voice. To the second are assigned pipes and other such instruments. To the third are ascribed harps, lyres, cymbals, and everything that is sonorous by being struck.²²¹

40. "Reason saw, however, that this material is worthless if the sounds aren't formed by a certain measuring of intervals and by a moderated variation of sharpness and dullness. Hence it recognized that these were the seeds which in grammar (when it had turned to the careful consideration of syllables)²²² it had called 'feet' and 'accents.' And because in words themselves it was easy to attend to the shorts and longs of syllables scattered throughout speech in an almost equally great number, it tried to arrange and connect these feet into definite orders.²²³ And in the first order, following sensation itself, it demarcated the moderated segments that are called 'pauses' and 'clauses.'²²⁴ And lest the flow of feet roll along longer than its good judgment could sustain, reason set a limit from where it could re-vert [to the beginning of the line]; and from this very fact it called the limit a 'verse.'²²⁵ However, what wasn't moderated by a fixed limit yet still ran according to reasonably ordered feet it designated with the name of 'rhythm,' which in Latin can be called nothing else but 'number.'²²⁶ In such a way were poets born from reason. And when reason saw in them the great importance not only of their sounds but of their words and the things [that the words signified], it honored them to the utmost and gave them license for the reasonable untruths they wanted.²²⁷ And because they drew their origin from this first discipline, it permitted grammarians to be judges over them.²²⁸

41. "Therefore, in this fourth step, whether in rhythm or in cadence itself, reason understood that numbers rule and perfect the whole.²²⁹ It most diligently examined of what sort they might

be; and, chiefly because it had woven together all of the above with these very aids, it discovered that they are divine and sempiternal. And by now it was enduring most reluctantly the fact that the splendor and serenity of these things were being discolored by the bodily matter of voices.²³⁰ And because what the mind* sees is always present and is acknowledged to be immortal (with numbers appearing to be of this class), but because sound (since it's a sensible thing) flows into time past and is imprinted on the memory,²³¹ it was said by way of a reasonable untruth (reason already favoring the poets) that the Muses were the daughters of Jove and Memory.²³² Whence this discipline, partaking of both sense-perception and understanding, acquired the name of 'music.'

15.

42. "From here on out, reason advanced with the help of the eyes. And surveying earth and heaven, it perceived that nothing other than beauty pleased it, and in beauty were shapes, in shapes dimensions, and in dimensions numbers. And then it asked itself whether such a line and such a curvature (or whatever other shape and figure) were such that the intellect could contain them. It discovered that they were far inferior and that nothing which the eyes see can in any way be compared to what the mind* discerns.²³³ It also reduced these distinct and arranged realities to a discipline and called it 'geometry.'

"Reason was [also] very much moved by the motion of the sky and was invited to undertake a careful examination of it.²³⁴ There as well—in the extremely consistent succession of the seasons, in the established and fixed courses of the stars, in the measured spans of distance [between them]²³⁵—it understood nothing else than that dimension and numbers are dominant. Binding this together into an order by defining and distinguishing as before, it

gave birth to astronomy,²³⁶ a mighty subject for the religious but a torment for the curious.²³⁷

43. “Therefore, in all these disciplines, reason kept bumping into all things numerical. Still, they were standing out more clearly in those dimensions that reason was gazing upon as most true when thinking and mulling things over within its very self. But in those things that are sensed, reason instead was reflecting on their shadows and footprints.

“And at this point, reason lifted itself up a great deal and anticipated a great deal:²³⁸ it dared to prove that the soul* is immortal.²³⁹ It went over everything carefully; it perceived that it had enormous power, and that whatever power it had, it had from numbers. Something wonderful moved it, and it began to suspect that perhaps it itself was that very number by which all things are numbered²⁴⁰ — or if it wasn’t, number was nevertheless there where reason was busy trying to reach. In fact, reason grasped with all its strength that which is already a future guide to the whole truth (he of whom Alypius made mention when we were inquiring into the Academics),²⁴¹ as if Proteus were in his hands.²⁴² For the false images of these things that we number,²⁴³ drifting away from that most hidden [number] by which we number, seize our thinking for themselves and often make that [number] slip away when it’s already being held.

16.

44. “If someone doesn’t yield to these false images but reduces all those things that are scattered far and wide throughout so many disciplines to some simple, true, and certain oneness, then he who is most worthy of the name ‘educated’ is seeking those divine realities blindly no more, realities that should no longer be believed only but also contemplated, understood, and retained.²⁴⁴ But

whoever is either still a slave to desires, gazing eagerly at perishable things, or is someone who, now avoiding those things and living chastely, doesn't yet know what nothing is, what formless matter is, what a lifeless formed [thing] is, what a body is, what form in a body is,²⁴⁵ what place is, what time is, what is in place, what is in time, what motion according to place is, what motion not according to place is, what stable motion is,²⁴⁶ what eternity is, what it is to be neither in a place nor nowhere, what is outside of time and forever, what it is to be both nowhere and not to be nowhere, to be never and not to be never²⁴⁷—whoever, therefore, not knowing these things, wishes to inquire into and dispute about his very own soul* (though not, I would say, about God Most High, who is better known* through not knowing):²⁴⁸ by however much he can make the most mistakes, by that much will he make them.²⁴⁹

“On the other hand, he who has comprehended simple and intelligible numbers will come to know these things rather easily. Furthermore, he who is strong in intellectual aptitude, leisurely (due to the privilege either of age or of some kind of good fortune),²⁵⁰ and intensely enthusiastic for study, and who will follow the order of the disciplines mentioned above (insofar as it's necessary)—he will comprehend these numbers. Indeed, although all these liberal arts are learned, partly for their usefulness in living, partly for the knowledge and contemplation of things,²⁵¹ it's extremely difficult to attain their usefulness unless a most talented person has insistently and consistently devoted himself to it from his very childhood.

17.

45. “However, I beseech you, mother: don't let the fact that we need some of these [disciplines] for what we are seeking deter you like some immense forest of things.²⁵² As a matter of fact, out of all

of them certain things will be chosen that are very few in number but very mighty in power—though, to be sure, for many people, learning them is difficult. For *you*, however—you whose intellectual aptitude is made known to me daily and whose mind, far removed from all trifles (either because of your age or because of your admirable temperance) and emerging from the body's great fall,²⁵³ has, I know, risen up high within itself—for you, they will be as easy as they are difficult for those who aren't terribly swift and for those who are living most wretchedly. Now if I should say that you're about to arrive easily at a parlance free from defects in pronunciation and language, I would indeed be lying. For I myself, for whom thoroughly learning these things was a great necessity,²⁵⁴ am still criticized by Italians for many of my words' sounds, while I, in turn, censure them with respect to sound itself.²⁵⁵ For it's one thing to be confident by virtue of one's art, another to be confident by virtue of one's tribe. But any learned man, carefully attending to my speech, will perhaps discover the solecisms we are talking about; for there was once someone who most skillfully persuaded me that Cicero himself had committed some defects of this sort.²⁵⁶ Such a class of barbarisms has been discovered in our times so that now even the speech of him by whom Rome was saved seems barbarous.²⁵⁷ But you, having disregarded those things that are either childish or irrelevant to you, will so come to know the almost divine power and nature of grammar that it will seem you are holding onto its very soul^{*258} and leaving its body behind for the eloquent.

46. "And I could even say this about the other arts of this sort. If perhaps you disdain them completely, I advise you—insofar as I dare as your son and insofar as you permit—to guard, firmly and cautiously, that faith of yours which you have seized through the venerable mysteries and to remain henceforth in this life and with

these mores, consistently and vigilantly.²⁵⁹ But what about matters most obscure and yet divine? How is it that God makes nothing evil and is omnipotent, while such great evils are being committed? For what purpose did He who needs nothing make the world? Has evil always existed or did it begin in time? And if it has always existed, was it on God's terms? And if it was, then has this world of ours, in which this evil is mastered by the divine order, always existed as well? If, however, this world began to exist at some [point in] time, how was evil held by the power of God before it existed? And what need was there to make a world in which evil, which the power of God was already curbing, would be included for the punishment of souls*? If, however, there was a time in which evil wasn't under God's dominion, what happened suddenly that had not happened before throughout the eternal times?²⁶⁰

“For it's most foolish (not to mention impious) to say that there existed in God a ‘new plan.’ But if we say that evil has been troublesome to God as if it were bad for Him (which a good number of people think), then instantly no learned man will hold his laughter and no unlearned man will keep his temper. For what harm could evil, whatever nature it has, do to God? If they say that it could do no harm, there will be no reason to create the world; if they say that it could, it's an inexpiable sacrilege to believe that God can be injured, or at least to believe that not even by His own power has He provided for His substance not to be injured.²⁶¹ In fact, they admit that a soul* suffers punishment here, although they would prefer that there be absolutely no difference between the substance of God and that of the soul*.²⁶² But if we should say that this world of ours wasn't made, it's impious and ungrateful to believe this, lest it follow that God did not make it. Therefore, one must inquire into these things and matters of this sort either by this order of education or not at all.

18.

47. “And lest someone imagine that we have embraced something too extensive, I say this more plainly and briefly: no one ought to aspire to the knowledge of those things without that double science, so to speak, of good disputation and the power of numbers.²⁶³ If someone reckons that even this is too much, let him gain a superlative knowledge* of numbers alone or dialectic alone. And if this is unending, let him gain only a perfect knowledge (insofar as he can) of what is ‘one’ in numbers²⁶⁴ and how important it is—not yet in the supreme law and the supreme order of all things, but in those things that we perceive and do here and there every day.²⁶⁵ For the very discipline of philosophy is already adopting this education, and it will discover nothing more in it than what is one, but in a manner far more profound and far more divine.²⁶⁶

“A double question belongs to this education: one about the soul*, the other about God.²⁶⁷ The first makes it so that we know ourselves; the other, our origin. The former is sweeter to us; the latter, more precious. The former makes us worthy of a happy life; the latter makes us happy.²⁶⁸ The former is for those who are learning those things; the latter, for those who are already learned. This is the order of the studies of wisdom through which each man becomes fit to understand the order of things, that is, to distinguish two worlds²⁶⁹ and the very Parent of the whole, of whom there is no knowledge* in the soul* except to know* how it knows Him not.²⁷⁰

48. “Therefore, the soul*, holding to this order and now given over to philosophy, first inspects its very self and, now that its education has persuaded it either that it itself is reason or that reason belongs to it²⁷¹ and either that there is nothing better and more powerful in reason than numbers or that reason is nothing other than number,²⁷² it will speak to itself thus:

“I, by some interior and hidden motion of mine, can separate and connect the things that are to be learned, and this power of mine is called reason.²⁷³ In fact, what should be separated if not something that is either reckoned to be one and is not, or is at any rate not so much a ‘one’ as is reckoned? Likewise, why should something be connected, if not so that it may be one insofar as it can? Therefore, both in separating and in connecting, I want the one and I love the one;²⁷⁴ but when I separate, I want something purged: when I connect, I want something intact. In the former, foreign elements are avoided; in the latter, proper elements are joined in order to make one complete something.

“For a stone to be a stone, all of its components and all of its nature have been consolidated into one.²⁷⁵ What about a tree? Isn’t it true that it’s not a tree if it’s not one? What about any living being’s parts and entrails and whatever else belonging to it from which it owes its existence? Certainly, if they suffer a sundering of their unity, there will be no more animal.²⁷⁶ What else do friends strive for than to be one? And the more they are one, the more they are friends.²⁷⁷ A people is one city²⁷⁸ for which dissension is dangerous: and indeed, what does it mean to ‘dis-sent’ if not to ‘not sense’ as one?²⁷⁹ Out of many soldiers is made one army:²⁸⁰ is it not true that the more that a multitude, whichever it may be, coalesces into one, the less easily it is conquered? Whence this coalition into one is called a battalion-wedge [*cuneus*] as if it were a co-union [*couneus*].²⁸¹ What about all love? Isn’t it true that it wants to become one with what it loves, and if it connects with it, becomes one with it?²⁸² Pleasure itself provides such intense delight for no other reason than that loving bodies are driven into oneness with each other. How does it come about that sorrow is destructive? Because it tries to dissect what was one.²⁸³ Therefore, it’s troublesome and perilous to become one with what can be separated.²⁸⁴

19.

49. “From many things previously lying around here and there and then assembled into one design, I make one house. I’m better than it if I indeed make it; and it’s made—and therefore made better—because I make it. From this there is no doubt that I’m better than a house. But from this [it doesn’t follow that] I’m better than the swallow or the little bee, for the one skillfully builds nests, the other honeycombs. But I’m better than these because I am a rational animal.²⁸⁵

“But if reason is in fixed dimensions, does it follow that what the birds make is measured with *less* precision and congruence? On the contrary: it abounds in numerosity. Not, therefore, by making what can be numbered but by knowing numbers am I better. What then? Could they work not knowing the numerous? Absolutely they could! From where is this demonstrated? From the fact that we too adjust our tongue to our teeth and palate by certain dimensions so that letters and words rush forth from our mouth, yet when we are speaking we don’t think of the oral movements we should be making.²⁸⁶ Further, what good singer, even if he is untrained in music, doesn’t guard by that same natural sense both the rhythm and the melody perceived by memory when he’s singing? What is more capable of being numbered than that? The unlearned man doesn’t know this, but he still does it by nature’s operation. But when is one better than the beasts, and when should he be placed above them? When he knows what he’s doing. Nothing else puts me above a beast except the fact that I am a rational animal.

50. “Then how is it that reason is immortal and yet I’m defined as something that is at the same time both rational and mortal?²⁸⁷ Or is reason not immortal? But one-to-two or two-to-four is a ratio most true; and this wasn’t more true yesterday than it is today, nor will it

be more true tomorrow or the year after; and even if this whole world of ours should perish, this ratio of ours cannot *not* exist. For it is always as such;²⁸⁸ but this world of ours neither had yesterday, nor will it have tomorrow, what it has today. Not even on this very day has the sun been in the same place for even the course of an hour.²⁸⁹ Thus, since nothing in it abides, it has nothing in the same way for even a short period of time. Therefore, if a ratio [*ratio*] is immortal and if I, who by either separating or connecting all these things of ours, am reason [*ratio*], then that by which I am called mortal isn't mine.²⁹⁰ Or, if the soul* isn't that which is reason and yet I use reason²⁹¹ and it's through reason that I am better, then one should flee from the worse to the better, from the mortal to the immortal.'²⁹²

"These and many other things the well-educated soul* says to itself and deliberates on. I don't wish to follow them through to the end, lest while I desire to teach you order, I exceed the limit, which is the father of order.²⁹³ For [the soul*] leads itself step by step²⁹⁴ to mores and to the best life, not by faith alone, but by the certainty of reason.²⁹⁵ To the soul* that carefully regards the force and power of numbers, it will seem exceedingly unworthy and exceedingly lamentable that it's through its own knowledge* that a verse flows well and a harp plays in tune, while its own life and its very own self are following a wayward path and, dominated by lust and accompanied by a most shameful racket of vices, are dissonant.²⁹⁶

51. "But when it has composed and ordered itself²⁹⁷ and has rendered itself harmonious and beautiful, it will now dare to see God and the very Font itself whence flows every truth, the very Father of Truth.²⁹⁸ O great God, what eyes those will be! How healthy! How lovely! How strong! How constant! How serene! How happy! But what, what, I beseech, is it that they see? What should we imagine it to be? What should we surmise? What should we say? Everyday words come to mind, and all of them have been

rendered paltry by the paltriest things. I shall say nothing more, except that to us is promised a vision of beauty in the imitation of which everything else is beautiful, in comparison to which everything else is foul. Now as for anyone who will have seen this (which he will see who lives well, prays well, studies well), when will it ever move him why one man wishing to have children doesn't while another who has them in abundance abandons them? When will it ever move him why one man hates those who have not yet been born while another loves those who have?²⁹⁹ Or how is it not contradictory that there will be nothing in the future which isn't with God (from which it necessarily follows that all things are done by order), and yet God isn't petitioned in vain? Lastly, when will any burdens or any dangers or any scorn or any allurements of fortune³⁰⁰ ever move the just man? For in this sensible world, one should intensely consider what time and place are, so that what delights in a part of place or time may nevertheless be understood as far inferior to the whole of which it is a part. It's clear, in turn, to a learned man that what offends in part offends for no other reason than that the whole into which that part wonderfully fits isn't being seen, but that in the intelligible world any part is as beautiful and as perfect as the whole.³⁰¹ We'll talk about these things at greater length if, as I encourage and hope, your studies will have decided to take hold of the order we have mentioned (or perhaps some other order that is briefer and more appropriate but still correct) and will have held onto it actively and constantly in every way.

20.

52. "For this to be granted to us, we must make a supreme commitment to the best mores, for otherwise our God could not hear us (though He very easily hears those who live well).³⁰² Let us

therefore pray that there come to us not riches or honors or things of this sort, which are fleeting, wavering, and—despite every manner of resistance—transitory, but those things that make us good and happy.³⁰³

“And so that these petitions may be most devoutly granted, mother, we especially enjoin this task on you, by whose prayers (I believe without a doubt and confirm) God has given me this mind* of mine, to prefer nothing whatsoever to finding the truth, to want nothing else, to think of nothing [else], to love nothing [else]. Nor do I cease to believe that this same great good which we have desired by your merits we are to obtain by your supplication.³⁰⁴

“Now truly, Alypius, why should I exhort, why should I admonish *you*? You aren’t someone who is excessive for the simple reason that loving such things with all one’s might is perhaps always insufficient and, indeed, can never rightly be called excessive.”³⁰⁵

53. Here, Alypius said: “You have truly brought it about, by daily consideration and by the admiration we have for you at present, that we not only have no doubt about the memory of the most learned and great men (which, on account of the magnitude of their deeds, has sometimes seemed incredible), but we can even swear on it if necessary. For what is it that you have disclosed to us today, almost before our very eyes? Is it not that venerable and almost divine discipline that is both rightly held and proved to be that of Pythagoras?³⁰⁶ At the same time, you have pointed out the rules of life and not so much the paths of knowledge* as its broad fields and limpid seas,³⁰⁷ as well as (and this is why that man was an object of great veneration) where the very sanctuaries of truth are,³⁰⁸ what qualities these sanctuaries have, and what caliber of men seek them. And you have done this briefly and so clearly that although we suspect and believe that you’re harboring things still more hidden, nevertheless, we don’t think we would be without

impudence if we imagined that more should be demanded of you.”

54. “I gladly accept this statement of yours,” I said, “for it’s not so much your words, which aren’t true, as it is your true heart in the words that delights and stirs me.³⁰⁹ And it’s well that we have decided to send this writing to someone who gladly and customarily lies a great deal about us.³¹⁰ But if perhaps there are others who read this, I’m not afraid that they’ll grow indignant at you. For who wouldn’t most kindly overlook a loved one’s error in judgment?³¹¹

“But you mentioned Pythagoras, which I believe came to your mind* by I know not what divine and hidden order. For something very necessary had completely escaped me, something about that man which, if the memories committed to writing are to be believed (though who wouldn’t believe Varro?),³¹² I’m accustomed to admire and, as you know*, shower with praises almost daily:³¹³ namely, that Pythagoras handed down the discipline of ruling the republic last of all to his listeners who were already learned, already perfect,³¹⁴ already wise, already happy.³¹⁵ For he saw such great waves there that he did not wish to commit anyone to them except the man who, by ruling almost divinely, would both avoid the rocks and, if all else failed, become a rock in the waves himself, as it were. Of the wise man alone can it most truly be said,

He, like an unmoved rock in the open sea, resists³¹⁶

and the other splendid verses on this sentiment that have been uttered.”³¹⁷

Here our disputation came to an end, and, with everyone filled with joy and hoping for much, we dismissed the assembly, as a nightlight had already been brought out.³¹⁸

Finis.

COMMENTARY

BOOK ONE

Cover Letter (1.1.1–1.2.5)

Augustine's cover letter to *On Order* is the most difficult in the Cassiciacum tetralogy, partly because of its abstruse subject matter and its unusual thesis and partly because, more than any other dedicatory letter from Cassiciacum, it functions as an overture or guide to the essential points of the dialogue. It is therefore worth the effort to study the cover letter closely. We begin with a summary of its thesis, followed by an explanation of four of its main features.

More than anything else, Augustine tells his friend Zenobius, people of the highest caliber want to know how God's omnibenevolence (His caring for everything) and omnipotence (His ability to do everything) can be reconciled with the obvious disorders and injustices we encounter in human life (1.1.1). This reconciliation is not easy to understand because of two difficulties: the difficulty in comprehending the order proper to things and the difficulty in comprehending the order of the whole (and compounding these difficulties is the difficulty of communicating any breakthroughs that have been attained). Without this reconciliation, there is a temptation to think either that God's power does not extend "all

the way” down to human affairs (a denial of His omnipotence) or, worse, that God is not omnibenevolent. Even the less impious option of denying divine omnipotence is unsatisfying, for there is much evidence of God’s awesome and meticulous ordering of the created world—for example, the reasonable movements of nonrational animals and the tiny parts of a flea’s body (1.1.2). On the other hand, our wonder at God’s natural order is offset by our dismay at what a chaotic and brutal mess human existence is.

The source of all this confusion, Augustine claims, is that human beings do not have the right perspective on things; they are like people who stand only inches away from a large mosaic and complain that the tesserae are disordered (1.1.2). The only way to gain the right perspective—that is, the only solution to the challenge of seeing how God’s omnibenevolent omnipotence and the chaos and evil around us can be reconciled—is not to launch a comprehensive study into all that is or ever will be but to gain self-knowledge (1.1.3). Augustine has a precise form of self-knowledge in mind, a form that is facilitated by a liberal arts education and is described as the soul’s “returning to itself.” When the soul returns to and reclaims itself, it understands unity, and when it understands unity, it can understand the unity of the whole (1.2.3). To aid in this quest for self-knowledge and unity, Augustine urges Zenobius to “engraft” himself onto and “co-fit” himself into this dialogue (1.2.4).

1. The Spectrum of Answers

In raising the question of theodicy,¹ Augustine lightly canvases various proposed solutions common in his day, solutions that do not vary widely in kind from those of our own time. The most common philosophical opinion in antiquity was that the “nethermost areas” of existence (i.e., human life) are “abandoned” or “neglected” by

God (1.1.1). Different philosophers had different reasons for drawing this conclusion: there was no strong evidence of a divine, benevolent influence in human life; the gods were too lofty to concern themselves with such lowly creatures; a providential God would interfere with human free will, etc. But the conclusion itself was shared by a wide variety of philosophers, including those who normally opposed each other. The Epicureans held this view, and so did their arch enemy, Cicero (although he was reluctant to proclaim it as loudly as the Epicureans). Plotinus, from whom Augustine learned a good deal, also taught that it was not in keeping with the excellence of divine existence to tend to humanity's daily concerns.²

In opposition to this consensus stood the Stoics, who were vigorous defendants of a divine and benevolent providence guiding human affairs. Stoicism offered the kinds of arguments that Augustine lists in 1.1.2, such as the impossibility or unlikelihood that well-designed and minute organisms could be the products of chance. If the parts and movements of these nonrational creatures bespeak a deliberate and intricate arrangement that could only come from a rational order, and if these creatures are in no way the product of human, rational engineering, then by default they are the products of a divine, rational Engineer. Augustine repeats the arguments of the Stoics (which in many respects anticipate contemporary intelligent design theories), but interestingly, he does not endorse them. Instead, he mentions them as counterarguments that should encourage us to proceed in this debate but to proceed with caution. When Augustine contrasts "the parts of a flea [that] are wonderfully and distinctly arranged" with "human life . . . tossed and turned by the flux of innumerable disturbances" (1.1.2), he is essentially juxtaposing the positions of Stoicism and Epicureanism and inviting us to delve further.

2. *Knowing the One*

Augustine's own solution to the standoff between the Stoics and Epicureans is not to reevaluate each of their claims but to begin from a different footing, that of unity. Knowing the truth about providence and evil entails objectively judging that there is a unity to the whole of existence. Denials of an omnipotent providence are denials of a unity to existence: the universe, the argument goes, may have some providential ordering here and there, but in other areas it is dominated by disparate and random forces pulling it in different directions. According to this view, the universe is really a multiverse, a concatenation of unharmonized multiplicity. Assertions of omnipotent providence, on the other hand, are assertions of an underlying cosmic unity brought together by a providential and almighty God (or at least a First Mover). This unity, however, is threatened by the problem of evil, which seems to force us to choose between saying that God the Unifier is the cause of evil or that God does not unify the whole after all, for evil has dominion here and there. Either way, the notion of unity is key.

That Augustine is aware of the importance of unity is evident from the first sentence of *On Order* and the two achievements that he claims are "extremely rare and difficult for men." The first is grasping the "order proper to each and every thing," or more literally, "the order of things proper to each" (1.1.1). The term *ordo rerum*, the order of things, was already commonplace by the time of Augustine, but he is using it here in contrast to the "order of the whole" rather than as a synonym for it, which is unusual. It is not simply the overall unity to the grand cosmic whole that is difficult to see; it is also the unity of simple, concrete things, the essential unity by which a thing is what it is. For the unifying principle or essence of a thing, as we shall see, is not as easy to comprehend as one would think.

The second difficulty is grasping the “order of the whole, by which this world is held together and ruled” (1.1.1). By “this world,” Augustine means the world experienced through the five bodily senses, the world of space, time, and matter in which we encounter seemingly endless multiplicity and divisibility.³ Grasping the order of this whole does not necessarily require understanding everything about everything within it (which is impossible for human beings in this life). Rather, it entails knowing what it is that makes the whole whole, that is, knowing the order that unifies the whole into a whole rather than a mere assortment of disparate things. Augustine alludes to the fact that the very term “universe” literally means “turned toward the one” (see 1.2.3). Like a single concrete thing, for a whole to be whole, a unity must underlie its multiplicity.

Augustine’s emphasis on grasping unity also explains why his approach to “theodicy” is framed by the question of order. On the objective side of things, the existence of a single order that can absorb or manage breakdowns within it would offer strong proof that its Orderer was in control. On the subjective side, order is in a sense the essence of intelligibility. When the human intellect grasps the intelligibility of what it is studying, it is somehow grasping a pattern, an ordering that explains or identifies or reveals the underlying unity and coherence of disparate data.

3. *Self-Knowledge*

The question of intellect brings us to the third difficulty mentioned in the opening paragraph of 1.1.1, that of communicating insights into unity. Such insights are difficult to communicate because they require an audience that is capable of understanding them. The insights into what gives individual things their natures and what gives the whole its wholeness are not easy to achieve. For someone to be amenable to these breakthroughs, he or she must be

duly prepared for them, either by natural aptitude or, especially, by a proper education. For Augustine, knowledge is not something that can be implanted in every mind willy-nilly: it can only come as the fruit of careful moral and intellectual formation. The knowing subject must be at his or her very best in order to discover the extremely obscure objective realities being sought here.

But how does one become a knower at one's very best? Augustine's answer is that a special kind of self-knowledge is required: not the kind according to which one knows one's own strengths and weaknesses or likes and dislikes (which is valuable in its own right, to be sure), but the kind by which the soul "returns to itself" (1.2.3) and knows itself *as* soul, that is, as an intelligible and intelligent reality. Although knowing that I have an intelligence or a capacity to understand may be relatively self-evident, knowing that my intelligence is intelligible—that it is something real and yet incapable of being understood in terms of space, time, or matter—is far from being an automatic process. Truly understanding the difference between the sensible and the intelligible is a rare achievement, which is why an intellectual conversion or "turn" of the intellect to itself is needed.⁴ It is this intellectual conversion that Augustine identifies as the antidote to the errors in opinion he has listed (1.1.3) and that he admonishes Zenobius to undergo.

Augustine does not define intellectual conversion in the cover letter, but he does describe what it entails, how it may be achieved, and what it yields. It entails three things. The first is "the great habit of withdrawing from the senses" (1.1.3). To understand the difference between the sensible and the intelligible, one must learn to think, quickly and naturally, of intelligible realities without in any way comparing them to sensible phenomena.⁵ This mental habit does not come easily; in *Against the Academics*, Augustine calls it "more than human" (3.17.38). Yet no matter how superhuman it is,

it remains indispensable. Augustine's own reference to a circle is a useful example (1.2.3).⁶ To understand the geometer's definition of a circle as an infinite number of radii on the same plane that converge at the center, one can begin by imagining a wagon or a bicycle wheel, with its spokes as the radii and its hub as the center. But the only true understanding of a circle is the one that accurately grasps the nature of a line (the radii) and a point (the center) as understood in geometry. What is a line in geometry? It is length without width, a one-dimensional and hence invisible reality.⁷ What is a center? It is that which has neither length nor width, a reality without dimension and hence invisible. In other words, the components of the definition of a circle are literally unimaginable; they can be grasped or "seen" only by the intellect. If I can picture a line and a point in my mind, I am not picturing a line and a point at all but an extremely narrow rectangle and a very tiny dot.

Second, intellectual conversion entails the great habit of "collecting [the] soul into itself" (1.1.3), of uniting itself. In the *Confessions*, Augustine approvingly notes the linguistic bond between collecting (*colligere*), putting together (*cogere*), and thinking (*cogitare*). Thinking is a matter of unifying, of grasping or effecting the unity that "must be collected out of dispersion."⁸ Similarly, the soul that wishes to collect itself must think of itself. Yet the soul's thinking of itself is a unique instance of thinking, for it is the only time that a subject is thinking of a subject as a subject; in every other case, when the soul thinks of something, it is as a subject thinking of an object. Plotinus describes the unique case of the soul knowing itself qua subject by stating that it does not involve one part of the mind knowing another part or the mind knowing its various contents, but the mind knowing itself in such a way that the knower is not distinguished from the known.⁹ Such is true unity.

Third, intellectual conversion includes the great habit of the soul “holding itself” (1.1.3). To learn what Augustine means by this expression, we must turn to his other metaphorical uses of “holding.” In *On the Happy Life*, Augustine speaks of the mind contemplating wisdom and “holding itself” to wisdom in such a way that it is not “disturbed by any inane thing” and does not turn to “the mirage of images” that make it fall from its goal (4.33). Augustine makes several allusions to the myth of Proteus, who must be held firmly in one’s hands despite the many misleading shapes that the sea god takes in an effort to escape.¹⁰ Augustine interprets Proteus’s changing appearances as sensible images such as—to use our earlier examples—the image of a spoke masquerading as a radius or a hub as a point. The god himself, on the other hand, symbolizes the “knots” or “nodes” of comprehension—that is, the unchanging and intelligible structure of human intelligence—onto which one must “hold” unswervingly in order to arrive at the truth.¹¹

The soul’s “holding itself,” therefore, signifies the mind’s ability to remain in the “great habit” of thinking in terms not of the sensible but of the intelligible. This is no easy feat, for human consciousness is itself protean, so to speak: it is not an angelic, disembodied intellect that grasps everything at once and eternally, but one that makes use of and perhaps to a certain extent relies on bodily sensation. Although human consciousness, when properly educated, can think exclusively in terms of the intelligible, its polymorphic character enables it to slip easily into more carnal modes of thinking, all without its being aware that such a slip has occurred. Thus, unless one stays in the right holding pattern, one can unwittingly distort the purest of intellectual breakthroughs.

Further, given the human condition east of Eden, this distortion has something of a head start; we are inclined to think carnally long before we are able to differentiate the intelligible from the

sensible, and thus we are likely to acquire a strong habit of thinking carnally about intelligible realities that makes it difficult to acquire the liberating habit of thinking outside the carnal box, so to speak. In order for intellectual conversion to be achieved, therefore, it must successfully overcome what Augustine calls certain “wounds of opinion that the course of daily life inflicts” (1.1.3). These wounds are humanity’s pronounced proclivity to materialism, the belief or assumption that mistakenly conceives of all reality as spatial, temporal, and material. Such materialism is “inflicted” on our understanding by our daily lives because we spend most of our mental energy dealing with problems that center on or emanate from things that are mortal and perishable and because we rely considerably on our bodily senses to do so. After a while, the preponderant application of our intelligence to such ephemeral or physical concerns gives us the impression that *all* reality is ephemeral or physical. The irony, of course, is that the human mind which convinces itself of this position is able to do so only because it has the power to transcend the spatial, temporal, and material. Were the mind not a spiritual entity, it would never be able to make an intelligent case in favor of materialism. Mere groups of atoms cannot explain either themselves or other groups of atoms.

Augustine identifies two ways in which the materialist wound of opinion can be addressed and intellectual conversion achieved: solitude and a liberal arts education. By solitude, Augustine does not necessarily mean that one should withdraw from the company of others. When he advocates “separation from the multitude,” he stipulates that he does not “mean the multitude of men, but the multitude of everything that sensation touches” (1.2.3). There is no hint here of a solitary Descartes in his cabin. Yet although withdrawal from the sensible is a good way to begin the paradoxical process of *increasing* one’s vision of reality, it is not sufficient on its

own. Augustine likens sensory “solitude” to the cauterization of a wound, which aids the healing process but by no means completes it. For a full recovery, one must turn to the liberal arts, all of which have as their aim the discovery of various intelligible realities. It has already been mentioned how a study of geometry, with its definitions of a circle, line, and point, confronts us with the task of comprehending with the mind, rather than picturing with the imagination, certain concepts or realities; and we will see much more on this subject in book two of the dialogue.

Whatever the path through which it is achieved, the yields of intellectual conversion are great. Augustine’s extensive use of the example of the geometer’s circle illustrates how the intellectually converted mind—that is, the soul that has returned to itself—gains its own unity or “center,” and in gaining its own unity is able to understand the unity of the whole (1.2.3). (The word that Augustine actually uses is “beauty,” not “unity,” but for Augustine there can be no beauty without unity.) The soul’s very nature, which forces it “to seek everywhere that which is one,” is forever on the quest for unity. Like a good crime mystery, every desire to know is a search for the *one* solution that is hinted at by the multitude of clues, and that desire is not satisfied until it has alighted on the single answer that explains, integrates, and unifies those clues. Augustine’s juxtaposition of the infinite multiplicity of the radii to the unity of the center follows a precedent set by Plotinus, who contrasts the “realm of sense” and its fissiparous magnitudes to the “realm of essence” or “Real-Being,” which is fully present, indivisible, and immutable. Plotinus likens Real-Being to the center of a circle, “which is unbrokenly in possession of itself, the starting point of [the radii’s] course and of their essential being, the ground in which they all participate.”¹² Augustine, however, also departs from Plotinus in his assessment of the multitudinous. For the latter, multiplicity is ulti-

mately an evil;¹³ for the former, it is merely an occasion for getting lost. Already Augustine is beginning to appropriate the significance of the Christian doctrine of creation, which teaches that God made the multiplicity of matter good.

4. *Entering into the Dialogue*

Augustine's insistence on self-knowledge as the solution to the problems of theodicy (if we insist on calling it that) is unusual, one likely to meet resistance even from fellow Christians equally committed to a resolution of the triadic problem of divine omnipotence, omnibenevolence, and evil. C. S. Lewis, for instance, approached the issue by demonstrating how the notions of omnipotence and evil are not logically contradictory,¹⁴ and he has been followed by a comet tail of analytic philosophers. Why, then, does Augustine take the path that he does? Perhaps because theodicy, as important as it is, is not his ultimate goal. Faced with the choice of, on one hand, providing an adequate theodicy and, on the other, providing his reader with access to a higher viewpoint from which an adequate theodicy, among other things, eventually follows, Augustine chooses the latter.

It is that focus on formation for the sake of a higher viewpoint which accounts for Augustine's emphasis on the reader's becoming a part of the dialogue. Augustine uses the imagery of "engrafting onto" and "co-fitting into" to describe the ideal relationship between the reader and the order to which the text is pointing (1.2.4). We have already discussed the significance of these terms in the Introduction;¹⁵ for now, it is enough to note that *On Order* is not so much a list of arguments for the compatibility of providence and evil as it is a series of spiritual exercises designed to give the reader who really immerses himself or herself into the dialogue the wherewithal to know, not the whole of knowledge, but the whole in knowledge.

Day One (1.3.6–1.11.31)

The Setting (1.2.5)

The conversation begins in Verecundus's villa in Cassiciacum. Usually, the group's discussions take place either in a meadow or in a separate building where the baths are located. Augustine lists the participants as Alypius, Navigius, Licentius, and Trygetius (1.2.5). Curiously, Augustine's mother, St. Monica, is not mentioned, even though she has "speaking parts" in both books, while Navigius has none. The reason may be that Augustine is listing only his regular coinvestigators. Although Monica plays a prominent role in *On the Happy Life*, her involvement there is somewhat exceptional and most likely due to the fact that it was Augustine's birthday (having little interest in the topic of skepticism, she is absent from *Against the Academics*).¹⁶ Her involvement in *On Order* is significant, but it was not originally planned. She joins the conversation by chance (or providence?), after which Augustine ensures that, circumstances permitting, she be present for the rest of the discussion (see 1.11.31, 2.1.1).

As for the other participants, Alypius is capable of philosophical discussion yet restrains himself during the disputations, most likely for the sake of letting Augustine's two pupils be duly exercised. Licentius's recent enthusiasm for poetry, which began to grow in *Against the Academics* and has already been causing problems,¹⁷ is mentioned as a portent of things to come. Augustine alludes to Trygetius's military service (which may explain the young man's sense of propriety) as a possible reason for his love of history. Thus, both Licentius and Trygetius are fixated on the same liberal art of grammar, which includes both poetry and history (see 2.12.37). Although Augustine is recommending the study of the liberal arts, his students exemplify one potential danger in their study, namely, becoming mired in one discipline and advancing no further.

An Unscheduled Lucubration (1.3.6–7)

At Cassiciacum, the coming of night typically ends the conversation or makes its continuation more difficult.¹⁸ Here, however, the conversation begins at night (1.3.6), which may explain why Augustine begins his narration of the events with the disjunctive phrase “*But one night.*” Augustine has been ruminating on some ideas, telling us only that they have to do with his “love of discovering the truth” and being with himself. In the *Soliloquies*, when Augustine employs similar language, he describes himself as seeking his “very self,” what is good for him, and what evils he should avoid (1.1.1).¹⁹

Moreover, Augustine draws the reader’s attention to the activity of thinking in a particular manner or mode that, thanks to repeated practice, is now habitual for him. Augustine has learned to “hold his soul” in a way that is free from bodily images, or at least that does not mistake bodily images for intelligible realities. In a way that is reminiscent of Socrates’s powers of concentration,²⁰ Augustine’s meditations also evince a certain liberty from the demands or limitations of the body, as he is able to carry on like this for half the night.

Augustine does not, however, know where his ideas come from—or as he puts it, they come to his mind “from I know not where” (1.3.6). The use of expressions such as *nescio unde* and *nescio quid* (“I know not whence,” “I know not what”) are common in Latin for signifying something indeterminate, and in this translation for the sake of readability they are sometimes rendered as “something or another.” Augustine uses these expressions more often in *On Order* than in any other Cassiciacum dialogue, twenty times in total; and he appears to be using them in a specific sense, as a way of signifying an X or a known unknown, that is, a reality that is indeed known to exist but the precise essence of which

remains, at least for the moment, beyond the intellect's grasp. Rather than be an intellectual cop-out, the identification of a known unknown is, as we see in a number of different disciplines, an important first step in eventually discovering its nature or content. In this case, Augustine declares that he does not know the source of the things that come into his mind. Thoughts and ideas can be mysterious, the result of a complicated mental process that does not always leave a clear trail of cause and effect. Yet it is this trail that interests Augustine; his own lucubrations may be described in part as an exercise in cognitional genealogy.

Augustine mentions three rules that he has given the two youths with whom he is sharing a room, Licentius and Trygetius. First, he prohibits them from working on their studies at night lest they study excessively. Moderation, as is clear from *On the Happy Life*, is an important theme in the Cassiciacum dialogues, and it figures prominently in *On Order*. Tied to the theme of moderation is Augustine's second rule, that his pupils discuss something besides their books. Third, Augustine wants the youths to habituate their soul "to be at home with itself" or dwell within itself (1.3.6)—in other words, to acquire Augustine's habit of "holding the soul" within itself. This habit can be encouraged by reading certain books, but it must still be appropriated as one's own and not merely memorized from a text. Indeed, *On Order* is itself a book that encourages the appropriation of a particular intellectual habit that goes beyond mere book learning.

Augustine's attention is redirected, like water in a channel, to water being redirected in a channel. The running water outside is making a strange noise because of a known unknown. His confusion about the unintelligible noise made by the water flowing over the stones is an echo of the confused observer of the "disordered" tiles of the mosaic when not viewed from a proper distance, and

the water current itself (first fast, then slow) may be a harbinger of the conversation to come.

Licentius happens to be awake as well, and so Augustine invites him to solve the problem with him. His invitation contains a small barb, playfully proffered but sharp nonetheless: a reference to Licentius's Muse. As we learned in the cover letter, the youth has taken a sudden interest in poetry. Readers who have read the Cassiciacum dialogues in order have already been introduced to Licentius's poetic enthusiasm in the second and third books of *Against the Academics*, even though the events recounted there take place several days after book one of *On Order*. Chronologically, then, we are witnessing the beginning of Licentius's turn to poetry.

Augustine realizes that Trygetius is awake as well, and so school is back in session. It is only an apparent violation of Augustine's three rules, which stipulate that they not work on their studies at night, that they discuss other things besides their books, and that they try to make their soul at home with itself. In the discussion that follows, all three conditions are fulfilled.

There is no nightlight for this playful lucubration since not even wealthy Italians can afford one (1.3.6). Mention of this curious detail highlights Augustine's North African wonderment at some northern Italian customs, but it also has a deeper significance, as light often serves as a symbol for insight or intelligence (see 2.20.54). The school is completely in the dark, both literally and metaphorically.

Augustine feels admonished by the running water to say something about it (1.3.7): there would appear to be an alignment or isomorphism emerging between physical events and intellectual activities. In an effort to solve the problem before them, he eliminates as unlikely a number of possible causes, such as someone disrupting the channel at this hour of the night. Licentius, too, rules

out the possibility that the noise is caused by rain. After identifying a known unknown, the problem-solver must work out its properties, narrowing down the options of what it could be by intelligently excluding what it is unlikely to be. The pair's deliberations constitute a mini-workshop in human knowing. Licentius's swift answer, however, provides a satisfactory solution. Given the fact that it is mid-November in Milan and that deciduous trees in the area abundantly shed their foliage around this time, the likely cause is accumulated leaves intermittently clogging the channel. Augustine, impressed by his student, congratulates him on this "probable" answer—probable because it is indeed a plausible explanation but one that has not been verified, and also because, strictly speaking, one cannot hope to have more than a probable knowledge of sensible realities and events.²¹

Wonder Versus Enchantment (1.3.8–1.4.10)

The "school's" brief exercise in deduction and problem solving regarding a practical matter has served as a useful starting point for a deeper philosophical reflection. Augustine refers a second time to Licentius's love of poetry, ostensibly praising him for occupying himself with Calliope (the head Muse) instead of wondering about anything (1.3.8). The verb that Augustine uses for "occupying" is "holding" (*tenere*), the same verb that he had used to describe the soul holding itself in an intellectual pattern (see 1.1.3). Augustine is implying that instead of holding his own soul in philosophical wonder, Licentius is holding on to the empty fictions of poetry. Licentius, rightly detecting a left-handed compliment, makes a rejoinder of his own. He expresses surprise that Augustine, who has perhaps given the impression during their retreat at Cassiciacum that he cares for nothing but metaphysical discussions, should ever show interest in mundane things. It is a compliment but with a hint of accusation that Augustine lives in an ivory tower.

Augustine assures him that nothing is alien to the philosophically minded, for anything that is done outside the manifest order of causes provokes wonder in the mind. When Licentius offers a carefully qualified endorsement of Augustine's statement, Augustine is thrilled. Licentius has demonstrated an ability to make an important distinction as well as to affirm the principle of causality—that there is a cause (and hence an order) to everything. Both things portend well for his progress in philosophy. More importantly, Licentius seems interested in the question, and his interest bespeaks a desire for wisdom, which is the *sine qua non* of the philosophical life. Augustine, hoping to fan this flame of passion, brings up poetry again, describing how greatly superior Licentius's simple comments are to the loftiest accomplishments of the Muses.

But the flame dies as quickly as it has flared up. When Licentius learns that he must defend his position in a philosophical disputation, he not only asks to be left alone but increases his pursuit of poetry, singing aloud the story of Pyramus and Thisbe.

It is not unusual for teenagers to cling to their music, but there is more going on here than adolescent stubbornness, especially since Augustine has said elsewhere that Licentius displays a rare disdain for youthful pleasures.²² The exchange is a vivid demonstration of what Socrates calls the “old quarrel between philosophy and poetry.”²³ At stake is what should serve as the ultimate guiding principle, or light, for Licentius's thoughts and actions. Licentius is currently too easily swayed by the beautiful voice of the poet, which in this case is leading him to linger on the self-destructive lusts of two young lovers rather than to ascend to a love of the higher. He has succumbed to the poet's Siren songs.

Poetry's seductive quality is all the more problematic in tragedy, which more than any other genre fulfills Jocosta's prayer in *Oedipus Tyrannus*: “May you never come to know who you

are.”²⁴ Tragedy, in Aristotle’s famous formulation, displaces the fear and emotions of the audience onto the stage and keeps them there.²⁵ This catharsis is salubrious for the city but has a numbing effect on individuals, as it allows them to learn of the horrible truths about things such as war and incest only in another and never in themselves.²⁶ Socrates thus concludes that tragedy is a “mainer of thought.”²⁷ Or to put it in terms closer to those used in *On Order*, whereas philosophy both begins and ends in wonder, such as the wonder that triggers the group’s nocturnal conversation, tragic poetry both begins and ends in what we might call enchantment.²⁸ Whereas wonder is an awakening of our natural desire to know the causes of effects we observe, enchantment is a charming or hypnotizing of that desire into the dreamlike world of the poet. Finally, wonder is important because it animates theology as well as philosophy. In the cover letter Augustine observes that it would be presumptuous to divorce from God that which arouses our wonder in nature (1.1.2).

It is for these reasons that Augustine’s chastisement of Licentius, now stripped of its patina of playfulness, is severe. Comparing Licentius’s singing to the howling of a dog, he charges that the youth’s poetic preoccupations have raised a wall between him and the truth higher than the one that divided Pyramus and Thisbe. (The comparison itself is also significant in that it connects, as with Augustine and the water channel, two seemingly unrelated events.) The word Augustine uses here for being “bowled over” by poetry is *provolutus*, to be rolled over again and again. Unlike Augustine’s mind, which turns to itself (see 1.3.6), Licentius’s is being turned over, carried away like a leaf in a fast current. Wonder arouses and empowers the mind; enchantment drugs and vitiates it.

Augustine then engages in a tactical retreat, convinced that his admonition has failed. Poetry has captured Licentius’s heart, and

there is a risk that harsher tactics will only cause a backlash and strengthen him in his resolve. (The task of education is a delicate one.) But contrary to Augustine's expectations, the attack has worked. Licentius expresses shame for what he has done, although not with perfect contrition. His imperfect citation of the Roman playwright Terence conveniently omits from the line the word "wretched" (which apparently Licentius is loath to apply to himself), while the way in which he uses the line indicates that he is still interpreting life through the lens of poetry. His description of Augustine's voice as a "racket" is belittling, and his connecting of the two "rackets" is sullied by an admixture of superstition. But perhaps most significant is his use of poetry to criticize his love of poetry, which could indicate either a lingering and unhealthy attachment to poetry or a healthy subordination of poetry to philosophy (it is difficult to say at this point).

Overall, however, the confession shows genuine improvement. In it Licentius compares himself to a shrew, the tiniest of terrestrial mammals, even lower in status than the dog to which he has just been compared. He acknowledges that Augustine was right to warn him to philosophize rather than to sing (which he rightly inferred was the import of Augustine's remarks), and he expresses a salubrious hope in obtaining something good from this humbling experience. Moreover, Licentius follows Augustine's example of juxtaposing two seemingly unrelated events (in this case, the scaring of the shrew and the chastisement by Augustine) and of discerning between them a connection. In doing so he is recognizing a greater order of things into which not only seemingly random details but even his own life fits most perfectly.²⁹ Nothing, Licentius now realizes, happens accidentally: even his defeat in a debate would have a providential design to it. He has had a breakthrough that will serve as an important foundation for the rest of the dialogue.

Encouraged, Augustine returns to his pupils. He first asks for Trygetius's opinion, who replies that he is keenly interested in the question of order but uncertain as to where he stands. Trygetius is a natural contrast to Licentius in temperament and perhaps talent. Together they function much like Glaucon and Adeimantus, the elder brothers of Plato whom Socrates endeavors to convert to philosophy in the *Republic*. Just as Socrates focuses primarily on Glaucon, the more talented and ambitious of the two, Augustine's efforts are directed toward Licentius, whose character is recognized early on as noteworthy (1.3.7). One of the principal differences between the two sets of interlocutors, however, is the rivalry between Trygetius and Licentius. Trygetius takes delight in Licentius's retreat from the Academic school of Cicero, which Licentius had vigorously defended in the first book of *Against the Academics*. Licentius's development has indeed been dramatic: not only has he come to view poetry as a potential adversary of philosophy, but he now recognizes skepticism as a duplicitous attempt to rob would-be lovers of wisdom of their quarry. This insight is all the more astounding given the fact that it comes before Augustine's own refutation of this school of thought in books two and three of *Against the Academics*, which takes place several days later.³⁰

Augustine responds in kind to Licentius's promising use of poetry, bursting forth in praise of God the Father with the help from a verse, duly modified, of Vergil's *Aeneid*. Given the fact that Licentius has made a turn to philosophy and not to religion, Augustine's response implies that philosophy done well can lead to Christian worship. Although the early Church in general and Augustine in particular were pioneers in reconciling faith and reason, the daring of this statement should not be overlooked, as it is far from apparent that all roads from Athens or Rome lead to Jerusalem.

Augustine's citation of the *Aeneid* is also noteworthy given how critical he has been of Licentius's attachment to poetry. His use of Rome's greatest poet not only offers Licentius a lifeline in his transition from poetry to philosophy, but it also suggests that poetry used properly can be a healthy part of the philosophical life. Augustine's appreciation of the *Aeneid*, however, does not blind him to its potential dangers. He vehemently rejects the pagan myths about the gods and mocks its Apollonian cult along with its abundant use of animal sacrifices. Finally, Augustine subverts the meaning of the passage that tells of walking on sacred fire in honor of Apollo.³¹ Instead of reverencing the fire as sacred (like Vergil), Augustine calls it pernicious and states that it signifies blinding lust; and instead of piously walking on the fire, he advocates smothering it.³²

Causality (1.4.11–1.5.14)

Augustine decides to lose no time and presses Licentius to explain the order of nature, using the leaves and water in the canal as an example. The order of the canal itself is not difficult to explain because anything made by humans is made for a purpose: artificial things have an order to them because their artificers put the order into them. But the order of nature is quite another matter. Phenomena such as leaves falling in a canal and clogging it up seem random and meaningless. Yet if that is so, the order of nature might be defective or even nonexistent.

Licentius is unfazed by the challenge. Contrary to Augustine's formulation of the question, he rejects the notion that one must first know which order is responsible for the leaves' fall before one can rule out chance. What is important, Licentius contends, is that we know *that* an order caused it, even if we do not know *what* exactly the order is or *how* it came about. Discovering this particular order would be virtually impossible, given the vast number of

factors and the difficulty in identifying them all. But this elusiveness does not prevent the mind from arriving at the conclusion that there *is* a succession of causes behind the leaves acting in this manner. Licentius thinks like a good scientist: if the effects are “utterly hidden” from our senses, we cannot trace their causes, since human knowing begins with the sensible and proceeds to the intelligible.³³

Licentius then takes the offensive, demanding anyone who holds that something can be done without a cause to prove it. In the case of the leaves, their journey from the trees to the narrow straits of the canal can certainly be explained by a succession of causes, from their weight to the strength of the wind to the speed of the water’s current. Licentius is adamant in his stance and attempts to trump all challenges to it by calling any potential naysayer an annoying or hostile inquisitor. Since at the moment he has only one challenger, his comment is a preemptive putdown of Augustine.

Augustine, however, playfully brushes the insult aside by stating that as the cad who took Licentius away from Pyramus and Thisbe, he could hardly be anything but odious in Licentius’s eyes. His reply also contains a snub of its own: rather than say that Licentius was speaking of Pyramus and Thisbe, he says that he was speaking *with* them, like, we may imagine, someone talking to imaginary friends. Augustine then tests Licentius with a different problem: “For whose good” does nature produce trees that do not bear fruit? (1.5.12). The question is valuable in two ways. First, it forces a clearer understanding of what Licentius means by order. So far Augustine has been juxtaposing accident and order, and within this juxtaposition Licentius has been associating causality with the latter and not the former. Causality and accident or chance, however, are not mutually exclusive categories. In the *Physics* Aristotle describes chance as the unintended result of two intersecting causes. Two

men, for instance, meet in the marketplace “by chance” when neither went to the marketplace for that reason. Their meeting can be understood in terms of cause and effect (one went for this reason, the other for that) even if neither intended the result. Chance, Aristotle concludes, “is the name we give to causation which incidentally inheres in deliberately purposeful action taken with respect to some other end.”³⁴ Augustine suggests something similar when he writes to Romanianus: “perhaps what is commonly called Fortune is actually being ruled by a certain hidden order, and what we call chance in human affairs is nothing but something the reason and cause of which are concealed.”³⁵ What is chance on one level of explanation can “be a functional element of what is designed for an end at a higher level.”³⁶ Chance can therefore be part of a purposive order.

The notion of purpose brings us to the second valuable aspect of Augustine’s question. Just as Licentius has not distinguished different levels of causes, so too has he not distinguished different kinds of causes. He has admirably defended the principle of sufficient reason and the principle of causality, and he seems to have a good grasp of material and efficient causation; still, he has not come to terms with the two other kinds of causes identified in classical philosophy: formal and final causes. It is into the latter that Augustine inquires when he asks about “for whose good” certain trees are ordered.

One of the temptations when discussing final causes in the order of nature is thinking about them simply in relation to human utility. The Stoics fell into this pit with their defense of divine providence, arguing that all of nature has been made for the use of human beings.³⁷ What else is a pig, they declared, but a life-support system for bacon?³⁸ Trygetius likewise succumbs to this reasoning. Before Licentius can reply, Trygetius reduces the question of end

or *telos* in nature to human benefit, arguing that gymnospermous trees are still useful to humans in different ways. Licentius rightly rejects this strategy: it is not necessary to know either the end or the purpose of a thing to know that it has been produced according to a cause or series of causes. The burden of proof remains on Augustine: *he* must demonstrate the impossible, that the principles of sufficient reason and of causality are false. Licentius, however, does not answer Augustine's question, and thus the distinction between end (what results from a causal process) and purpose (what results from conscious choice) remains unexplored.³⁹

By postponing the discussion about causality, Augustine implicitly concedes the validity of Licentius's reasoning. We can know that order exists without knowing what the order is. The *ad hominem* portion of Augustine's remark, however, frightens Licentius. He is poignantly aware that Augustine is manipulating the course of the conversation, and he wants to know to where he is being sent. The "whither" of his question contrasts with the "whence" of Augustine's earlier inquiry into the flowing water's order (1.4.11). Whereas Augustine is trying to attempt a *reductio*, or retracing, of something to its primal source, Licentius is trying to anticipate the game plan of his adversary. Ironically, however, it is Licentius's focus on strategy that keeps him from identifying Augustine's: he is too busy seeing the discussion as a sort of chess game to discern Augustine's pedagogical intentions. Licentius objects because he does not believe that he is capable of teaching either Augustine or the things "that are at the midpoint of philosophy" (which he rightly senses is whither Augustine is sending him), all because he overlooks the possibility that Augustine is helping him to teach himself.

Augustine replies that he does not wish to be extolled since he is also a boy when it comes to philosophy, nor does he want Licentius to be *too* hard on himself. The qualifier is telling:

Augustine is hinting that learning must be accompanied by *some* self-reproach, just not so much that it becomes debilitating. Augustine also encourages him by suggesting that someday in the near future he will be one of God's "seers" (*vates*). *Vates* has several connotations in this context; it can refer to a teacher or master, but its more common meaning is either a prophet or a poet. Augustine might be holding out the hope that Licentius will be a poet in the service of Christian providence.

Augustine has faith in the power of dialectical discussion, stating that even uneducated people can be drawn into the right society by a chain of questions. He then makes use of Licentius's earlier comparison of himself to the leaves in the channel, telling him that even leaves that resist being carried remind people of an order of things. In this way Augustine both continues the dialogue's custom of connecting seemingly unrelated things and obliquely answers Licentius's question about whither he is being sent.

As his ecstatic response illustrates, Licentius understands the answer. Leaping out of bed, he praises God for the innumerable ways in which He uses order to call our attention to Him. Licentius has finally moved from the "whither" of his earlier questions to the "whence" of Augustine's: he is retracing everything that happens back to its source. That source is God, who is introduced into the dialogue at this point as an (Uncaused) Causer setting all things in order. This notion builds upon a number of Licentius's previous insights. First, it explains the seemingly random correlations that he had made earlier. Even the most gratuitous things, such as the order of this discourse, fall within a providential design; what appears to be accidental or random on one level is actually providential on another, precisely because of God's ordering of the whole. Second, Licentius's characterization of God provides the logical conclusion to his proof about knowing that there is an order

without knowing what the order is. That proof had implicitly relied on the notion that an infinite regression of causes was impossible: sensation could register cause after cause, but the mind at some point would have to realize that this cannot go on forever. Hence an Uncaused Causer is necessary if everything in the universe is admitted to have been somehow caused. Licentius's description of this progression of causes in terms of encirclement is particularly significant, as it calls to mind the image of the circle from the cover letter and the self-referential quality of the dialogue.⁴⁰ If Licentius is providentially encircled by participating in this discussion, perhaps so too is the reader by studying this dialogue. Certainly, Licentius's progress so far has made a circle, beginning as it did with the hope that he would find (1.3.9), and now closing with a confession of a new discovery: "How great are the things that have been done, that we may find You!" (1.5.14).

But crucial as they are, Licentius's advances are far from perfect. It is precisely on the relation of the text to his appropriation of Augustine's principal insight that he falters. Licentius thinks that his being encircled by providence is so wondrous that it should have been predicted by a *vates* or fortune-teller long ago. He speculates that if a prophet would have foretold the publication of this book, then the things that led to its publication would be just as necessary as the end product itself. Therefore, even a trivial event such as the falling of leaves is necessary. In his zeal to reject the notion of randomness or coincidence, Licentius has portrayed everything in terms of necessity. Although he is rightly gaining a better grasp of divine purpose both in nature and in human affairs, there is a way in which his understanding of divine action is not sufficiently transcendent but rather Stoic, placing God within the whole and within a nexus of necessity. It is not surprising, then, that when Licentius mentions divination for the second time, he

does so uncritically (1.3.9), for divination rests on an immanentist view of the gods. Perhaps he did not understand what Augustine meant by encouraging him to be a *vates* and thus misjudged the worth of diviners. Finally, there is a hint of vanity in Licentius's thinking. He is cognizant of the reputation (*fama*) that this dialogue might generate and predicts that it will have a great effect (1.5.14). This concern for fame, as we will soon see, will not bear good fruit.

The Goodness of Order and of God (1.6.15–1.8.21)

Overall, Licentius's answer proves one thing to Augustine: the youth has not read enough Cicero. About a week earlier, Licentius had relied on Cicero's authority as a wise man⁴¹ and had demonstrated a familiarity with some aspects of Cicero's *Academica*, although not a perfect one. In this current discussion, Licentius has been making responses redolent of Cicero's trilogy on providence: *On the Nature of the Gods*, *On Divination*, and *On Fate*. Earlier, for example, he had criticized the practice of prophesying with mice, which is mentioned in *On Divination*,⁴² and he had wisely avoided a flawed rung in the Stoic defense of providence that is relayed in *On the Nature of the Gods*⁴³ and is criticized by Cicero's spokesman.⁴⁴ Here, however, he invokes necessity in a way that smacks of the fatalism rejected in *On Fate*⁴⁵ and refers to diviners so nonchalantly that it is obvious he has not read (or at least not heeded) Cicero's critique of them in *On Divination*. Such a lacuna marks a serious deficiency in Licentius's education: Cicero's contributions to philosophy are relevant to these discussions, and as Licentius himself admits elsewhere, Cicero was the Latin father of philosophy.⁴⁶

Rather than try to correct Licentius's errors directly, Augustine moves on to a different problem, asking him whether order is good or evil. The question confounds Licentius (who is afraid of the

pitfalls hidden in either option), but it does introduce the theme of good and evil into the conversation. Augustine has mercy on his frustrated pupil and asks him something more within his ken: what the opposite of order is. Licentius easily replies that it is nothing, since order seizes and possesses the whole (a fact to which Augustine alludes in the cover letter). Licentius's answer, however, inadvertently snares Trygetius, who thinks that on the basis of this reasoning, error should be the opposite of order. Trygetius has probably reasoned that because error is a defect in understanding and because defect implies disorder, error is the opposite of order. What he fails to see, however, is what Licentius points out to him—namely, that even a defect has a cause and is therefore enclosed in an order of things.

The importance of this insight is demonstrated by Augustine's exuberant reaction. Hardly able to contain himself for joy, he tells the reader that Licentius was becoming his son and friend, as the youth was now "coming full force into the midpoint of philosophy." Only a short while ago Licentius had despaired of teaching the things at philosophy's midpoint; now Augustine concludes that he is practically there. (That Licentius has not fully reached the midpoint might explain why, unlike the word *kentron* in the cover letter, "midpoint" [*medium*] appears just slightly off from the middle of book one.) Augustine's reaction also tells us something about the elusive midpoint to which he is referring. Just as the midpoint of the cover letter is a particular kind of self-knowledge that can grasp the beauty of the whole (1.2.3), the midpoint of philosophy mentioned here seems to be a grasp of order as the unifying principle of all things, even of those things that are disordered. It is possible, in light of the similarity in language, that the two things are intrinsically related: at the heart of true philosophy is the self-knowledge that yields a knowledge of the whole.

Augustine may be impressed with Licentius, but Trygetius has yet to be convinced. When Licentius grows quiet after an explosive plea for words,⁴⁷ Trygetius tries to press the matter further. Licentius, who admits that he *almost* holds what he can now see, consents. Trygetius is upset over Licentius's conclusion that evils are contained within order on the grounds that it is impious. Licentius did not say that evils are contained within order, but Trygetius has made the right inference, since error can be considered an evil. But Trygetius wrongly assumes that containing something is the same as causing it.⁴⁸ Licentius's task is to show his friend that this does not have to be the case. He begins his explanation by insisting that God's love of order behooves Him to contain evils (even if He did not author them) and ends by arguing that if God is just, He must contain evils within an order that perfectly renders to each its due. The hinge between these two statements is Licentius's view of the whole: like human speech, he surmises, the whole consists of "opposites" that together form a single beautiful unity. The view is similar to that found in the cover letter (1.2.3), but it is the first time it has appeared in the dialogue proper.

Augustine is again pleased, this time encouraging Licentius with a line from Terence's *Lady of Andros*: "Now a new religion has begun in you, I grant." The phrase *nova religio* is an odd one: in Terence's play it refers to a character's newfound sense of morality, but here Augustine is infusing it with a different meaning. It should be recalled that during Augustine's first poetic exclamation, he invited Licentius to join him as a worshiper dependent on piety (1.4.10); now, during this his second exclamation (which comes after Licentius has defended God's justice), he commends him for having taken up the invitation. "New religion" is of course an exaggeration in the same way as it is for Terence, but it is an

exaggeration based on Licentius's real growth in faith as a result of his storming the midpoint of philosophy.

To make sure that Licentius keeps what he has stormed, Augustine plans to test him as soon as possible. The test will be in the form of a *disputatio* between Licentius and himself, but Augustine lets him know how different their disputation will be from what takes place in the rhetorical schools or law courts. There the primary goal of debating is winning, not learning; glory is the prize to be sought, and humiliation the evil to be avoided. By contrast, Augustine hopes to debate Licentius in an arena where truth is the prize, error the evil, and personal pride irrelevant. But this new arena is not one in which good grammar and erudition are to be disregarded. Augustine is trying to educate Licentius, and that entails cultivating a sense of gracefulness even as one pursues the truth in simple honesty. After all, the dialogue is not owed to someone with "crass ears" (1.7.20).

Augustine's digression on Zenobius, the intended recipient of *On Order*, gives us a clearer image of the paradigmatic reader of this dialogue. The profile that emerges is of a man greatly interested in the matters under discussion and whose benevolence and *humanitas* or humane kindness are commendable. The profile is sharpened by a comparison of Licentius's love of poetry with Zenobius's, with the two possibly suffering from the same shortcoming (it is predicted that Zenobius will rejoice at Licentius's conversion to poetry, not at his conversion to philosophy or his "new religion"). Zenobius seems to have been morally converted toward the good but lacks all the elements of an intellectual conversion to the true. Finally, there is an added layer of irony in the dialogue's exploration of the relationship between philosophy and poetry, as we learn that *On Order* is meant to answer a poem that Zenobius wrote on the problems of theodicy. Augustine's phil-

osophical dialogue is literally a response to a poem, just as philosophy is a response to poetry.

After being told what Zenobius's reaction will be, Licentius admits somewhat sheepishly that he now sees philosophy as more beautiful than poetry. It is one of his most important concessions thus far. The quarrel between philosophy and poetry began early in the dialogue and resulted in one of its more heated moments. Now, in the spirit of the truth-focused *disputatio* Augustine has called, Licentius risks mockery by abandoning a previous position. His sigh forms a natural contrast with the empty breaths of Pyramus and Thisbe that had once held his attention, while his thanking Christ for the turn to philosophy indicates, among other things, that he has grasped Augustine's connection between philosophy and faith. But as with his earlier accomplishments, Licentius's new love must be tested, and Augustine holds out the possibility that he is rejoicing immoderately over the boy's progress. Given Licentius's past, the reservation is not unreasonable.

Bathroom Humor (1.8.22–23)

The two youths rise with the dawn to answer the call of nature while Augustine remains to pray. We learn that the evening before, Monica and Licentius had both gone out for the same reason and that Licentius had chanted a verse from the Psalms so loudly and repetitively that the pious Monica, not able to take any more, reprimanded him sternly though to little effect (1.8.22). The incident is comical, all the more so because Augustine has just finished saying that since *On Order* is not owed to someone with crass ears, he wants it to be refined; yet he follows up his call for propriety with a vignette involving bathroom humor. Augustine manages to avoid outright hypocrisy, however. His delicately phrased account is bereft of any proper nouns for the activity itself or even the place

for the activity, thus heeding by a hairsbreadth Cicero's admonition about not speaking of bathroom matters directly. "To go to the bathroom in private," Cicero writes to his son, "is not immoral, but to speak of it is indecent."⁴⁹

Augustine hears Licentius chanting the same verse this morning and points out to him that his singing for conversion—the subject of the verse—has not been in vain. Licentius agrees and remarks that his conversion to philosophy has in fact been a conversion to God, as both involve being transported "into certain great and wonderful things" (1.8.23). Augustine goes further, correlating in detail the meaning of the verse with the activity in which Licentius was engaged at the time he was singing. The Plotinian language about turning to God is unmistakable; what is less obvious is the way in which Augustine also departs from Neoplatonic teaching. Rather than characterizing the body as evil, Augustine speaks of a certain "muck and filth" pertaining to the body, most likely disordered carnal desires in the soul. The sensible or corporeal is not bad or filthy per se, but the soul's lingering exclusively on the multiplicity of all that sensation touches inflicts on it certain materialist "wounds of opinion" that lead it astray (see 1.1.3–1.2.3). The human soul was not made to dwell on the mortal and the perishable; it was made for a grasp of the higher and permanent things. Thus, while Plotinus portrays matter as the evil product of a possibly weak soul,⁵⁰ Augustine portrays matter as the innocent victim of a willfully sinful soul.

Augustine's departure from Neoplatonism is further underscored by the comic manner in which the scene and the subsequent discussion are portrayed. Plotinus, as Porphyry tells us at the beginning of the *Life of Plotinus*, was ashamed of inhabiting a body and therefore refused to speak of many things connected to it, such as his birthday or his nationality. If Augustine were as

uncomfortable about earthy matters as Plotinus, it is unlikely that he would have used such an earthy metaphor in such a whimsical manner; generally speaking, people who are uptight about the body do not tell humorous stories involving defecation. The very fact that this scene is in the dialogue at all should cast doubt on any estimates of Augustine's early anthropology as "semi-dualistic."⁵¹

Augustine's application of Ps 79:8 to Licentius's gastrointestinal evacuation has an additional significance. As we saw earlier, Licentius's two instances of connecting his own condition to the "random" events happening around him⁵² marked important advances in his understanding of order and reflected an ever-growing recognition of something that has been only hinted at so far—divine providence. That hint is offered here again but with Scripture as the second element in the correlation. Sacred Scripture is key to understanding providence because, as Augustine attests in the *Confessions*, it is written in such a way that it encompasses not only God's providential care over human history but our own individual lives.⁵³ It is for this reason that rather than interpret the poetic verse in light of Licentius's experience as before, Augustine is interpreting the experience in light of the verse,⁵⁴ confirming Licentius in his earlier attempts to read events providentially and teaching him the supreme lens through which that reading should occur.

The Command to Satirize (1.8.24)

The private instruction that Augustine now gives Licentius runs contrary to our expectation. Augustine has obtained from his pupil a profession of love for philosophy and a disavowal of poetry, but instead of telling Licentius to foreswear poetry, he asks him to return to it. Augustine's assignment is all the more astonishing given that he has just portrayed the lovers of wisdom rather than of

poetry in an appealingly erotic fashion (which will be discussed below). Having discredited poetry as a guide to life, he now treats the vanquished adversary as part of the solution.

Licentius is to satirize the story of Pyramus and Thisbe at its most poignant part, turning its moments of passion and pathos into scenes that are risible and ridiculous (the verb *adripere* means “to attack,” but Horace uses it to signify satirizing). In a few days, Licentius will hear Augustine’s own zany satire of the Academics and other schools of philosophy in *Against the Academics* (3.7.15ff). In the meantime, he has Augustine’s earlier mockery of Pyramus and Thisbe to serve as a template (1.3.8). Instead of the two lovers in Ovid’s version romantically speaking “whispers of delight”⁵⁵ to each other, Augustine had comically depicted them breathing *to* each other; and instead of a fissure in the wall through which they communicate, he used the unattractive diction of a “tiny ingrown crack” (*inolita rimula respirabant*, 1.3.8).

Augustine’s call to satirize challenges Licentius to see through the indulgent self-pity and veiled lasciviousness of tragic love stories in the hopes that it will end his glossy-eyed infatuation with poetry. Paradoxically, the cure for poetry is poetry. Elsewhere, Augustine even advises Licentius to perfect his poetizing, for once something is perfected, we tend to grow bored of it.⁵⁶ Aside from being psychologically perceptive, this admonition reflects Augustine’s desire to lead his pupils in an ascent not around but *through* the liberal arts to higher forms of wisdom, even though some of those arts are potentially dangerous in their power to distract.

More importantly, Licentius is to turn tragedy into comedy. In the Platonic dialogues, philosophy is understood vis-à-vis these two art forms: the *Symposium* ends with Socrates debating Agathon the

tragedian and Aristophanes the comedian as to whether the same writer knows how to compose both comedy and tragedy.⁵⁷ Given the fact that Socrates alone stays awake to the end, it would seem that the answer to this query is in the affirmative if the writer is a philosopher. Seen in this light, Cicero's positive appraisal of comedy as "the imitation of life, the mirror of custom, and the image of truth"⁵⁸ is no great surprise, for the same three things can be said about his own dialogues. By teaching Licentius to laugh poetically at tragedy, Augustine is thus preparing his pupil to write "philosophical comedy" in the tradition of Plato, Cicero, and, of course, himself.⁵⁹

After being given his homework assignment, Licentius nods silently, not in affirmation but "in consideration of the matter" (1.8.24). The young man's lack of enthusiasm raises the question of whether he will ever complete the task. It is not mentioned again in *On Order*, and a chronological reconstruction of the time spent in Cassiciacum indicates that about a week later, Licentius is still singing tragedies, this time in a language he does not even understand.⁶⁰ Also about a week later, Licentius is composing his own verses, but because Augustine censures him for doing so, it is unlikely that the verses on which he was working were part of a satire on Pyramus and Thisbe.⁶¹ From what we can tell, Licentius remains mired in an excessive love of tragedy and never heeds Augustine's guidance.⁶²

But Licentius's failure to rise to the challenge serves as a more poignant prod to the reader, inviting the latter not so much to complete the specific undertaking of satirizing a tragedy as to assent to the general purpose behind it. That assent involves, among other things, rejecting a perception of life as tragic or meaningless and detaching oneself from a specific discipline or one's specific skills to the more architectonic love of wisdom.

The Mystical Marriage Bed (1.8.24)

Licentius's foundering is especially disappointing in light of Augustine's stirring metaphors for the learned and the ignorant. Liberally educated individuals, Augustine claims, are Truth's most persistent courtiers and most impressive lovers. Augustine uses unabashedly erotic imagery, again calling into question the purity of his Neoplatonism. He begins with what can be called a male phenomenology of passion, of a suitor in hot pursuit of his beloved, and culminates with what can be called a female phenomenology, of a soul in conjugal union with the Bridegroom who is Christ. The use of such imagery in both pagan and Christian literature is not novel,⁶³ nor is it—even though it describes males who ultimately end up in the marriage bed of Christ—homoerotic. As Augustine explains, what is being described is a union not of bodies but of the soul, in which there is no sexual differentiation.⁶⁴ Moreover, if there is a sexual identity to be metaphorically ascribed to the soul, it is the female sex rather than the male, since the soul, regardless of whether it inhabits a man's body or a woman's, is feminine in its receptivity to the initiative and entrance of Christ.⁶⁵

The uneducated and carnally minded multitude, on the other hand, fester in their rags, scratch their scabs, and refuse to heed the sound instructions of the physician.⁶⁶ Augustine's graphic description of those suffering from a certain disease of the soul hearkens back to his remarks in the cover letter about the difficulty in attaining self-knowledge because of the wound of ignorance inflicted by our daily routine (1.1.3). What is added here is that while those who suffer from ignorance might actively desire illumination, they are often too impatient or stubborn to follow the instructions of their physician and undergo the healing process. The comparison to an itchy scab conveys this condition well. Those who have not undergone an intellectual conversion foolishly perpetuate their own

misery in the same way that weak-willed people scratch a scab for the sake of pleasure rather than endure discomfort for the sake of being cured. The argument is redolent of Plato's Allegory of the Cave, where the prisoner chained to the bottom of the cave must be practically liberated against his will, as he must be "compelled to" stand up and turn around and "dragged" up into the light outside by force. Indeed, the liberated person finds the experience disorienting, "painful," "distressing," and "annoying."⁶⁷ Human fallenness is such that human beings resist the very means by which they are made whole.⁶⁸ And they are content with the mere name of God and with their own faculties of sensation (as opposed to the mind's power of intellection) in the way that beggars are content with the handouts they receive. It is in this way that they "live as wretches" (1.8.24).

But do uneducated Christians fall into this unhappy category? Augustine is offering advice specifically tailored to Licentius that is designed to arouse his passion for the higher; he is not providing a complete taxonomy of Christian believers. To answer this question, then, the reader must study the rest of the dialogues from *Cassiciacum*. And that study must take into account Augustine's portrayal of his redoubtable mother Monica, who, though uneducated, hardly fits the profile offered here of a scabrous beggar; indeed, she is described elsewhere as successfully storming the castle of philosophy.⁶⁹ By contrast, Licentius is receiving a liberal arts education yet ignores the "prescription" of his physician Augustine about the "medicine" of satirizing tragedy.

Cockfight (1.8.25–26)

The eager courtiers in Augustine's *Cassiciacum* entourage are ever vigilant, hoping to catch an affirming nod from that coy beauty, Lady Reason. Since that nod can come from anywhere,

Augustine and his pupils delay their discussion to watch a cock-fight. Elsewhere Augustine cautions against the vice of *curiositas*, or vain curiosity,⁷⁰ but here, since the motive is a search for the intelligible rather than the titillation of bloodlust, he defends it. Augustine stipulates that the fight is between two barnyard roosters rather than specially bred game cocks as a further indication of the spontaneity of the scuffle and the fact that the observers are not partaking in a blood sport; their sincerity is further verified by observing in moderation. Augustine's report is not without dramatic finesse. The Latin satirist Petronius once compared gladiators to barnyard cocks;⁷¹ here, Augustine essentially treats two barnyard cocks as gladiators.

Augustine is looking for a signal or sign from the beauty of reason in the birds he is observing, but his search for signs is only externally similar to the practice of augury. In *On Divination* Cicero's brother Quintus defends divination, citing the time when the incessant crowing of barnyard cocks predicted the outcome of a battle. Cicero's sarcastic rejoinder, "Do you really think Jove would have used chickens to convey such a message to so great a nation?" is followed by a more serious observation. Roosters often crow, so how can there be any extraordinary meaning in their behavior? It would have been momentous if a fish and not a cock did the crowing; as Cicero notes, a cock's crow can be explained solely in terms of natural cause and effect.⁷²

Both Quintus and Cicero, however, are debating in terms of a "God of the gaps," where supposed breakdowns in or deviations from natural behavior can be ascribed to divine intervention. Quintus thinks that a rooster crowing is an authentic augury because it does not usually crow at that time of day; Cicero thinks the same event is meaningless because the late crowing can just as easily be explained by what the rooster had for lunch. Both assume that if

something can be naturally explained, there is no divine significance to it. For Augustine, on the other hand, the fact that nature works at all is portentous. God is not to be found in the supposed gaps of nature; He is to be found in the fact that there even is a nature and that it works in spite of apparent breakdowns or gaps.

The cockfight is an occasion for both objective and subjective reflection. Objectively, it is an example of an ugly disorder enfolded in a beautiful order. Like the cover letter's example of a mosaic that includes numerous "chaotic" tesserae, the fight bespeaks reason's moderation and governance of the entire episode despite its bitterness and the tattered appearance of the loser. Subjectively, it is an occasion for self-knowledge, a return to oneself and to God through an outer-inner-upper trajectory that ascends to higher forms of knowledge. Augustine lists three sets of questions, to which we can add the contemporary equivalent:

1. Outer: Why is nonrational nature behaving this way? (natural sciences)
2. Inner: What is in us that is asking why nature is behaving this way? (turn to the self or mind, cognitive theory)
3. Upper: Where is there not law, order, or measure? (philosophy, metaphysics, theology)

Significantly, the hinge between the immediate question about the fight and the deeper question about cosmic order is the mind's recognition of its own erotic drive to know and its awareness of how different it is from the senses that facilitate the awakening of its eros in the first place.

The Great Chain of Being (1.9.27)

Augustine and his pupils have observed moderation not only in their watching but in their philosophizing. They are therefore

able to meet early the next day, ready and alert for more. Augustine calls attention to the shallow contests of the rhetorical schools, warning his students about what he does *not* want. He then suggests to the boys that order is best defined as “that which, if we keep it in this life, will lead us to God, and which, unless we keep it in this life, we won’t come to God” (1.9.27). The definition, which is functional rather than ontological, fails to fulfill the criteria for a proper definition, which must be neither too broad nor too restricted. Augustine’s is the former: it could just as easily apply to grace or the theological virtue of charity as to order. But the definition has heuristic value in that it does not give the direct content of what is being defined but the broad outlines or properties by which something can then be discovered and more properly defined.⁷³ Further, Augustine’s definition heightens our suspicion that this dialogue has as much to do with a certain kind of conversion as it does with order itself, for Augustine’s most explicit statement about order in the entire work ends up relating to us (the knowers) rather than to it (the object of our knowing). As if by confirmation, Augustine draws attention not to the boys’ interest in order but to their desire to come to God.

Augustine next offers what initially appears to be a digression on the group’s absent friends but what turns out to be a preface to a more important point about this dialogue, which is not only prepared on behalf of absent companions but orchestrated, he suspects, by the very providential order that the interlocutors are so keen to identify. If this conversation (or dialogue) is occurring according to a providential order, then a grasp of its meaning and structure will help us, to borrow Augustine’s terminology, to come to God. We have already seen from the cover letter’s central image of the circle that there is a possibly isomorphic or mirroring relation between the text and the reality that it signifies (1.2.3). We

have also heard Licentius say that Augustine's discourse is "encircled" in order to teach, suggesting that the dialogue itself has a similar quality (1.5.14). But how?

It seems that this passage could provide an answer. In it Augustine describes his dialogue as a "chain of writing" (1.9.27), an expression that echoes an earlier reference to the power of a "chain of questions" in bringing individuals to the truth (1.5.13). Indeed, a closer examination of the first half of the dialogue reveals a chain-like progression. Recurring motifs—such as mice, the leaves, and the whither and whence of various questions—look forward and backward in such a way that they constitute chain links between the separate segments of the dialogue, where each link is a circle, the edge of which acts as the center for the next circle. (The pattern continues here as well with a reference to a "wall of defense" [1.9.27] not long after mention of the wall separating Pyramus from Thisbe and Licentius from truth [1.3.8] and with Licentius's nodding or failing to nod [1.8.24, 1.10.28].) Moreover, if there *is* a similitude between the order of this dialogue and the divine order to which it points, the whole can also be said to be ordered as a chain, with each of its successive links acting as rungs in a great ladder or nexus to God. The imagery of chains, in other words, may be more than just a casual comparison but a blueprint on how to read the dialogue and reality itself.

At the very least, Augustine's characterization of *On Order* as a chain of written words implies that the dialogue is ordered to show the reader the greater order of things, and his prediction that his disputation will beget other disputations (which will inspire a new series of links in the chain of order) is a clear reference to the world of human beings who stand outside the text. Last, his language about this chain of discourses being "engrafted into the order of instruction" relates to and sheds additional light on his advice in

the cover letter “to engraft yourself onto and co-fit yourself into the very order about which I am writing to you” (1.2.4).

Order Continued (1.9.27–1.10.30)

The time has finally arrived for Licentius to defend his convictions. After heightening his listener’s eagerness for the discussion, Augustine asks Licentius to define order. Augustine ignores his own definition from a moment ago as well as the well-known Stoic definition of order as “the arrangement of things in their fitting and suitable places.”⁷⁴ He is interested in exercising Licentius in the hopes that he will become a good investigator of reality.

More impassioned than precise, Licentius balks at the request as if he had been doused with cold water. Yet after a brief pause (and perhaps through the encircling order he had noted earlier), the youth is inspired to utter the following definition: “Order is that through which all things that God has ordained are guided.” It is the second time that the imagery of inspiration has been used in reference to Licentius (see 1.7.19). This “adventitious spirit” could be several things: a contrast to the Muse by which Licentius hopes to be inspired;⁷⁵ a representation of the providence guiding Licentius’s progress; and the adventitiousness or giftlike character of an insight or breakthrough in understanding.

Augustine begins the attack without delay, asking whether God seems to be guided by order. If Licentius replies no, then it will be concluded that God governs chaotically. But if he replies yes, it will mean that God is being led by something else and hence is not omnipotent. Licentius, however, has been given a small way out and takes it. Augustine has not asked whether God *is* guided, but whether He *seems* to be. Licentius is safe to reply in the affirmative without commenting on what is really the case.

How long this strategy can hold out is never determined because of Trygetius's interruption. Trygetius has assumed—again falsely—that if something seems to be the case, then it is in fact so. Licentius could easily challenge the naïve realism implicit in this assumption, but instead he brings up a counterexample. Since both the Father and the Son, Licentius argues, are called God, and the Son proceeds by order, then God both guides all and is guided by order. Trygetius does not deny this, but he is uncertain how to answer. The response that he eventually gives is in all respects correct, though it leaves open the possibility that Christ should not be called God. Regardless of the correct formulation, it is significant that all three interlocutors know their faith and are taking great pains not to deviate from it.

Libido Principandi

But this, one of the most explicit religious discussions in *On Order*, is derailed by the pettiest altercation between Licentius and Trygetius recorded during the Cassiciacum retreat. The spat begins innocently, with Trygetius not wanting his possibly inappropriate remark about the Son to be written down (significantly, it is the text that is the catalyst for the ensuing disorder). Despite the fact that Trygetius's concern stems from piety and not vanity, Licentius relishes the mistake. When he is subsequently rebuked by Augustine for his *schadenfreude*, Trygetius responds with some of his own. In an unfortunate regression, the boys are imitating the cockfight rather than honoring the higher order that it revealed, thereby adding another "link" to what has come before.

The boys' uncharitable exchange illustrates what Augustine refers to elsewhere as the *libido principandi*, the lust for first place.⁷⁶ It is a disorder of the second part or motion of the soul, the part that seeks honor, recognition, or praise. Socrates calls it

thumos or the spirited part of the soul, the seat of anger and stubbornness, and while it can be reason's most powerful ally, it can also be its deadliest enemy. At Cassiciacum Augustine has already endeavored to ensure that the young men's *thumos* remain strictly subordinate to their reason,⁷⁷ but on this occasion *thumos* and not the love of wisdom has prevailed.

Augustine's sensitivity to the dangers of disordered *thumos* accounts for the harshness of his own thumotic reaction, which, though in the service of reason, comes close to being excessive: only his tears keep it within the limit. Not unlike Cicero (who, Augustine notes elsewhere, could not stand to see anything he loved contaminated),⁷⁸ Augustine is upset to witness "toxic emulation and vain boasting" pollute philosophy and the life he is now living. It may also be noted that the boys' behavior violates the spirit of one of the cardinal rules at Cassiciacum—that every debater is free to retract something he may have "conceded rashly," since the aim of these exercises is truth rather than victory.⁷⁹ Augustine calls the boys' vainglory an insane disease, a characterization that, in light of what has been said before, places them in the category of the scabby and scratching fools. He bewails their blissful ignorance and reminds them that only some are lifted by wisdom while the rest "are let loose into the depths." (Whether this expression refers to ignorance or damnation is left uncomfortably ambivalent.) And perhaps most telling of all, Augustine calls them the very thing that Licentius had conveniently omitted in his citation of Terence: wretches (1.3.9). It is as if Licentius's failure to accuse himself accurately when he had the chance has led to a stronger manifestation of what he was trying to hide and a stronger accusation from his judge and teacher. Licentius in particular shows no sign of having learned from the experience: he essentially accuses Augustine of overreacting and remains unrepentant

for wanting to remove this incident from the books. In doing so he is ignoring the words as well as the example of Augustine, who earlier had said to him, “If you conquer me, no greater triumph could be given to me” (1.7.20). Licentius is also undermining his own progress, which began when he humbly admitted that the truth of order surpassed his rhetorical ability to defend it (1.3.9).

Licentius’s reaction is especially regrettable, but Trygetius is not above criticism either. He begins with a commendable desire not to have his infelicitous theological vocabulary put on record and ends with a commendable willingness to let the ugly affair remain on record as a testimony to his and Licentius’s lowliness. Still, his eagerness to keep the dialogue within a tight circle of friends bespeaks an only partial triumph over the vain and thumotic desire to be seen by others in a favorable light. Trygetius’s closing statement is unintentionally humorous in two ways. First, his language is hyperbolic. *Desudo* means to sweat greatly, and *non parum desudabimus* therefore means that we will sweat really, really greatly. Second, the reader’s humorous reaction is heightened by the realization that he or she, a complete stranger, is reading this passage more than sixteen hundred years later. Trygetius’s strategy to wash away the memory of their pettiness with buckets of sweat has failed spectacularly, since a long and unbroken chain has, as Augustine envisioned, been grafted onto *On Order*.

That said, the key reason why Augustine includes this incident in the final draft of the dialogue is not to humiliate his pupils but to illustrate the universality and depth of the problem at hand. The negative desire not to look like a fool or the positive desire to be esteemed can be a poison that overcomes the detached and disinterested eros of the mind—not only in teenagers and rhetoricians but in all human beings. As Augustine puts it in *On True Religion*, the zeal for polemical victory “darkens” the intellect.⁸⁰ Anyone

desiring the truth must therefore eliminate all vainglory from the quest, yet the extirpation of this vice is exceedingly difficult.

Monica and Philosophy (1.11.31–33)

Augustine is angry at his students but not to the extent of being cruel. When his mother comes in to inquire about their progress, he does not embarrass them by telling her what has happened but instead undertakes a light-hearted and illuminating look at the compatibility of philosophy and womanhood.⁸¹ The discussion is also important because it highlights the extent to which an average Christian, one without an advanced liberal arts education, can participate in the realities with which the group is wrestling. Finally, the comic overtones of this scene relieve the “tragic” tension of the youths’ altercation.

Like Licentius, Monica does not want her presence to be written down, but her motivation is the diametric opposite of that of the youths. Rather than trying to safeguard her own reputation, she seems more concerned about Augustine’s—at least that is how he interprets her protest, when he assures her that his readers will not think less of him for including a woman in his publications. Augustine begins his remarks by dismissing the proud and ignorant who obsequiously “rush into reading books like they rush into greeting men” and who care more about the fame and standing of an author than the merit of his opinions. The views of these posers need not be taken seriously, since their real concern has nothing to do with the subject matter. There is, however, a small minority among this shallow crowd capable of being redeemed by the right writings. Augustine compares these writings to a “decorated” door that leads this minority to philosophy’s inner sanctum. The word for “decorated” is *depicta*—depicted or portrayed: Augustine is referring not to mere ornamentation but to scenes depicted on

panels, like Vulcan's shield in the *Aeneid*. In other words, Augustine is speaking about a book (1) that depicts or portrays scenes and (2) that leads (only) a minority of its audience (3) to the heart of philosophy. Several unnamed works of their ancestors are mentioned (presumably those of Cicero), along with books by their contemporary Manlius Theodorus. And since Augustine is telling Monica all these things lest she worry about being included in his current composition, we may also add *On Order* as an aspirational member to that list.

Augustine then contrasts two different classes of men: the high-born (those born into the upper class of their society) and the "very learned" (1.11.31). The former, known in Greek as the "beautiful and good ones" (*kaloi k'agathoi*), are members of the nobility. They are not only politically free but also free in the sense of being educated in the "free" or liberal arts. The "very learned," by contrast, consist of men who are not of noble birth but who philosophize. These lowborn lovers of wisdom would not change places with their privileged counterparts since they have found a far greater good. The gulf between the aristocratic gentleman and the philosopher (a common theme in Platonic dialogues) is significant, although a small bridge may connect the two through the liberal arts (which, as Augustine contends in book two of *On Order*, can ultimately lead to philosophy). One of the goals of the philosopher is to entice promising members of the gentry to the life of philosophy, and one of the purposes of the Cassiciacum retreat is to help Licentius and Trygetius move from the one class to the other.

The delineation of these two classes also draws attention, by way of absence, to a third: Monica's. Although Monica was well born enough to grow up with servants⁸² and have an estate with a vineyard as a married woman,⁸³ and although she is familiar with some books of the liberal arts (1.11.31), she has not received the

benefit of a liberal education and is not “very learned.” Augustine’s point here to Monica is that the philosopher is by nature indifferent to social rank and thus to her status; and something similar obtains for the gentleman who has been educated to respect virtue no matter where it appears and who knows, in the words of Benjamin Franklin, that “he is not well bred, that cannot bear ill-breeding in others.” There is even a subclass of gentlemen, Augustine argues, that is capable of shedding its conventional prejudices and appreciating philosophy from a woman.

Augustine’s praise of his mother contains a certain amount of exaggeration and irony. His offer to become Monica’s disciple, for instance, smacks of Socratic dissimulation, as when Socrates proposes becoming the disciple of the reputedly pious yet clueless Euthyphro.⁸⁴ Monica herself is the first to detect Augustine’s playful lack of sincerity, “devotedly” (*religiose*) remarking on the unprecedented numbers of lies she is hearing from him. Augustine’s protracted tall tale is beautifully bested by his mother’s succinct wit.

But not all of Augustine’s jocular compliments are false. It is true that Monica shares several traits in common with the philosopher: she has no fear of death (1.11.32), she is “afame for things divine” (2.1.1), she understands the importance of attaining the knowledge and understanding of things,⁸⁵ and she understands the importance of wanting truly good things in order to be happy.⁸⁶ The first and last of these traits inspire Augustine to claim that Monica has mastered the “citadel of philosophy.” On the other hand, there are ways in which she does not have the attributes of a philosopher. She is impatient with philosophical reasoning (she refers to the Academic skeptics as “spazzes” instead of carefully refuting their arguments);⁸⁷ she is not always able to detect logical fallacies or tackle thorny philosophical problems;⁸⁸ and she is not as articulate as a philosopher.⁸⁹ It is also telling that Monica’s

largest role is in *On the Happy Life*, which Augustine considers to be the most religious dialogue in the Cassiciacum corpus;⁹⁰ but in what is arguably the most philosophical, *Against the Academics*, she appears fleetingly and has no speaking role.

Is Monica, then, a philosopher? The answer depends on what one means by the word. There are three basic options: its etymological meaning, its etymological meaning narrowly applied, and its customary usage. Etymologically, as Augustine points out, a philosopher is a lover of wisdom. According to this option, *every* Christian is a philosopher, since every Christian loves Christ, who is Wisdom (1 Cor 1:24).⁹¹ But if this same definition were applied stringently and narrowly to mean that only a true and pure lover of wisdom can be a philosopher, then *only* Christians could be philosophers, since only they, the argument would run, can be fully purged of their impure loves through sanctifying grace and only they have access to the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God through revealed mysteries like the Incarnation and the Trinity (Rom 11:33). Third, according to customary usage at the time, a philosopher is someone who loves wisdom through the use of reason alone, without the aid of religious faith or divine revelation. With this option, *no* Christian can be a philosopher, since Christians love the wisdom that has been divinely revealed to them and live by faith as well as by reason (see *On Order* 2.5.16).

Given Augustine's citation of the etymological meaning of philosophy, one would think that he prefers the first option or perhaps the second. His writings, however, evince an all but unanimous preference for the third. Unlike other Church Fathers such as St. Justin Martyr, who took the name and even the outfit of a philosopher, Augustine never applies the term "philosopher" to any Christian believer—not to St. Ambrose, Manlius Theodorus, Marius Victorinus, or himself.⁹²

Augustine's diction is all the more curious given that at the same time he refuses to call Christians philosophers, he does not hesitate to encourage his Christian brethren or would-be brethren "to philosophize."⁹³ Perhaps Augustine employs the verb but not the noun with respect to the religious believer because there is a difference between engaging in an activity and having that activity define one's identity in a particular manner. There is, for instance, a difference between mothering someone (treating a person with motherly care and regard) and being a mother (a woman who has a particular biological or legal relationship to a child). Augustine, it appears, wishes to entreat Christians to wrestle with philosophy and to use it to enrich their understanding of themselves and their faith, but he is careful to distinguish this activity from a way of life that does not bend the neck to the yoke of Christ. For philosophy, when defined as the love of wisdom through reason alone, constitutes a way of life that, although sharing several traits with the life of faith, is not identical to it. And insofar as there are differences, there are and will be tensions. It is one thing to say, as Augustine readily would, that faith and reason are not opposed to each other; it is another to say that a life based on unaided reason is indistinguishable from a life grounded on a faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

According to the third usage of the term, then, Monica is not a philosopher, but neither is Augustine: Christian women cannot be philosophers, but neither can Christian men. But such a usage does identify the mind's love of wisdom as the common ground between philosophy and Christianity, and thus it invites a more detailed look at the relationship between faith and reason. Augustine will turn to this topic in the second book of *On Order*.

The charming repartee between Augustine and his mother would conclude book one were it not for a brief and somewhat

pointed exchange between Augustine and Licentius. Licentius ostensibly praises the providence that has set the group on this trajectory. But there is a hidden edge to his remarks, for he is essentially admonishing Augustine, saying to him, “Don’t forget that *you* have things to do for *us*, even if you are an unwitting pawn of divine providence.” (One suspects that Licentius is still concerned about his reputation and trying to recoup his losses.) Augustine does not take the bait but reminds both Licentius and Trygetius that if they notice this order, they should adhere to it all the more by living their lives better. “The order of our loves, then, must parallel the order of the whole,” writes one scholar commenting on this dialogue. “That which is highest in being should hold the highest place in our scale of loves; creatures, in turn, should be loved in proportion to their varying degrees of dignity and worth.”⁹⁴

Concluding Thoughts

In a series of short discussions, the penultimate of which ends badly, book one has managed to convey several important teachings. The most important of these is that there *is* an order of things, a fact that can be affirmed simply by recognizing that nothing can happen without a cause (knowing what exactly the order consists of is not necessary). Further, God is the Ultimate Orderer or Uncaused Causer responsible for this order. An infinite regression of causes is impossible, and so there must be something that itself is not caused yet causes the sequence of causes to begin. This sequence (or chain) is structured so that the perceptive “reader” of the world may follow the links back to God. Moreover, God can arrange things in such a way that even evils which He did not cause are justly contained by order. The notion of measure or limit (*modus*), which was introduced rather casually in book one (1.8.26), appears to be key to understanding this point. But if the first book

has advanced our understanding of order, it has not fully satisfied our inquisitiveness. It would be helpful, for example, to know exactly how evils fit in or are contained by order and how they could not be caused by God if God is the great Uncaused Causer. These topics therefore need to be addressed in book two.

Second, the order of discussion seems every bit as important as the arguments themselves, where the progress of the interlocutors is measured by their ability to understand the seemingly random events around them as part of a benevolent providence stemming from and pointing to God. One of Licentius's remarks to Augustine is thus paradigmatic of how this dialogue, and all of reality, is to be read: "See, I beseech, how many things have occurred, such that I believe something is now happening with respect to us by quite a favorable order" (1.8.23). Augustine has been training his pupils to recognize providence as the hidden hand guiding chance occurrences. His underlying reason for doing so is articulated more explicitly in the first Cassiciacum dialogue: "In fact, perhaps what is commonly called Fortune is actually being ruled by a certain hidden order, and what we call chance in human affairs is nothing but something the reason and cause of which are concealed. And perhaps nothing, regardless of whether it is advantageous or not, happens in part that does not fit and harmonize with the whole."⁹⁵ The habit of labeling the unknown "fortuitous" is virtually universal, but it must be broken if the unity of the whole is to be properly acknowledged. One way of doing this is by intelligently recognizing how the things that happen "accidentally" to us convey a second level of meaning bearing even upon our individual lives.

Further, since Augustine has hinted that the "enchained" character of the written dialogue mimetically reflects the "enchained" character of reality, what is true for the interlocutors is also true for readers. We are, in other words, being encouraged

by Augustine not only to join the boys in discerning the red thread of providence running through our lives, but also to see our reading of the dialogue in this light. Among other things, we are challenged to determine whether our contact with *On Order* at this particular time in our lives is not owed to a hidden and benevolent order that has arranged things so that even if it were not specifically written with us in mind, it should now fall into our hands to teach us something that we need to learn now.

Perhaps it is on account of these links between the order of being and the order of this dialogue that Augustine blurs the line between the dialogue as a written artifact and the action of the dialogue as a lived reality. Near the opening of 1.11.33 is “And when I saw that we had spilled so many words that they should have been written down (but we had already reached the limit of a book) and that there were no tablets left . . .” At Cassiciacum stenographers purportedly used steel pens and wax tablets to record the conversations; later, Augustine and Alypius would edit the transcripts into “books” (*libri*) or sections and commit them to a codex, a bound volume of parchment.⁹⁶ Here, however, Augustine reverses the order of tablet and book and acts as if book one of *On Order* has a natural or preordained limit that must be respected; the practical matter of running out of tablets is added almost as an afterthought, and no mention is made of editing the transcripts. The result of this conceit is the impression that there is a predestined ordering with respect to both the original conversation and the written composition.

It is also a providential time to stop because Augustine needs to mind his health. He has spewed or vomited (*evomere*) too many things onto the youths in his anger and needs to spare his esophagus. Augustine’s emotional dyspepsia suggests a breach in limit and moderation that needs to be corrected.

Finally, if the order of this dialogue bears upon our concrete lives, so too do its ancillary lessons. The misty eyes of the tragic poet must be replaced by the clear eyes of the philosopher, not to make us less erotic but more. Religious conversion and a sincere embrace of the faith must happen, not to truncate philosophical discussion but to heighten it. And the love of the good expressed through virtuous living must occur in conjunction with our quest for the truth so that disordered desires like the love of personal glory may be subordinated to the detached and disinterested desire to know (hence Augustine's final remark to Licentius about being morally better as the appropriate response to recognizing a "hidden and divine order" [1.11.33]). There are still a number of questions about each of these lessons (particularly regarding the relationship between philosophy and faith), but appropriating the groundwork laid here will be instrumental in comprehending the answers given in book two.

BOOK TWO

Cover Letter (2.1.1)

In this, his second opening address to Zenobius, Augustine singles out Monica for having a mind ideally suited to true philosophy. His high assessment, based on the intensity of Monica's passion for things divine, dispels any lingering doubts that Augustine's ironic compliments the day before might have cast on the sincerity of his admiration (that said, having a mind well suited to philosophy does not necessarily make one a philosopher). Augustine also mentions his dear friend Alypius, whose return from Milan is happily followed by an enticing mildness and a warm sun. Since Alypius has played decisive roles in *Against the Academics* and *On the Happy Life*, his presence here promises to change the character of the proceedings.

Finally, Augustine establishes the setting. The meadow, which they often use for their colloquia, is similar to the bathhouse from the previous day in that it underscores the leisurely and hence philosophical character of their retreat. Leisure is naturally associated with liberal education but even more so with philosophy, since the contemplative life is the only one that is truly leisurely.⁹⁷ The pleasantness of the day is also significant. Timaeus claims in a conversation with Socrates that the gods chose the location of Athens because its mild climate helps produce wise men;⁹⁸ further, a day's brightness or lack thereof tends to have a symbolic value in the Cassiciacum dialogues.⁹⁹ The bright morning bodes well.

Day Two: Part I: Resumption of the Discussion
on Order (2.1.2–2.7.23)

Return to Licentius's Definition of Order (2.1.2)

Before resuming the discussion, Augustine reminds the boys of their past behavior. The reminder is humiliating (they are being chastised in the presence of Alypius, whom they hold in high esteem [see 2.3.8]) and thus reflects how gravely Augustine views the crime of treating serious matters lightly. Yet the shaming is not excessive, and Augustine is able to find an unforeseen providence to the interruption of their discussion: it has enabled Alypius to participate. Even though the boys' behavior was in itself bad, it has helped lead to a good result; through God's favor, it was conducive to order.¹⁰⁰ This interpretative approach proves important later on.

Augustine asks Licentius whether he is ready to defend his definition of order, which Augustine repeats: "order is that through which God guides all" (2.1.2). This statement, however, is not a repetition but an emendation, for Licentius had not defined order as that through which God guides everything but as that through which God guides (only) the things that He has ordained (see

1.10.28). Licentius fails to notice Augustine's switch, or he does not consider the change significant; either way, he now has the more daunting task of defending the existence of order in both the things that God has ordained and the things that He has not (such as evil). Augustine had promised that he would be sophistical (1.7.20), and he has not disappointed.

Augustine returns to the question that had derailed their first discussion: whether God is guided by order. Whereas before Licentius had asserted that it seemed He was (1.10.29), he now states that He is not (2.1.2). Operative in Licentius's defense are a number of questionable presuppositions. First, he assumes that order pertains only to the management of evil; good things, he thinks, do not need order (this position contradicts his initial definition of order as pertaining to the [good] things that God has ordained). Second, he assumes that all good things are equal in value. Third, he seems to think of evil as a thing with the same ontological status as the good. Earlier, Licentius failed to grasp the goodness of the nature of order (1.6.15); now, he fails to understand the nature of evil. In sum, Licentius lacks an understanding of being and nonbeing and the hierarchy that emerges therefrom.

Motion and Being with God (2.1.3–2.2.7)

In an effort to provoke him to an intellectual conversion and thus remedy the deficiencies in Licentius's underlying metaphysics, Augustine shifts to a series of surprising topics. He begins his pedagogical detour with the topic of motion. Are the things that are guided by God, Augustine asks, movable? The question is geared to gauge the breadth and depth of Licentius's understanding of motion. Classical philosophy had a far more robust and differentiated view of motion than what is commonly held today.¹⁰¹ Socrates, for example, defines the soul as "motion capable of

moving itself” and characterizes it as “the cause of all transformation and motion in all things.”¹⁰² Understanding motion correctly, then, can lead to a knowledge of the soul or to self-knowledge.

Licentius seems to have a sense of what is at stake, but his distinction between the movable things of “this world” and the immovable things that are with God is a rather crude and distorted form of Platonism. Licentius associates the “movable” with sensible phenomena and the “immovable” with intelligible realities; he then associates intelligible realities with God exclusively. The problem with this portrayal is that it leads to an un-Christian, quasi-Manichaean dualism where the sensible, created world is bereft of God; in the language of the cover letter, the divine is treated as not reaching “all the way to these last and nethermost areas” (1.1.1). The problem of motion, it is revealed, is not unrelated to the question of presence, especially the presence of God to His created order. It is not the first time that the group has struggled with the issue of divine presence, and with about the same degree of success. In *On the Happy Life*, they fumbled over what it means “to have God” (2.12–3.22); here, Licentius cannot conceive on his own of what it means “to be with God” or “not to be without God” (2.2.4).

Licentius eagerly accepts Augustine’s definition: “whatever understands God is with God” (2.2.4). The advantage of this definition is that it affirms the important distinction between the sensible and the intelligible and associates genuine knowledge or understanding with the latter. As Socrates says in the *Phaedo*, when the soul relies on the senses, “it is dragged by the body to things which never remain the same,” but when it dwells in “the realm of the pure, the everlasting, the immortal and the changeless,” it itself remains unchanged.¹⁰³ Whatever part of the knower it is that does the understanding is of the same character as that which it grasps;

the mind, like the Being to which it unites in an act of knowing, is likewise in some way free of the limitations of space, time, matter, and locomotion. Augustine is drawing the group's attention to a form of presence that is higher than mere physical presence; or as he puts it later, he is exploring the paradox of "what it is to be neither in a place nor nowhere, what is outside of time and forever, what it is to be both nowhere and not to be nowhere" (2.16.44).

Augustine also narrows the discussion by focusing on the understanding not of things but of God. The change has four effects. First, it shifts consideration from any human knower in general to the wise man, since the wise man, who knows the greatest and highest things, would alone have much knowledge of God. Second, it prompts the group—thanks to the cooperation of Trygetius and Licentius—to gain a more precise understanding of what it means to know. "Knowing" in the loose sense of the word includes a mere recognition of particular things, such as books and clothes. By this usage even animals would be knowers. It is therefore better to call this kind of knowing "sensing," since it involves the senses of the body and grasps only what is in the sensible world, that is, the movable. Knowing in the strict sense, on the other hand, cannot be reduced to the sensible because it is an act of grasping what is intelligible or immovable. One way to understand this kind of knowing, Licentius asserts, is in terms of presence. Something that is immovable is perfectly present, since there is no chance of its ever becoming less present. God certainly fits this description ("for whose presence there is no waiting and of whose absence there is no fearing" [2.2.6]), as well as all the things that can be truly "known." Consequently, the wise man truly "knows" when he is utterly present to God Himself or to the things that are with God.¹⁰⁴

Third, as the group learns more about knowing, it comes to learn more about what it is in the human person that knows: the

soul. For the sake of easier comprehension, the soul is divided according to its various operations. The collation of data received from the five senses is identified as an activity belonging to the soul, even though the senses are a part of the body. Memory, that good servant with its bountiful peculium, is also a part of the soul, though it too pertains to “the things that pass away” (2.2.6). By contrast, the “wise” part of the soul (i.e., the part that “knows” in the strict sense) is ever present before God, ruling the subordinate parts and using them when necessary. The name that the group uses for this part is the intellect.

Fourth, the discussion introduces via Licentius a connection between wisdom, the knowledge of God, and self-knowledge. The wise man, Licentius declares, knows God because he knows himself. This does not mean, as he explains, that God is the self, but that knowing one’s own knowing gives one a window into the Source of this remarkable faculty (2.2.6). In the parlance of the dialogue, the wise man is present to himself because he has withdrawn from the senses, and he is present to God because he is present to himself. Licentius and Trygetius are beginning to grasp the central points in the cover letter.

That said, the two youths still have a way to go. Licentius has yet to come to terms with the nature of motion. His portrayal of the movable and immovable adumbrates a bifurcated universe in which motion and its lack appear as two utterly different realms, with nothing in between to bridge them. Such a bifurcation has a dualistic implication that Licentius is trying to avoid. On one hand, he affirms that there is nothing without God; on the other, he holds that “all things which are moved aren’t with God” (2.1.3). Yet in the cover letter, Augustine credits the orderly behavior of irrational moving bodies, animate and inanimate, to divine power and organization (1.1.2). If Augustine is right, there is a certain kind

of motion that links rather than separates the created and the creator. Last, symptomatic of Licentius's quagmire is his persistent deprecation of that important mental motion known as memory.

Put differently, Licentius and Trygetius are at a loss to explain how God, who is pure, transcendent, and immutable Existence, is present to those realities that come into being and pass away. That God must be present to them is an important tenet of the Christian doctrine of creation; as Augustine writes elsewhere, if something that does not exist in and of itself is abandoned by "that through which it exists," it will certainly no longer exist.¹⁰⁵ Despite their progress, the youths' responses smack of a somewhat vitiated Platonism, one in need of further nuance. More than that, they need to distance themselves from or correct certain aspects of Neoplatonism. Plotinus's association of matter with evil contradicts not only the biblical teaching that God created all things good but the mystery of the Incarnation. One of the goals of Augustine's interrogations in these passages is to inch Licentius away from a doctrine that disparages the material realm toward a theological appreciation of material creation, since left unchallenged, the former becomes eerily similar, at least from the perspective of the uneducated, to the dualism of the Manichaeans.¹⁰⁶

Folly and Knowledge According to Privation (2.3.8–10)

Augustine proceeds to his next surprise topic. If the wise man understands the things that are with God, Augustine argues, then folly is with God. Or—to put the matter in its most blunt and impious form—the youths are calling God a fool.

Operative behind Augustine's sudden attack is the same goal of effecting in them an intellectual conversion toward true being. But to understand being, one must understand both what it is and what it is not. Later in his life Augustine will differentiate two fundamen-

tally different kinds of knowing: knowing according to the form of a thing (*notitia secundum speciem*) and knowing according to privation (*notitia secundum privationem*).¹⁰⁷ The latter, which is essential to the grasp of nonbeing, is especially elusive because it involves knowing that there is nothing knowable about the object in question—some crucial component of “knowability” is missing from it. Knowing according to privation, in other words, is knowing not the intelligibility of a thing but that it lacks a certain intelligibility.¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, when I understand folly, I understand not a determinate content but the absence of that determinate reality which is called wisdom.¹⁰⁹ Folly’s elusive character may explain why Augustine changes the first of the classical *loci* or *topoi* of oratory in 2.3.9 from “whether a thing is or is not” (*sit necne sit*) to “which kind is it” (*quae sit*). It is surprisingly difficult to answer the question of whether folly exists since as a privation of wisdom it “exists” only by virtue of what it is not. But what Augustine means by his own question of “which kind is it” is unclear, especially since he also raises the similar question of *qualis sit*, “what sort is it” or what properties it has. *Quae* is an interrogative adjective here, and so it may be prompting a response that is also adjectival: “Folly is bad,” “folly is corrupt,” etc. On the other hand, the intended response that Augustine may have in mind is that folly is the kind of thing known according to privation rather than according to its form.

Augustine is aware of the difficulty in truly coming to terms with insights into various kinds of privation and the realities—or rather, unrealities—that they grasp. In *On the Happy Life*, he admits that one must sometimes employ language in questionable ways: when, for example, one says that one “has need” of something, one is essentially professing a possession of nothing, for “having” denotes possession while “need” implies absence (4.29). In *On Order*, he is not astonished when Licentius and Trygetius

become “rattled” (*commoti* also means “greatly moved”) as they watch their careful distinctions between sensible and intelligible kinds of knowing earn them the label of blasphemous. Trygetius quickly passes the torch to Alypius (2.3.8), while Licentius, we come to learn, leaves the scene entirely (2.3.10). Yet Augustine is persistent. He realizes that knowing according to privation is a small but crucial part of what it means to be wise, for these highly counterintuitive insights often presage spectacular breakthroughs in the fields in which they occur. Greek geometry would not have progressed far without the discovery of π or the Pythagorean theorem, the former being an irrational number—a number lacking the fullness of *ratio* or intelligibility—and the latter presupposing an understanding of incommensurable lengths, which are likewise irrational. And Augustine never would have left the restrictive compound of materialist dualism for an adequate metaphysics without his realization that evil is not a substance but the privation of a good.¹¹⁰ It is because of the importance of *notitia secundum privationem* that three of the four Cassiciacum dialogues contain discussions on specific kinds of privative nonbeing.¹¹¹ Paradoxically, mention of this darkness sheds much light (see 2.4.11).

It is the former soldier Trygetius who sees that they are outflanked and brings in reinforcements, compelling Alypius to join the disputation for the first time. Alypius’s reluctance to participate appears genuine and is consistent with his behavior in other dialogues.¹¹² Curiously, he chooses to pass over the crucial flaw in Augustine’s accusation that the youths have associated folly with God because “they said that all things which the wise man understands are with God” (2.3.8). But what if folly is not a thing but the absence or privation of a thing? The wise man could then understand, by way of *notitia secundum privationem*, what folly is

without being a fool just as a mathematician can understand the number zero without being a cipher.

Alypius, however, does not say this. Perhaps he too, like Licentius and Trygetius, stands in need of an intellectual conversion whereby the difference between being and nonbeing is fully grasped. But the more likely explanation is that he shares Augustine's desire to have the youths arrive at the breakthrough into privation on their own. Augustine later states that his friend was already well aware of the answer that Trygetius would eventually give, and that he is sensitive to the hazards of arriving at this kind of insight (2.3.10).

Rather than reveal the full answer, then, Alypius replies with a beguiling part of it. He rightly responds that folly is not something, strictly speaking, which is understood, but he goes on to depict a knowledge of the concept of folly as something that induces folly in the knower. Augustine enjoys reducing this depiction to its absurd consequences along with tossing in a well-placed innuendo about Alypius's legal skills. Alypius for his part takes the jesting in stride and even adds to the characterization of himself as a failed lawyer before gracefully bowing out. The playful and productive rivalry between Augustine and Alypius serves as a corrective model for the earlier mean-spiritedness between Licentius and Trygetius.

Alypius's strategy in providing only a partial truth has succeeded: it has helped Trygetius deduce on his own that understanding folly is, in an odd way, something other than understanding since by definition it lacks a certain "understandability." Augustine cannot dismiss this insight. When the mind knows according to privation, it knows an absence; and since true knowing can only be the grasp of a presence, one can just as easily say that knowing privation is not knowing at all. That said, knowing according to privation may be a not-knowing, but it is not ignorance or error either; it is a part of the treasury of wisdom.

Rerum Concordia Discors (2.4.11–2.5.17)

The usually deferential Trygetius has had to assume a greater role in the disputation to fill the vacancy left temporarily by Licentius. Augustine's language for this vacancy is telling: he describes Licentius as "totally absent" (2.3.10) and "absent in every way" (2.4.11). His use of the superlative implies that there are different degrees of presence and absence, with physical presence being one but perhaps not the most important kind. When Licentius returns, for example, Augustine enjoins him to concentrate on the disputation by telling him to be "wholly present" (2.5.17): having a presence of mind is not a metaphor but a real activity, one as real if not more real than bodily presence. Augustine's descriptions of Licentius's absence and presence are therefore part of his unfolding of a theory of presence or of "being with" (see 2.1.3–2.2.7).

Trygetius's prominent role continues as Augustine now combines the topics of folly and order. Does the fool, he asks, guide by order? Augustine wishes to determine whether Trygetius can uphold Licentius's definition of order without casting God in an unfavorable light, thereby resuming his attack on the definition as well as building upon the previous discussion.

His dearth of examples notwithstanding, Trygetius has no difficulty in rising to the occasion. He answers that although the fool barely orders his own life, this disorder makes little difference: divine providence encloses such a life within a greater order so that individual evils are given places befitting their stature. An important distinction is to be drawn between causality and use: both God and humans may make good use of a bad thing of which they themselves were not the cause. Echoing the language and content of the cover letter, Trygetius also surmises that the eyes of the mind must be properly "lifted up and extended" to see how this is so or

they will view what they see as a “massive deformity” (2.4.11). No matter how hard they try, narrow-minded inquirers will never understand the unity of the whole in the face of disorders, or as Horace puts it, the *rerum concordia discors*, the discordant harmony of things.¹¹³

Trygetius’s core insights are not new: Licentius had said as much on the first night (1.7.18–19). But its reemergence here is important not only as a marker of Trygetius’s progress but because it sets the stage for the dialogue’s first thematic treatment of a liberal education (see 1.1.3). Augustine is only too happy to provide the similitudes that Trygetius is unable to produce. After again alluding to the providential order guiding this discourse, he finds appropriate examples in the city, the body, and the liberal arts. The order of this presentation is itself instructive. Since the progression constitutes a movement from observable events around us to a more precise grasp of things, it recapitulates Plato’s ascent from opinion to knowledge¹¹⁴ and Aristotle’s method of advancing from the *primum quoad nos* to the *primum quoad se*.¹¹⁵ Like Plato and Aristotle, Augustine recognizes how all observations are at least initially conditioned by the views of those around us, and how the polis thus marks the starting point for all philosophical inquiry. Second, the order advances from the corporeal to the incorporeal according to the outer-inner-upper pattern that is dear to Augustine (see 1.8.26).

The liberal arts, however, do more than provide relevant examples for Trygetius’s assertion: they provide the wherewithal by which one can recognize its truthfulness.¹¹⁶ For Augustine, a liberal education is not only a means of cultivating the gentleman, liberating him from the ugly and base;¹¹⁷ it is an exercising of the mind that strengthens it for the pursuit of wisdom. In this case, the liberal arts are useful because they help one grasp the nature of measure or limit (*modus*) and render one competent to philosophize about

the Supreme Measure (*summus modus*). Augustine's references to the importance of *modus* are not unprecedented,¹¹⁸ but their salience here marks a new level in our understanding of order. Evils, Augustine is now telling us, are contained in order through *modus*: that is to say, order is able to reign supreme precisely because God assigns a just place for evils and imposes a limit (*modus*) on how much damage they do. Not only is each assignment beautiful in itself (as there is a certain beauty in an evil being punished by exile in a demeaning place), but the demeaning places and the limits imposed on evils contribute to the overall beauty of the whole. Accordingly, Augustine states that *modus* is the very heart or inner sanctum of order (2.5.14).

Although all of the disciplines are useful in learning the nature of *modus*, they are not useful in identical ways. Augustine sees different functions for the two branches of the liberal arts. The so-called trivium¹¹⁹ of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic is useful in helping one understand how tiny disorders are kept in measure by a greater order. Augustine observes that even those notorious purists, the grammarians,¹²⁰ concede that some base elements enrich the overall loftiness of poems, while rhetoricians often insert flat and ostensibly unpolished prose into their speeches to cast a brighter light on their more eloquent moments (2.4.13). Further, the logician or dialectician makes use of false syllogisms in order to sharpen the analytical skills of his students; or to speak more specifically, it is what the author of a philosophical dialogue does when he includes deliberately flawed arguments, like the ironic composer of *On Order* (2.5.13).

As for the quadrivium: music, geometry, astronomy, and mathematics are useful in studying different kinds of measure directly, thereby preparing the soul for philosophy and for an understanding of the Supreme Measure by which all is kept in order (2.5.14).

Augustine's opinion of the value of the liberal arts will evolve over time, but he is consistent, both at Cassiciacum and throughout his life, in maintaining a rather paradoxical appreciation of them. On one hand, he is happy to engage the disciplines on their own terms, taking seriously what they take seriously. On the other, he evaluates their ultimate significance in a way that is strikingly different from the viewpoint of the disciplinary specialist. No grammarian or rhetorician, for instance, would evaluate the importance of their fields in terms of *modus* or philosophy, and most specialists are at a loss to see how their area of specialization fits into a hierarchical and unified pyramid of human knowledge.

Augustine goes on to portray those who have completed a liberal education as capable of properly surmising—to borrow an image from the cover letter—the mosaic of the whole (see 1.1.2). They are therefore not shocked by the appearance of defects or discrepancies, by “murkiness” or “mixture” (2.5.15). Admittedly, Augustine's examples of bad things that happen (infertility and excessive fertility, poverty and stinginess, prodigality and want, injustices in the distribution of honor, harsh winters and regional drought) are not utterly horrific or nefarious events such as genocide, pandemics, or the torture of the innocent. Literarily, the very mention of evils on that scale might detract from the generally comic tone of the dialogue. Theologically, evils on that scale might be better addressed in light of the mystery of the passion and death of the Christ, which is not present in this dialogue.¹²¹ And finally, limiting the discussion to the evils he has listed maintains continuity with the tradition he is engaging, since all of the examples are lifted from or inspired to some extent by classical authors.

On the other hand, those who have not had the right education will not be able to see beyond these disorders since the nature of *modus* will have escaped them. Augustine's description of this

unenlightened group as complaining “even in poems” (2.5.15) is a rather pointed hint to Zenobius (who wrote a poem on the subject [1.7.20]) to become better educated if he truly wants the answers to his persistent questions. Failing that, he should at least be strong in the faith so that God may free him from the entangled evils of his ignorance.

Reason and Authority (2.5.16–17)

If Augustine’s goal were merely the cultivation or refinement of a civilized person, he would have stopped at the last of the liberal arts. Since, however, he wants to make a wise man, he continues to even higher kinds of knowledge. Philosophy and the sacred mysteries of Christianity are higher than the liberal arts, for both involve not this or that department of knowledge but that architectonic knowledge of the whole known as wisdom. Philosophy and Christianity, however, are not synonymous. Judging from these passages it would appear that for Augustine, the liberal arts are to philosophy what philosophy is to the sacred mysteries of divine revelation. Just as the liberal arts are useful pedagogues for the philosopher, philosophy is a useful pedagogue for the believer. Just as the liberal arts’ limited but useful focus on things prepares one for a more perfect study in philosophy, philosophy’s limited but useful grasp of all that can be known about God prepares one for the more perfect study of Him who is revealed in the mysteries. And just as philosophy is not technically dependent on the liberal arts (with the possible exception of dialectic) but is nonetheless enriched by them, the mysteries are not dependent on philosophy even though the latter helps believers to understand what they already believe.

Augustine enmeshes these reflections on philosophy and the Christian faith in a discussion on reason and authority (2.5.16).

Philosophy is the way of life that “promises reason,” that aspires to the full and perfected use of the human intellect. Such a perfection would be welcome, for there is nothing in reason that is contrary to Christian revelation or vice versa. Faith and reason are compatible: reason points to several of the realities of the Christian faith, and the Christian faith welcomes reason so that it may be better understood. Augustine even goes so far as to say that philosophy at its very best—that is, “true” and “genuine” philosophy—has as its sole aim a knowledge of the Trinity. Augustine is no doubt thinking of Neoplatonism as he makes these remarks, since Plotinus speaks of a divine Triad that aided Augustine in his comprehension of Christian Trinitarian doctrine even though it fell short of the mark by orthodox Christian standards.¹²² In *Against the Academics* 3.19.42, Augustine describes true philosophy as a synthesis of Plato and Aristotle, which in several respects is a characterization of Neoplatonism; yet he is also careful not to call an unadulterated Neoplatonism the true philosophy since it includes an anti-Christian bias, “clever pride,” and error. Indeed, one of Augustine’s goals at Cassiciacum is a correction of these defects.

As the strengths and weaknesses of the Neoplatonists illustrate, philosophy is impressive but ultimately insufficient. First, as just noted, it is not without error.¹²³ Second, “it barely frees a tiny few” (2.5.16), since philosophy has always been for a very small minority rather than the majority of the population. Third, there are decisive realities of which philosophy, even at its very best, is unaware. Augustine mentions the mystery of the Incarnation, when God “deigned to assume and bear this body of our race” (2.5.16). Even if the philosopher knows that the Word was with God and the Word was God, he can never know without the aid of supernatural faith that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.¹²⁴ In fact, he is inclined to look upon this doctrine of a majestic and transcendent

God becoming a lowly human being as repulsive. Yet for Augustine, this repulsiveness is precisely what makes the miracle of the Incarnation so wonderful: it is relatively easy to live and die for a noble cause, but it takes a truly loving God to live and die for the half-hearted and corrupt.¹²⁵ It may be a scandal for God to take flesh for the sake of such a multitude, but it is a beautiful and clement scandal.

In light of these three considerations, Augustine concludes that reason needs divine authority, that second prong of the “twofold path,” not as a substitute for rational illumination but as a means of achieving it. The best life consists of both faith and reason, where the former strengthens the latter and the latter sharpens the former.

Together, philosophy and Christian mystery shed considerable light on the soul and God (2.5.17), the two things most worth knowing. It is imperative, however, that these difficult subjects be approached in the right manner. A pseudo-education is as undesirable as no education at all: it produces none of the fruits of a genuine education (even if the same items are taught) and results only in a pinched and distorted soul. Rather than be “studious,” thereby fanning a passion for truth and wisdom, students will become “curious,” myopic gatherers of trivia, gossip, or morbid data; rather than be “learned,” sharpening an instinct for the separation of fact from fraud, they will be gullible or “credulous,” prone to superstition, social manipulation, and wild conspiracy theories; and rather than be “cautious,” mastering the paradoxical art of critical openness, they will remain “incredulous,” thick and incorrigible. To avoid such perversions, Augustine admonishes his pupils not to rush into their studies blindly. Since true learning aims not at the accumulation of data but at a conversion and honing of heart and mind, it must take place in such a way that the former is conditioned by the latter.

Return to Motion and Being with God (2.6.18–2.7.20)

Licentius's return to the group prompts Augustine's return to the topic of motion. Before, Licentius had defended the position that the "wise part" of the soul, the intellect, is with God immovably; now, he will be required to explain in what way the wise man is or is not moved. Operating out of a crude and misappropriated Platonism, Licentius had experienced difficulty in making such nuanced distinctions (2.2.6–7), and his weakness is especially evident now in his inability to define motion. Licentius is not to be blamed entirely: both Aristotle and Plotinus, for example, taught that motion is difficult if not impossible to define.¹²⁶ Why, then, is Augustine essentially asking a novice like Licentius to do the impossible? Perhaps it is at least to direct his attention to a kind of motion that he is not considering, a kind that can overcome the wall he has erected between the movable and the immovable.

Licentius is saved from having to define by Augustine's playful interpretation of a summons to lunch by a servant boy from the villa (2.6.18). Augustine borrows a line from a dialogue by Tacitus to narrate their laughter and departure, thus reinforcing the association of philosophical dialogue with comedy. But the scene also performatively corrects Licentius's earlier statements about the mind's struggle to maintain dominion over memory, which Licentius had characterized as a usurping domestic servant in 2.2.7. Here, however, Licentius joins the others in gladly following the houseboy who "forces" them to a wholesome lunch. Perhaps memory is more like the villa's helpful houseboy than Licentius's rebellious slave.

When the group is ready to resume, they must convene in the baths rather than the meadow because a cloud has covered the sky (2.6.19); their bright and promising start is, we fear, becoming overshadowed. Certainly, Licentius's thinking on motion remains

clouded. What is it that he continues to overlook, or what error has he committed? His chief mistake was in agreeing with Augustine. When Augustine asked him whether motion is “nothing else than” a transition from one place to another (2.6.19), he should have answered no. Licentius is apparently ignorant of the rich discussion on types of motion that exists in classical philosophy. In addition to locomotion (the kind that Licentius readily recognizes),¹²⁷ thinkers like Aristotle and Plotinus identify other forms such as qualitative and quantitative motion;¹²⁸ generation and destruction, increase and diminution, and alteration.¹²⁹ Whereas locomotion is a passing from place to place, these other forms of motion are from potency to act.¹³⁰ With this broader concept of motion, alteration or change is a type of motion rather than the reverse, and motion can exist outside the sensible realm. As an attribute of substance, Plotinus teaches, motion is *primarily* timeless¹³¹ and free of matter.¹³²

One more aspect of Plotinus’s metaphysical kinetics must be mentioned, and that is his understanding of the relationship between motion and stability in *Enneads* 6.3.27. Contrary to what one might expect, Plotinus does not view stability as the opposite of motion but instead differentiates stability and rest. Rest, which pertains only to the sensible realm, is the negation or annulling of motion—specifically, of locomotion—for rest “signifies merely that an object has no motion.” Rest is a true negation, for a thing at rest “has been deprived of its due motion”; rest is therefore the result of a deficiency.

Stability, on the other hand, exists only in the Intellectual realm, for in the lower sphere of sensible, spatiotemporal realities, “nothing is stable”; whatever has the appearance of stability simply “has a less strenuous motion.” True stability cannot be considered the negation of motion for stability “*requires* for its own existence the simultaneous existence of Motion,” and “when Motion ceases,

Stability does not exist.” Stability, in other words, is not the negation of motion but its consummation or fulfillment: stability exists by virtue of a perfection of motion, not by an absence of it. A charioteer standing in his chariot at full gallop maintains his balance or stability not by refusing to move but by making a countless number of small movements to adjust to the jostling of his rig. If this crude physical analogy is somewhat true, the referent to which it points in the realm of pure intelligibility is more so, where stability “takes hold of” motion, as Plotinus puts it, rather than lacks it. Such a conception of stability, in turn, dovetails well with Plotinus’s inclination to characterize motion as a dynamic rather than a static form.¹³³

Grasping these aspects of nonlocal motion is important because it is instrumental in gaining self-knowledge, a knowledge of being, and a knowledge of the relationship between being and becoming. It is nonlocal motion that overcomes the various dichotomies evident in Licentius’s thought (what we have labeled his crude Platonism), for it is nonlocal motion, as we see in the *Timeaus*, that bridges the gap between the sensible and the intelligible.¹³⁴ Motion properly understood is an important ingredient that keeps Platonic metaphysics from being dualistic and static. And it is quite useful in understanding the Christian God. Although it is true that there is no motion in God (since God is pure Act),¹³⁵ God as Unmoved Mover remains profoundly connected to His creation through motion, and one can understand, however remotely, something about the procession of the divine persons in the Trinity through the analogy of motion.

On occasion, Licentius makes statements that point to the reality of nonlocal motion. To designate his fickleness in 1.8.21, he uses the word *mobilitas*—the same word that he used to describe the air driving the autumn leaves. And in an exchange with Augustine he declares that he is being moved to laugh (2.2.4; see

1.7.23). But Licentius is unaware of the metaphysical implications of his own language. It is also clear that Augustine himself has had the rich, classical theory of motion in mind all along and has been trying to “move” Licentius toward it. Two other passages that occur later in *On Order* confirm his intentions. First, in 2.11.30, Augustine defines reason as a “motion of the mind,” a clear reference to a kind of motion that cannot be understood spatially or locally (and if self-knowledge is a knowledge of one’s own reason, self-knowledge is therefore knowledge of a motion). Second, in 2.16.44, Augustine lists a number of things that an educated soul knows, including the following three: “what motion according to place is, what motion not according to place is, [and] what stable motion is.” Similar to Aristotle and Plotinus, Augustine understands “motion not according to place” in terms of potency and act, since elsewhere he writes that motion involves a tending toward that which the thing being moved lacks, while that which “exists by virtue of itself” has every abundance existing from itself and thus “does not even need any motion.”¹³⁶ And he explicitly states that an immaterial substance cannot be moved locally.¹³⁷ Finally, Augustine’s invocation of “stable motion” has a clear Neoplatonic derivation. In the *Soliloquies* he describes the laws of God restraining the unstable motion of changeable things and maintaining a “semblance of stability” in the sensible world (1.1.4); and in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* he writes:

Because it is written of His Wisdom that “She reaches from end to end mightily and orders all things sweetly” (Wis 8:1) and because it is again written that “Her motion is quicker and swifter than all motions” (see Wis 7:24), it is sufficiently apparent to those correctly considering this that Wisdom sweetly furnishes things with something incomparable and ineffable: her own stable motion (if such

a thing can be understood). And certainly, these things are so arranged that if this motion is taken away and Wisdom withdraws from this work, they will perish immediately.¹³⁸

Last, it should be noted that Licentius's difficulties in articulating what it means to be with God or not be without Him are tied to his ignorance of nonlocal motion. One way to understand God's presence to His creation is in terms of His constant providence over the motions of being and becoming, and one of the ways of understanding the soul's presence to God is in terms of its motion toward Him and from Him.

Return to Fools and Order (2.7.21)

Sensing another impasse, Augustine returns to the topic of folly and to the question he had posed to Trygetius: whether the fool acts or guides according to order (2.4.11). Since Licentius had left before this question was asked, he does not know that Trygetius has already tackled the problem. Nor apparently does Licentius see the connection between this problem and his earlier account of the whole being composed of antitheses (1.7.18).

Licentius's lack of presence (physical and otherwise) prompts Augustine to chastise him again. The correction is embarrassing for him, made as it is in the presence of Monica, but instructive for us. Augustine's advice to go back and read Trygetius's comments applies just as much to the readers of *On Order*, reminding us of the importance of engrafting ourselves into this narrative. Perhaps to aid us in this process, Augustine again blurs the line between the "real-life events" to which the text ostensibly points and the text itself, the finished composition that we are studying (see the comments on 1.11.33 above). At 2.4.12, when Augustine is speaking to Trygetius, he alludes to the cockfight they witnessed not as

something that took place the day before but as something “which we mentioned in the previous book.” One character in a book is telling another character in the same book about the book that contains them! In this section (2.7.21), Augustine the character admonishes Licentius the character to read what Trygetius said “earlier.” Presumably, this is a reference not to the finished dialogue but to the stenographers’ transcripts of the conversation recorded moments before. Still, the word used to denote “earlier” is *supra*, which primarily means “above”—the adverb is spatial in meaning and only metaphorically temporal. Such terminology, which implicitly draws the readers’ attention to the spatial artifact that they are reading rather than the temporal frame of the Cassiciacum group’s conversations, also occurs in the way that Augustine the narrator informs readers that Licentius had “in no way noticed that earlier on (*loco superius*) Trygetius had answered the question” (2.7.21). If one translates *loco superius* more literally, Licentius did not notice this “in the place up above.” Augustine’s conflation of event and text links the two together, enabling readers to enter into the providential order of the former through the chain of the latter.

Is God Eternally Just? (2.8.22–23)

Rather than push Licentius further on the matter or wait for him to catch up, Augustine raises a different topic. It will be Augustine’s final question for the group, because, as it turns out, it is the most difficult. The group has learned *that* evils are contained by order and even *how* they are contained; now, Augustine would like to know *when* they came into this order. He initiates his quest by asking Licentius whether God was ever not just. Licentius dares not say yes, and so the group is forced to conclude that evil has always existed. This conclusion, however, sounds almost as impious as the first. It is Trygetius who breaks the impasse by pointing out

that God could have been just long before He had any need to act justly, since there is a difference between the habit of virtue and a virtuous act. Trygetius's answer, however, brings with it problems of its own. If (as it has now been assumed) evil came into being at some time, then something was done apart from order. Even Licentius's original position—that order began precisely when evil did (2.7.23; see 2.1.2)—cannot escape this conclusion, for regardless of when order began, the introduction of evil would either constitute a disruption of order and hence be apart from it, or—even worse—be a part of order, in which case God would be its author.

The dilemma is not easy to resolve. It might be different if it involved only the emergence of evil in *this* world. God created all things good, but Adam, who turned away from God through the exercise of his free will, chose to introduce evil into the order of things. The Fall, however, was not “outside of order” (2.7.23) in the sense that God did not have foreknowledge of Adam and Eve's sinful decision and did not make it a part of His order even though He was not responsible for it. (As Augustine states years later, God is in some way the author of all causes but not of all choices.)¹³⁹ Moreover, God could have done this in such a way so that even human evils could be used as occasions to demonstrate His greater goodness. God's greatness is such that He can cause good to come even out of an evil that He did not cause; the fall of the race could miraculously become, through His benevolent providence, the *felix culpa* by which many are lifted to a level hitherto impossible to attain. Hence, in his later work *On the Free Choice of the Will*, Augustine explores the evils that men and women do and the evils that they suffer. Augustine responds to the first kind in ways similar to what has just been outlined here about moral evil, while the second is conceived along the lines of Licentius's thinking, as a just punishment for sinful souls.¹⁴⁰

But the dilemma facing the group in *On Order* is that the problem of evil has not been limited to evils in the spatiotemporal world,¹⁴¹ which is why not even Monica, the wise and veteran Christian, offers the aforementioned genealogy. Augustine wants to know about evil in a wider sense such as, we must assume, the evil of the fallen angels. As pure spirits, angels are outside of the spatiotemporal framework, and thus the origin of their fall is difficult to pinpoint. If, for example, they fell before the creation of the world, how can we say that evil “began” when it did not occur in time, since time starts to exist only when the world comes into being? And what about prior to that? Did evil exist before the angels were created?

Most importantly, there is an equivocation in speaking of the “existence” of evil in the first place since evil, in Augustine’s famous formulation, is a *privatio boni*: it “has no being except as a privation of good, up to the point where it has no being at all.”¹⁴² It is only sort of true that evil exists, for evil is also utter nonexistence.¹⁴³ The group is asking when evil came into being, but they might as well be asking when evil came into nonbeing or when nothing began to exist.

To answer Augustine’s question, therefore, two things are necessary: an adequate knowing according to privation (see above) and an adequate grasp of the nature of eternity and time. For Augustine, neither of these is fully possible without a root-and-branch conversion grounded in self-knowing. Yet Augustine has also given his listeners a small hint. After forgetting something he was going to say, he opines that this lapse in memory came about according to a greater order (2.8.23). Not only can breakdowns in order (such as failures to remember) be explained in terms of other causes (which can be explained in terms of order), but since forgetfulness is the privation of memory, the breakdown itself is an

instance of something that requires an insight into privation. In other words, Augustine's forgetfulness is isomorphic to the subject at hand. Like forgetting, evil is a lacuna that is not a byproduct of order but of a lack of order that nonetheless is enfolded within a greater order. Oblivion affords a clue into evil.

Monica, it should be noted, does not fare well in these exchanges. In her zeal to defend the eternity of divine justice, she declares that good and evil have always existed: ironically, she who so detested Augustine's years with the Manichaeans is agreeing with a key tenet of Manichaean cosmology. When Licentius takes her to task by narrowing the question to evil alone and whether it has always existed, she just as quickly retracts her statement (2.7.22). The next time she speaks is to reassert the enclosure of evil within a divine order, but her statement skirts the topic at hand, which is evil's "birth" or emergence (2.7.23). Augustine is polite to his mother: after she joins Licentius in a certain opinion, he interrogates Licentius but leaves her out of it (2.7.23). Augustine's charitable reference to the unequal talents of the group's members (2.7.24) leaves one wondering where he would rank Monica, especially since he is vocal only about her strengths but silent on the subject of her weaknesses.

Day Two: Part II: A Discourse on the Kind of Person One
Would Need to Be in Order to Understand All the Answers to
One's Questions About Order (2.8.24–2.20.52)

Alphabets and Syllables (2.8.24)

The conversation grinds to a halt as the interlocutors find themselves dumbfounded. Since Augustine knows that he cannot teach the nature of eternity and time or the "nature" of evil to the group in a reasonable amount of time (especially given their unequal talents [2.7.25]), he realizes that a sea change in pedagogy

is necessary.¹⁴⁴ Augustine offers an analogy: they have been asking questions about syllables when they do not even know their letters. Astonishingly, the topics they have covered so far are no more than syllables and not full words, and that which follows are mere letters of the alphabet!

A. The Order of Living (2.8.25)

The sea change that Augustine inaugurates involves turning to “a certain lofty discipline, far removed from even the suspicion of the multitude”—the law of God (2.7.24). What exactly Augustine means is unclear, at least at this stage. One thing is certain: he has shifted from a direct consideration of order to a consideration of the conditions by which the individual can understand order. These conditions, it turns out, can be fulfilled by education properly understood. Consequently, Augustine spends the rest of the dialogue offering his friends a vision of the way in which the mind is properly strengthened and formed so that it may come to know divine and hidden things. Although the breadth and depth of Augustine’s vision are at times daunting, it has but one purpose—to know oneself (see 2.11.30, 2.18.47). Again, a certain kind of return to oneself is held as the key to unlocking the most pressing metaphysical difficulties (see 1.2.3).

Augustine tells the group that the law of God commands a “double order,” one pertaining to living, the other to understanding. As was hinted at in the cover letter, intellectual conversion presupposes a certain degree of moral conversion.¹⁴⁵ A life devoid of virtue will have neither the aptitude nor—perhaps more importantly—the desire for serious study. Even after the heights of contemplation have been attained, right living is necessary to keep what has been attained. The double order is therefore not to be followed sequentially but simultaneously.

The salient motif of Augustine's outline of the order of living is moderation, even though the word is never used.¹⁴⁶ Augustine does not discourage caring for the body, but caring for it excessively; he does not advocate refraining from all love of praise, but from immoderate love. Augustine's emphasis on moderation is related to the group's recent insights into *modus*, the etymological parent of *modestia* (moderation).¹⁴⁷ He has already mentioned how a knowledge of the order of things should shape the way we live (1.11.33); after recognizing how the universe is benevolently moderated, we should therefore strive to pattern our lives in a similar way. And moderation is important because of what it enables one to do. By having a reasonable limit on its various desires, the soul can make good use of and appreciate the world without being addicted to it. This proper attitude in turn liberates the soul to pursue its true food: the knowledge and understanding of things.¹⁴⁸ Such a pursuit is far more difficult when the allurements of belly and throat or of political office and prestige seem more real than invisible truths. Augustine's double caution against indulging physical appetites and seeking political honor is therefore in preparation for the highest kind of desire: the desire for wisdom.

Augustine's advice has a Ciceronian ring to it, in part because he is addressing the same group of noble youths or gentlemen as Cicero.¹⁴⁹ Augustine starts at the center and works his way out, from the individual's body to his immediate circle of family and servants to broader political relationships. His treatment is shot through with a Christian sensibility: his advice regarding ruling and serving, for example, goes beyond lessons in fairness to a self-emptying humility.¹⁵⁰ And whereas the highest end for the philosopher is knowing the highest things, for the Christian it is knowing and loving the highest things. God is not simply to be studied; He is to be worshiped and adored (2.8.25). This love of God, made

possible by the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, also grounds the love of neighbor, depicted here in terms of goodwill. Religious conversion is essential to attuning oneself to the fraternal order of humanity, the cosmic order of being, and the Orderer that is the Triune God.¹⁵¹

B. The Order of Education (2.9.26–2.16.44)

1. AUTHORITY (2.9.26–2.10.29)

Having covered the divine law's first pillar, Augustine moves to its second. Education, he argues, requires both reason and authority. Of the two, reason is the higher and the greater since it alone enables humans to seize the truth through acts of understanding, that is, to "know" in the strict manner that the two youths had described earlier (2.2.4–7). Even divine authority is a means to this end, since believing is for the sake of understanding. According to Augustine, reason achieves this level when it learns to know itself. From this crucial vantage point it may then discover the immovable things spoken of earlier, such as God and the order of the whole (2.9.26; see 1.1.1–3). It is for this reason that Augustine cannot bring himself to call those who rely solely on authority—even divine authority—truly happy. The knowledge and understanding of things is the food for which the soul longs. Right belief and right opinion might be entirely accurate and true, but unless they are converted to knowledge by the mind's grasp, they cannot truly satisfy this hunger.

Although reason is first in importance, authority is first in time. Augustine rejects the temptation to think of reason as the purview of the educated and authority as a crutch for the ignorant, for the reality of the situation is more complicated. Every person needs the guidance of authority at some point in order to learn how to use his or her reason well. Initially, submission to authority occurs

without a true knowledge of its value. But once reason has been nourished in “the cradle of authority,” one may at last understand for oneself the intelligibility of its opinions and the reasonableness of its precepts (2.9.27). Indeed, it is authority that benevolently renders reason strong enough to comprehend first itself and then God.

The problem, however, is that the majority of human beings never really learn to actualize their minds’ capacities: individuals might use their reason every day of their lives, but they do not use it consistently well or to its full potential. For the “ignorant multitude,” therefore, authority remains necessary until the very end (2.9.26). Augustine shares with classical philosophy a recognition of the *demos*’ chronic unwillingness or incapacity to leave the cradle of authority. Where he differs is in his detection of a different kind of authority that can have a different kind of impact on the impoverished human mind.

According to Augustine, human authority is nowhere near as useful as that which falls under the label of “divine” (2.9.27), which, loosely speaking, can include the authority of anything naturally superior to humans¹⁵² but properly speaking stems solely from God. Properly, divine authority is perfectly and infallibly ordered to the knowing and understanding of things, commanding humans (as Augustine puts it) to “fly up to the understanding” (2.9.27). Not coincidentally, Augustine—who has referred both to the order of the whole and to this philosophical discourse as “chains” leading humans to God—now describes faith in the same way.¹⁵³ In fact, he has a higher assessment of this species of authority than of the philosopher’s use of reason, which he characterizes, obliquely yet disparagingly, for its disputatious runarounds and unreliability (2.9.27).¹⁵⁴ There is also self-deprecation implicit in this statement, for *On Order* is itself a disputation with numerous

runarounds, and while these runarounds are not without their value, the ultimate answers for Augustine lie in the sacred mysteries disclosed by divine authority.

ALYPIUS'S INTERRUPTION

Before Augustine has a chance to move to a more thorough consideration of reason, he is interrupted by Alypius (2.10.28). Ever the shrewd lawyer, Alypius sincerely praises Augustine's "grand image of life" but with an ulterior motive. First, as Augustine points out, Alypius extols the image in order to arouse within the hearts of Licentius and Trygetius a desire for the life it depicts. Knowing the power of imitation, Alypius is hoping that the enthusiasm of someone they respect will have a contagious effect. Second, the praise is intended as a subtle modification of Augustine's remarks on divine authority. Augustine had portrayed its utility in strictly intellectual terms, thereby omitting one crucial element: its power to eliminate the disparity between knowledge and conduct. He alludes to this power in his cover letter to *Against the Academics* when he praises the apostles (but not the philosophers) for living in accordance with the truth (2.2.5). And as Augustine's own stormy conversion as related in the *Confessions* illustrates, there is an enormous difference between knowing what is true and acting in accordance with what one knows to be true. Since not even intellectual conversion is sufficient to free the soul from bad habits, divine assistance is necessary for both the proper development of one's reason and the reordering of one's appetites.

Augustine agrees with Alypius and goes even further. Whereas Alypius seems to think that this divine assistance is limited to a few, Augustine holds that it has been administered much more widely than we imagine, and he singles out the boys as proof. Since neither their age nor their prior habits would have inclined them toward a

zeal for the eternal, their behavior during this retreat at Verecundus's villa can be explained only in terms of what Augustine would later in his life identify as grace. Thus, by amplifying Alypius's remark, Augustine makes an important correction to his original portrait.

Augustine's response is also curiously colored by the possibility that he or Alypius is lying. Augustine denies that he is being dishonest in his praise of Alypius, which is somewhat strange given that no one has accused him of doing so. And he predicates half of his reply on the assumption that what Alypius says is not different from what he thinks, that is, that his friend is not dissimulating (2.10.29). The harmless suspicion that Augustine shows is evocative of book three of *Against the Academics*, the events of which took place one to three days earlier and during which Alypius was consistently wary of Augustine's intentions. But it also ties into Augustine's hope that more people are converted to the good by God's grace than is apparent. Perhaps, Augustine conjectures, there are many who feign agreement with the prevailing zeitgeist by remaining silent or inconspicuous but who do not utter intentionally deceptive falsehoods—unlike Augustine earlier in his life, when he was a disingenuous rhetor.¹⁵⁵ Implicit in this discussion is the distinction between dissimulation and outright lying, a distinction that will be explored in greater depth in the *Soliloquies*.¹⁵⁶

PRINCIPLE, UNDERSTANDING, REASON

Before moving on to Augustine's treatment of reason beginning at 2.11.30, it is worth dwelling on precisely what it is that authority discloses (2.9.26). At the beginning of his discourse on the order of education, Augustine mentions that entering through the door of authority enables one to follow the precepts of an excellent life and to learn three things: (1) reason, (2) understanding, and (3) the principle of all things that is outside of all things (2.9.26;

see 2.5.16). As mentioned in the dialogue notes, there are Trinitarian echoes in this statement: the Principle corresponds to God the Father, Intellect or Understanding to God the Son, and Reason to God the Holy Spirit. Even as a catechumen, Augustine recognizes a connection between the divine persons and the image of God according to which the human mind is made, thus inspiring him to seek correlations between the two. Interestingly, Augustine is not wed to any one set of correlations: he offers other parallels in *On the Happy Life* 4.34–35 and in *On Order* 2.19.51, and he will certainly offer a different model decades later in *On the Trinity*. Augustine's flexibility attests to his own modest restraint before a divine mystery, but it also illustrates the consistency of his conviction that the *imago Dei* must somehow be Trinitarian, namely, that every act of human intelligence is somehow grounded in and reminiscent of the dynamism of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Augustine is convinced that we may learn something about our own knowing from the identity of the divine persons and vice versa. In this case, it is our process of reasoning that leads us to understanding, while our reasoning and understanding together lead us to that which is.

We will learn more about the dynamic motion of Reason in 2.11.30. For now, Augustine's description of Understanding and Principle bears closer scrutiny. Regarding the former, Augustine states that all things are in the understanding, or that it is all things. Either the intelligibilities that the intellect grasps are somehow present to the intellect and thus "in" it (a subject that will occupy much of the *Soliloquies* and *On the Immortality of the Soul*), with only "formless matter" (see 2.16.44), purely physical phenomena like shapes being "outside" the purview of intellect.¹⁵⁷ Or, the understanding is all things in the sense that it is *potens omnia fieri*, capable of becoming all things potentially rather than actually,

possessing the potential to know everything unboundedly but not right now.

Regarding the Principle of all things, just as reason leads us to an act of understanding, understanding leads us to a grasp of first principles. The ultimate Understanding, in turn, would lead to the ultimate First Principle, that which precedes all else logically and ontologically, or as Augustine puts it, that which is outside of or beyond (*praeter*) all things. By adverting to the process of human knowing, one can thereby see the relation of the Son (understanding) to the Father (principle-less Principle), the former being He who, as the image of the Father and as the Wisdom of God, leads us to the latter.¹⁵⁸

2. REASON (2.11.30–2.16.44)

The consideration of authority now complete, Augustine turns to the subject of reason. Because understanding reason is no easy matter, we are wise to follow his example of not rashly claiming to comprehend everything about it. Yet we may outline the three divisions of Augustine's remarks: (1) what reason is, (2) how the word "reason" is used, and (3) how reason is used.

1. Reason, according to Augustine, "is a motion of the mind* capable of distinguishing and connecting the things that are learned, the guidance of which only the rarest class of men can use to understand God or the soul* itself" (2.11.30). Augustine's definition of reason in terms of motion is particularly significant given the group's previous discussion of what it means to be moved. Obviously, "motion" here does not mean going from one physical locality to another, but neither is it the immovable intellect that Licentius argued made the wise man wise. Rather, reason emerges as the nonlocal motion of the mind toward the immovable state of perfect wisdom. The movement, in other words, would be the transition from potency to act.

Augustine's clause "the guidance of which . . ." gives further emphasis to what has now become a familiar theme, namely, that even though reason is universally possessed by all human beings, it is rarely used to its full potential. Echoing what he has stated in the cover letter, Augustine cites as the cause of this neglect our activities with the senses. These activities are not evil, but they can be characterized as deceitful insofar as they accustom us to thinking that the sensible alone is real.¹⁵⁹ Consequently, when we try to understand the (greater) reality beyond space, time, and matter, we stumble on unfamiliar ground. Harkening back to his definition of wonder, Augustine calls this phenomenon "strange" or wonderful (*mirus*) because we would not expect to find so great a power as reason so easily shackled by the senses. After all, the senses are supposed to aid and be informed by reason, not the other way around. Yet, as Augustine says, "this is how the matter stands."

2. To gain a better grasp of the strange interplay between the senses and reason, Augustine does not start at the highest point. Instead of exploring reason's lofty ability to know the soul or God, he attempts to track reason down in whatever it has touched. Augustine's justification for this method stems from the time-honored definition of humans as rational and mortal animals. The definition is important not only because it identifies rationality as somehow immortal, but because it sheds light on what rationality is. The rational (*rationale*), we are told, pertains to the use of reason, while the reasonable (*rationabile*) pertains to the result or product of rational activity. Augustine is clearly interested in the rational (since his quest is to examine the use of reason), but because he says that he does not know what that use is, he must start on a humbler footing. He therefore turns first to the effects of its use—that is, the "reasonable"—so that he and his listeners may gain a better understanding of their quarry.

3. Augustine adorns his exploration of the “reasonable” with colorful and often comic examples, but his main points are rather straightforward. The first is that the reasonable pertains to human artifice, not to nature. A dish prepared by a chef is reasonably seasoned, for example, but an apple is not reasonably sweet. Even an animal’s artifice would not be considered reasonable: a beaver may make an impressive dam, but because it is acting on the basis of instinct rather than through the use of reason, its activity is not said to be rational or its product reasonable. This strict usage of “rational” and “reasonable” leads Augustine to the conclusion that since the reasonable pertains to human making and doing, it has to do with a rational insertion of “dimension and modulation” (2.11.33) onto or into something else, whether it be the sounds of the throat or the works of the hands. Further, this characterization of the reasonable implies that reason inclines to order. Even the senses that are attached to reason by virtue of the union of soul and body take pleasure in well-ordered things. The eye, for example, delights in a well-proportioned building, and the ear enjoys a good arrangement of notes and harmonies. In both cases the pleasure depends on the dimensions or proportions of the thing experienced.

What is reasonable for the senses, however, is not necessarily reasonable for the mind, even when the mind receives its information through the senses. There is a difference, for example, between enjoying the beauty of a poem and enjoying its meaning. A poem’s combination of sounds—its meter and alliteration, for instance—might be a delight to the ears at the same time that its meaning—its plot and themes—are an offense to the mind. The reason for this difference lies in the fact that the senses have as their object the world of pleasure and pain and are thus pleased with such antitheses as hot and cold, bitter and sweet. The mind, on the

other hand, has as its object either good and evil or true and false and is thus concerned with a different kind of proportion and dimension. In both cases, however, the reasonable is defined in terms of a certain order and moderation of various elements.

2A. TRIVIUM: THE REASONABLE IN SPEAKING (2.12.35–2.13.38)

Augustine has so far been dealing with the humblest kind of knowledge—that which pertains to artisans. This in itself is reasonable: ever since his sea change to education Augustine not only has been inquiring into the knowing of the human subject (rather than the objective order of things) but also has been trying to work his way up gradually from the lower to the higher. In keeping with this ascent, he prepares to leave the arts and crafts behind to examine loftier kinds of knowing. His transition has been partially prepared for by the last art mentioned—poetry—and by the distinction he discovered between the reasonableness of the sounds and the reasonableness of their meaning. This second kind of reasonableness, it should be noted, has less to do with reason as the power to *make* reasonable things (what the Greeks would call *technē*) and more to do with reason as the power to *follow* reasonable things.

But such a transition can occur only by degrees. Augustine identifies “three classes of things in which something reasonable appears” (2.12.35). The first has to do with “deeds directed to some end,” that is, ethics. Augustine passes over the doing of reasonable things and focuses instead on the other two classes.¹⁶⁰ The second, the art of speaking, admonishes us “to teach correctly,” while the third, that which concerns delighting, admonishes us “to contemplate happily” (2.12.35).¹⁶¹ These latter two classes are what eventually come to be known as the trivium and quadrivium.¹⁶² Again Augustine has turned to the liberal arts, and again he has discerned different functions in each of the two branches. But whereas before

his first consideration was limited to their relation to *modus*, they are now to be examined vis-à-vis the reasonable.

Augustine begins with the lower of the two branches and the first of the disciplines within that branch—grammar. His treatment—which consists of two parts, one on the infancy of grammar (*litteratio*) and the other on grammar proper—is cast in the form of a genealogy. Augustine’s account of the development of language (which is a borrowing from and expansion on a passage from Cicero)¹⁶³ corresponds neither with the biblical account nor with a typically modern account. It differs from the former in that it marks the progress rather than the decline of language¹⁶⁴ and from the latter in that it traces this progress in terms of the constructive and collaborative intelligence rather than the self-interest of the innovators.¹⁶⁵ Augustine’s approach reflects the nature of his quest. Interested in the development of reason and its ability to follow reasonable things, Augustine offers a genealogy that is highly rational and marked by an ascending series of intelligent discoveries and developments.

Language was born from the natural solidarity among humans and the rational desire to communicate the thoughts of their minds. The agreement to have certain arrangements of sounds signify a wide variety of things was in itself a great event, as was the even more extraordinary agreement to have markings on a page signify the sounds that signified the things. Other reasonable developments followed. The usefulness of numbering, for example, was discovered, and grammar, the study of the various attributes and products of language, was born.

But not all that falls under the category of grammar marks an advance in reason. By making itself purveyor of all literature, grammar subsumed “history” (*historia*), by which is meant not only the records of past events but also all narrative. These stories

vary immensely in quality and, more importantly, in accuracy. The storytellers themselves do not mind grammar's annexation of *historia*, but the grammarians, who aspire to catalogue all of what they study, are bound to become overburdened. Moreover, the addition of fables to grammar cheapens the discipline. Because of it, a master of the rules of language might be considered ignorant simply because he has not heard the story of Daedalus flying.

Given the seemingly limitless potential of language, it is no surprise that its organizer and judge, grammar, should be such a valued art. Even higher on the scale, however, would be the power by which this art is produced. The very ability to make language and then to define and differentiate it raises the question of what this ability is and how it works. Augustine's answer is reason and dialectic, respectively. Dialectic is the machinery of reason: through the discursive acts of distinguishing truth from falsity and opinion from knowledge, it decisively actuates reason's potential. Consequently, dialectic reveals reason to itself. Because it "knows how to know," it alone produces knowers in the highest sense of the term, that is, those who not only know things but know the nature of their own acts of knowing. Dialectic, in other words, helps produce the very self-knowledge that Augustine has consistently praised and consistently characterized as extremely difficult to attain.¹⁶⁶

Augustine's understanding of dialectic bears a close resemblance to that of Socrates, who calls this discipline the "journey" from the sensible to the intelligible and the "power" to lead the soul "to the contemplation of what is best in the things that are."¹⁶⁷ Socrates also characterizes dialectic in terms of conversion, saying that it "gently draws [the soul] forth and leads it up above, using the arts . . . as assistants and helpers in the turning around."¹⁶⁸ Augustine's account, however, is not identical. Whereas Socrates places dialectic *after* what is more or less the quadrivium, Augustine

puts it before. The difference is no doubt partially due to the traditional ranking of the disciplines that Augustine is here following, but it also attests to the hingelike function of self-knowledge in Augustine's thought. Self-knowledge alone frees the mind from confusedly understanding the intelligible in terms of the sensible and is therefore crucial for accurately contemplating the divine and eternal things to which the quadrivium points. And since self-knowledge is attained through dialectic, this "discipline of disciplines" should precede those higher studies.

Augustine's concern with self-knowledge also explains his slight modification to the classical understanding of the discipline. Cicero summarizes the older understanding well when, in one of his dialogues, he has Varro call dialectic "speech enclosed by reason."¹⁶⁹ While Augustine would not disagree, he adds the dimension of self-knowledge. Dialectic for Augustine is more than just logic. While the two are closely related (as both enable the mind to sift through statements and determine which are true), dialectic helps reason discover itself.

Yet because dialectic pertains only to the rare lot that has undergone an intellectual conversion, a different discipline is needed for those unable to benefit from it directly. In contrast to the few true knowers who need no extraneous incentive to foster their love of wisdom, the unconverted masses are incapable of consistently appreciating the naked truth and therefore require pleasantries to adorn the truth and make it attractive to them. These pleasantries are not in themselves rational, but they fulfill the reasonable objective of helping the irrational become desirous of the good life.

Augustine's treatment of this art of adornment, rhetoric, sounds innocuous but actually constitutes a demotion.¹⁷⁰ Rhetoric was and is highly sought after because having the power to persuade essentially translates into having the power to get what one wants.

As a former rhetorician, Augustine is all too aware of rhetoric's power. Yet he transforms its function and value in several ways. First, he subordinates rhetoric not to the love of self-advancement but to the love of truth. If rhetoric is to be seen as useful, it is in disseminating the truth rather than obfuscating it. Second, rhetoric is to be practiced only by those who are truly wise, that is, those who have gained self-knowledge through dialectic.¹⁷¹ In a perfectly rational world all wordsmiths who are merely clever (such as lawyers, politicians, journalists, and professors) would be denied this persuasive tool.

But although Augustine demotes rhetoric, he does not eliminate it. Because of the relative incorrigibility of the masses, the ability to persuade through the emotional power of oratory must be a part of the skills of the rational and reasonable person. Augustine's image of a lap heaped high with treats to throw to a foolish and excitable crowd calls to mind Juvenal's original meaning behind his famous reference to "bread and circuses" in *Satire* 10.81, which is used *positively* to signify a means of motivating citizens to greater political involvement. Such a use of rhetoric would be in keeping with the classical philosophical tradition. Plato's ideal city, for example, requires the services of the sophist Thrasymachus,¹⁷² while Cicero openly confesses the necessity of oratory in introducing philosophy to Rome.¹⁷³ In the words of Ernest Fortin, rhetoric is "the art by which philosophy could relate itself to the nonphilosophic life"¹⁷⁴—that is, it is the art by which philosophy, insofar as it can, is able to be politically efficacious.

2B. *QUADRIVIUM*: THE REASONABLE IN DELIGHTING

(2.14.39–2.15.42)

The art of speaking—most notably dialectic—excites reason to move to "the happiest contemplation of the divine things." But because this contemplation involves gazing upon a beauty beyond

all sense experience, reason must first learn to leave the eyes of the body behind. It does so, ironically, by studies involving the senses. Three of the four disciplines of the quadrivium can be said to begin with concrete phenomena, even though all of them succeed in leading to intelligible realities.¹⁷⁵ These disciplines thus deserve the appellation “liberal” even more than the trivium because they liberate the mind from the limitations of the world of space and time. Rather than leap straight to the unfamiliar contemplation of the intelligible, Augustine notes, reason wisely ascends step by step with the help of these instructive arts, which it derives from itself.

The first discipline of the quadrivium that partakes of sense and intellect is music (2.14.41). Like grammar, the study of music leads to a minute division and classification of the various things that fall under its authority. Just as grammar divides the various sounds of the human voice into vocals, semivocals, and mutes, music divides the different sounds of melody into vocal, wind, and percussion (see 2.12.36 and 2.14.39). Just as grammar measures time intervals with “longs” and “shorts” or “singles” and “doubles,” music measures similar intervals in “pauses” and “members” (see 2.12.36 and 2.14.40). And just as grammar identifies units such as syllables and words, music sets limits by demarcating verses. Music even directly borrows the notion of feet and accents from the “seeds” of grammar and, as a result of its examination of rhythm, assigns all poetry to the jurisdiction of grammar (2.14.40).

It is understandable that music should be seen in a similar light to grammar. Music in antiquity had a broader meaning than it does today and therefore overlapped many of the things that would now fall under the study of linguistic rules.¹⁷⁶ But Augustine’s grammatical references bring with them an ulterior effect: they demote poetry. By putting the divine work of the poets under the pedantic scrutiny of the grammarians, Augustine is following the

rational ranking of knowledge yet also stripping poetry of its exalted and mysterious aura. No doubt he is also hoping that the lesson is not lost on Licentius.

The real value in studying music, however, lies not with its logical divisions and subdivisions but with the numerical significance of those divisions. This “numerosity” is most evident with rhythm, which is so inseparable in concept from number that in Latin it can be called nothing else but number. But it is true for the other divisions as well. The various “modulations” (i.e., measurements) of sounds, pauses, etc. all depend on number in one way or another. The essence of music, therefore, is number. Reason is pleased to have made this discovery because it turned to sound in order to contemplate divine things. Now, after establishing the study of music, it has learned that the ontological grounding of sound is something not aural or temporal but “divine and eternal” (2.14.41).

Reason’s discovery of the numerical realities in music is the indirect result of the invitation of the ears. Now, in order to continue its quest, reason solicits the aid of the eyes. The eyes, of course, are ordered toward visible beauty, which is why they seek it out most persistently. Yet this fixation prompts reason not to seek more of this beauty but to understand what beauty is. Through a procession of deduction, reason concludes that beauty is essentially numerical: things are pleasing to the eye because they have a certain shape, shapes consist of various dimensions, and dimensions are to be known numerically. Reason thus makes the same astonishing discovery as before: what lies behind that which so delights the senses is an immaterial or intelligible reality.

Geometry, the second discipline of the quadrivium, reflects this same peculiarity. None of the shapes and dimensions that are

measured by geometry, strictly speaking, exist in the sensible world. No perfect circle, for example, has ever or will ever be made, as there will always be some imperfection in the drawing that, no matter how minuscule, will disqualify it from truly being a circle. Even the definition of a circle—a locus of co-planar points equidistant from a center—rests on premises that lack any dependence on physical space or time, as a point is without magnitude. Geometry is thus a study of patterns that are grasped by the intellect rather than the eyes. As Socrates puts it in Plato's *Republic*, "Geometrical knowing is of what always is," not of what can come into being and pass away.¹⁷⁷

Reason's love of intelligible patterns next inspires it to consider the "motion of the sky" and to put its discoveries under the heading of the third discipline of the quadrivium—astronomy. This discipline, however, can be dangerously deceptive. As Socrates tells Glaucon in the *Republic*, by making the soul take the heavenly bodies seriously, astronomy has the paradoxical effect of causing "the soul to look downward."¹⁷⁸ Socrates's reasoning is that any study that does not "concern what *is* and is invisible"¹⁷⁹ keeps the soul fixated on the sensible, even if the object of study is physically miles above us. Consequently, if astronomy is to be pursued, it must be done in order to *demote* the heavens and to provide patterns that can be grasped "by argument and thought, not sight."¹⁸⁰ Such patterns would be inspired by the actual orbits of the planets, but they would not be identical to them, any more than the drawings of the geometer can be equated with the realities they signify.

Augustine's brief description of astronomy bespeaks a similar understanding. The significance of astronomy for the soul seeking the divine is not what it teaches about the stars or the calendar, and certainly not about the fate of individuals. (Both Socrates and

Augustine agree that astronomy is dangerous in the hands of the unlearned and is thus “a torment for the curious” [2.15.42].) Rather, astronomy is useful because it reveals the “rule” of dimension and number. Augustine calls this “a mighty subject for the religious” (2.15.42) because of the enormous benefit astronomy has for those seeking divine and eternal things. Singling out the religious, however, departs from the Platonic and Ciceronian portrayal of this science as beneficial to the student of *philosophy*, perhaps indicating a conviction on Augustine’s part that philosophy alone does not sufficiently inoculate against the allure of astrological superstition.¹⁸¹

The combined effect of these three disciplines is that reason comes to understand how all of reality is in some sense numerical. Numbers are utterly beyond the senses, but they are very much real; indeed, they are more real than familiar objects that come into being and pass away. As Cicero puts it, numbers “are the only thing unchangeable and eternal”;¹⁸² by contrast, that which can be touched, tasted, smelled, seen, or heard is mere “shadow and footprint” (2.15.43). The sensible can lead us to the “really real”¹⁸³ in the same way that footprints can lead us to the person who made them, but they themselves are only as real as the fleeting images that Proteus generates to elude capture.¹⁸⁴

Finally, such a focus on number explains why Augustine does not separately examine arithmetic, the fourth discipline of the quadrivium. All of the quadrivium, we come to learn, is in some way the study of number.

2C. THE SUBJECT OF PHILOSOPHY (2.15.43–2.16.44)

Reason’s development of—and being developed by—the quadrivium was initiated by its use of dialectic, which filled it with the wish to reach the “happiest contemplation of the divine things” (2.14.39). It was through dialectic that “reason itself shows itself and

reveals what it is, what it wants, what it can do” (2.13.38). Now, after gaining true knowledge of the nature of reality, reason returns to itself and again asks about itself, this time with respect to the entire soul. Its answer, of course, will be informed by what it has just learned. Since it now realizes that all known things are somehow numerical, reason concludes that it is too. Reason might be “with” number or it might even be identical to the “number by which all things are numbered” (2.15.43); in any case, it possesses at least some of the qualities of the numerosity that it knows. Reason, then, also in some way transcends space and time—and so too does the soul, of which reason is unquestionably a part. The soul, therefore, may be immortal.

Augustine acknowledges that proving the immortality of the soul is a bold undertaking, and he himself does not make a serious attempt to do so until the *Soliloquies* and *On the Immortality of the Soul*. In the meantime, there are other goals that a proper formation in the liberal arts gives one the courage to pursue. Augustine lists a host of difficult concepts that can be understood by knowing number. Since discussing each item would be excessive, three observations must suffice. First, by placing this list after the soul’s return to itself and a reference to its need for well-ordered desires, Augustine underlines the importance of intellectual and moral conversion. More than half of the items on the list require what intellectual conversion confers, namely, a proper differentiation between space and time on one hand and the nonspatial and nontemporal on the other. Further, the soul must know itself *and* live morally if it is to ever grasp reality. Neither intellectual nor moral conversion comes easily—Augustine stresses that training must begin in childhood and be pursued incessantly—but it is the only way in which the soul can gain the strength to see what it most longs to see.

Second, Augustine's statement that God is "better known through not knowing" brings to a fulfillment his earlier remark about the mind's coming to know the "Principle of all things" (2.9.26). As the Originator of the whole, God is not a member or part of the whole and is therefore not to be known in the same way as the whole or its parts. Augustine's brief statement about knowing God through not knowing is an affirmation of God's utterly transcendent Being and an endorsement of what is known later in the Christian tradition as the *via negativa* or apophatic theology.¹⁸⁵ The latter, however, is not to be confused with *notitia secundum privationem*, knowing according to privation. God, who is Supreme Good, and evil, which is a privation of the good, may both be mysteries, but the former is mysterious because it superabounds in intelligibility while the latter is mysterious because it lacks intelligibility. God is like the sun that blinds the owl by overpowering its ocular capacities, but evil is like total darkness that blinds the owl by not giving it a single photon of light. The "not knowing" of knowing God is significantly different from the "not knowing" of knowing privations.

Third, Augustine's list bears poignantly on the group's disputation. Several of the topics that the boys labored to explain—such as motion and "being with God"—are mentioned here in one way or another. And the final puzzle that derailed the discussion, whether evil has always existed, can be solved if one knows all the things on the list. The meaning for the group is clear: if they wish to find the answer to their questions, they must first become educated.

C. Advice to Monica (2.17.45–2.20.52)

1. THE LIBERAL ARTS, FAITH, AND PHILOSOPHY (2.17.45–2.18.47)

Augustine's ominous warning about not approaching these problems without the benefit of a liberal arts education or a good upbringing (2.16.44) casts a lingering doubt on whether those who

have only religious conversion or the chain of faith (2.5.15) can ever share in the delight that comes from contemplation and wisdom. Augustine responds to this doubt by now addressing Monica, who, as we have already seen, epitomizes the pious yet relatively unlearned Christian (see 1.10.31–1.11.33).

Augustine admonishes his mother not to be discouraged by the “immense forest” (2.17.45) that comprises the liberal arts for three reasons: (1) she has the right character for it (she is not “living most wretchedly”); (2) she has the right mind for it (unlike those who are not “terribly swift”); and (3) it is not necessary to master every jot and tittle of the liberal arts, which not even Augustine, a former professional in two of these disciplines (grammar and rhetoric), has succeeded in doing. Rather, what is important is holding on to the “soul” of the matter and leaving its “body” behind for the nitpickers. Indeed, such an attitude may even carry the added advantage of not getting lost in the minutiae. Monica, for example, is unlikely to turn into a pedant who spends her time counting solecisms in Cicero’s orations (see 2.17.45).

If, however, Monica chooses to disdain the liberal arts, Augustine has two recommendations: (1) cling to your faith, and (2) do not do what you did earlier—inquire into “matters most obscure and yet divine” like evil’s beginning (2.17.46). We will examine Augustine’s thoughts on evil’s beginning below, but first let us turn to his second piece of advice.

Augustine’s advice is dire: one should *only* inquire “into these things and matters of this sort” *after* receiving a liberal education. Although the faith avails much in the enjoyment of the happiest life, it may not be an adequate substitute for education in all respects; some obscure and divine matters may prove too hard a nut to crack without the tools of the liberal arts.

Not only that, it must be received according to “*this* order of education or not at all” (2.17.46). Augustine has already mentioned that “without the order of the disciplines, one will become curious instead of studious, credulous instead of learned, incredulous instead of cautious” (2.5.17), and in the *Soliloquies* the character Reason observes: “it is the office of a good discipline to attain [Wisdom] by a certain order; attaining it without order, on the other hand, is a stroke of luck that can hardly be believed” (1.13.23). Order is crucial; without it, learning becomes enormously difficult (see *On Order* 2.7.24).

Yet as soon as he utters this all-or-nothing warning about the necessity of a properly ordered liberal education, Augustine offers three other alternatives. *If* the study of the seven liberal arts is too much, he suggests, study two of them: dialectic and mathematics. If this is too much, study one of them. And if even this is too much, just make sure to understand the concept of unity in numbers—not even in its highest intelligible manifestations but in the daily pedestrian things that we observe and do.

In offering these alternatives, Augustine accomplishes two tasks. First, he undermines or at least qualifies his endorsement of the liberal arts. Only a moment ago, Augustine insisted that a study of the seven liberal arts according to a strictly followed order is necessary for inquiring into obscure and divine matters; now, he concedes that two liberal arts, one liberal art, or even a quotidian distillation of a single liberal art may be sufficient. This concession does not constitute a complete retraction, as Augustine suggests his three alternatives only for those who chafe at a full immersion into the liberal arts; full immersion therefore remains the ideal. Yet it does acknowledge that there are other ways to grab onto the “soul” of the liberal arts without the liberal arts; they are useful tools, but they are not the only tools. Later in his life Augustine expresses

regret for his praise of the liberal arts in his early dialogues.¹⁸⁶ It is a reasonable criticism, but it fails to acknowledge that his early dialogues also contain counterbalancing elements that take some of the luster off that praise. Augustine is clear in these passages that even if his proposed order of a liberal education is followed to the letter, it is not sufficient by itself; he is also clear that Monica has in some ways matched and even surpassed the achievements of the well educated. Finally, Augustine has already mentioned the inadequacies of life without authority and has critiqued the life of the philosopher (2.9.26–27).

Second, Augustine's added concessions have the effect of singling out the most essential benefit of the liberal arts, with the character of a camera lens moving back to an ever more encompassing vista. At first the lens had zoomed in rather closely, examining each of the liberal disciplines one at a time. Now, the focus is wider as Augustine makes out the most important facet of first one branch of the liberal arts, then the other. The end of the trivium, he asseverates, is "good disputation," while the end of the quadrivium "the power of numbers" (2.18.47). Therefore, the most important discipline of the trivium is dialectic and of the quadrivium is the study of numbers. Finally, the camera pans back to the whole of the arts all at once. This transition can be compared to Augustine's opening image of the eye moving back from a multitude of inlaid stones to a single, unified mosaic (1.1.2). And what it reveals is that truly knowing unity is the most important end of a liberal arts education. Augustine's *reductio* or retracing of the disciplines to "what is 'one' in numbers" in 2.18.47 reinforces his earlier statement in 2.16.44 about finding "some simple, true, and certain oneness" scattered far and wide throughout the disciplines.

As for what actually constitutes a matter "most obscure and yet divine," Augustine offers as his sole example the topic that had

stumped the group: the birth of evil. In keeping with his argument that moral, intellectual, and religious conversion are necessary to understand the solution, Augustine does not offer a direct answer but rather a heuristic outline of the hurdles any answer would have to overcome in order to be satisfactory. His outline does help, however, in narrowing the field of possibilities and thus constitutes his fullest response to the question that he himself had posed.

Augustine outlines four possibilities: (1) evil began in time; (2) evil has always been, is in God's arrangement, and the world also has always been; (3) evil has always been, is in God's arrangement, and the world was made; and (4) evil has always been but has not always been in God's arrangement. Of the four, Augustine rejects the second on the grounds of impious ingratitude and the fourth on the grounds of impious folly or absurdity. Holding that the world has always been is impious and ungrateful because it implies that God did not make the world. Believing, on the other hand, that evil has not always been under God's arrangement leads one either to say that God shifted strategies in midstream (which is absurd to predicate of someone eternal and changeless) or to subscribe impiously to some kind of Manichaean dualism.

The two remaining possibilities are that either evil began in time or it has always existed (even though the world has not) and has always been under divine control. To decide between the two, one must have a firm grasp of the meaning of "time," "always," and "this world."⁸⁷ Meanwhile, the disparities between the learned and unlearned remain significant, as can be seen by their differing reactions to the proposition that evil is bad for God (2.17.46). The learned man, Augustine says, will not be able to hold his laughter, and the unlearned man will not be able to keep his temper, presumably because the unlearned man does not like a position that he takes seriously being laughed at. Aside from illustrating the

phenomenon of loyalty to one's own, which was on display in the quarrel between Licentius and Trygetius, the example also points to the difficulty in communicating certain truths to the unlearned (see 1.1.1).

Augustine's depiction of the world as the punishment of souls is the logical corollary to the limit (or *modus*) that divine order imposes on evils, and it builds upon the earlier conclusions of the group. This conclusion can be inferred not only from Licentius's argument about God rendering to each his due, but from Augustine's example of the city using base citizens to execute base but just measures (1.17.18–19, 2.4.12).

Augustine's schema of possibilities about evil presupposes and advertises the need for the kind of robust liberal education he has been advocating—before, that is, he concedes in 2.18.47 his three other alternatives. But regardless of whether it is robust or minimal, if an education helps one to understand the concept of unity, it has served its central purpose. And the unity in question does not even have to be the highest kind for, as he concludes in 2.18.47, it is the task of *philosophy* to adopt our education (be it fulsome or rudimentary) and introduce us to a unity that is “far more profound and far more divine” (2.18.47) because it is philosophy that is centered on the soul and God. Knowing what makes either a unity reveals what each truly is, just as seeing how the pieces of a mosaic come together to form a single image enables one to comprehend it. Knowing the oneness of the soul, which yields the much-desired goal of self-knowledge, is the “sweeter” of the two because it comes more easily than knowing God. It is also, as Augustine constantly stresses, crucial in understanding the difference between the sensible and the intelligible. Knowing the oneness of God, on the other hand, is far more difficult (again Augustine states that He is better known through not knowing) but much more important. As

the Parent of the whole, God is the *summus modus* or Supreme Measure who gives the whole its intelligibility, albeit without in any way being a part of it. Together, the knowledge of the soul and God make one “fit to understand the order of things” (2.18.47).

Augustine’s description of philosophy strongly suggests that philosophy is instrumental in perfecting reason. When Augustine initially defined reason, he mentioned that it could be used for knowing God and the soul, though only with the greatest difficulty (2.11.30). Now we see that the knowledge of the soul and God is achieved through an education that includes philosophy. Philosophy is also the means by which we can recognize the underlying unity of the liberal disciplines: through it one sees how the various branches of the liberal arts harmonize into one. Because of its architectonic capacity to unify, Augustine goes on to use philosophy as the means of summarizing most of the dialogue’s movement.¹⁸⁸ The passage that follows (2.18.48–2.19.51) is almost equal in importance to the cover letter for succinctly conveying the teachings of *On Order*.

2. THE SOUL’S SOLILOQUY (2.18.48–2.19.51)

Augustine’s summary marks a significant shift. Up to this point his teaching on the liberal arts has been a monologue narrating reason’s gradual development through its coming to know its own knowing and the importance of number. Now, however, it is the soul that finds its own voice in philosophy, speaking to itself aloud about its own journey to perfection. In doing so it recapitulates all that has been said but with reference to the current theme of oneness.

The soul begins by recognizing its rational character, repeating the definition of reason given earlier (2.11.30). In this the soul sees that its rational part has “one” as its object, since both separating

and connecting (which are the activities of reason) aim at the “one.” Connecting obviously tries to unify elements, while separating seeks to break a thing down to its fundamental units.

Upon noticing its power, the soul looks at the objective world around it. (It begins, in other words, to consider the very things that occupied the group in their discussion.) Stones, trees, animals, friends, cities, armies, and lovers all in their own way strive toward unity.

After discerning the oneness of individual things in the objective order, the soul decides to consider itself more closely. It does so by examining its various kinds of knowing, starting with the lower and working its way up to the higher (hence it is repeating the method that Augustine adopted of ascending from the skill or *technē* of artists and artisans to the trivium and quadrivium of the educated [2.11.32–2.15.42]).

The soul begins with its ability to make. Here again it notices that whatever it makes is a unity in conformity with a single form. But this fact is quickly passed over as the soul realizes that it must be superior to the products it makes. And it is even higher than other expert makers (such as birds and bees) by virtue of its being rational. Animals make things instinctively, and even humans can do things unconsciously, like speaking well or singing beautifully. But one is better and ranked higher than beasts when “he knows what he’s doing” (2.19.49). Based on the examples just given, grammar from the trivium or music from the quadrivium would therefore attest to the soul’s superiority over the animal world by virtue of its rational self-presence.

This superiority is confirmed by a consideration of reason’s immortality. For reason to be immortal, it would have to be somehow outside of space and time, a pure intelligibility rather than a “shadow or footprint” in the sensible world (see 2.15.43).

The soul realizes that a ratio (*ratio*) such as two-to-four is immortal and that therefore reason (*ratio*) is immortal. But because the soul is not certain whether it is its own reason or merely uses reason, it hesitates to conclude that it is immortal and opts for the safer conclusion that we should flee from the mortal to the immortal (2.19.50). Perhaps the soul is hesitant to take these meditations too far given its equivocal use of the term *ratio*; it is, after all, simply thinking out loud. In any event, the soul's conjectures about proving the immortality of reason are an inversion of reason's earlier attempts to prove the immortality of the soul (2.15.43).

At this point the soul ceases to speak in the first-person singular, and Augustine's own voice returns. However, he continues with recapitulating the order of the dialogue. Just as his first exploration of the soul's immortality was followed by a discussion of the educated (2.16.44), so too does Augustine mention here that these are the things that "the well-educated soul says to itself and deliberates on" (2.19.50). But whereas Augustine had earlier used the theme of education to list the troublesome concepts that must be learned by the soul that wants to know the order of things, he now offers what amounts to a succinct summary of his earlier remarks on reason and authority (2.9.26–27), namely, that the soul "leads itself step by step to mores and to the best life, not by faith alone, but by the certainty of reason" (2.19.50).¹⁸⁹

Further, since the best life consists of possessing God (as was concluded in *On the Happy Life* 2.11), Augustine now offers an incredibly attractive description of what it would be like to see Him.¹⁹⁰ Significantly, he begins not with God, but with the "eyes" that have been so carefully prepared for this end by the liberal arts, philosophy, and faith. As for God Himself, who is "the very Font itself whence flows every truth, the very Father of Truth" (2.19.51), Augustine is loath to offer his opinion. Everyday words, he says, are

too lowly and inadequate for use. Only this much will he say: “To us is promised a vision of beauty in the imitation of which everything else is beautiful, in comparison to which everything else is foul” (2.19.51).

In keeping with his claim that God is better known by what He is not, Augustine is taciturn about God’s nature except to hint with his mention of Font, Truth, and Flowing that it is Trinitarian, and that this Triune God is transcendent Being rather than merely one truth among others (2.19.51).

Augustine cannot speak of seeing God, but he can speak of the effects of seeing Him. His focus is on the excellence of the purified knowing subject or agent, the so-called eyes of the mind, rather than the objective order that it sees (2.19.51). Faithful to the “turn to the subject” (or to use Augustine’s language, the “return to ourselves”) begun at 2.7.24, he summarizes the greatest fruits of intellectual conversion. Anyone who knows God will have no difficulty in grasping the greater order of things. The world’s seeming inconsistencies will in no way disturb such a person, as he or she will be able to discern an underlying unity or at least rightly judge it to be there. Significantly, Augustine is implying that a mere inspection of external causes is not sufficient to answer all the problems regarding the whole. The order of the dialogue (and of the soul’s soliloquy) is therefore instructive in itself. Augustine is in effect saying that to become truly wise, the soul must begin with an observance of external phenomena, then advert to its power to observe, and then discover itself by examining the various grades of its knowing. It is here that it must come to understand the crucial difference between the sensible and the intelligible, from which point it may gain the strength, however dimly, to see God Himself. This ascent also enables the soul to know and understand the unifying element of the whole, that is, the order of things.

Augustine's method of moving from the "outward" (physical things) to the "inward" (the different kinds of knowledge, especially self-knowledge) and then "upward" (to the eternal, intelligible world and then to God) is thus more than a random succession: it is *the* order by which one attains wisdom.

3. PARTING ADVICE TO MONICA AND ALYPIUS (2.20.52–54)

These things having been said, Augustine turns to the other adults in the group and addresses each of them individually. His touching statements to his mother are especially noteworthy because they betray a religiosity that may not have been always obvious in the dialogue. His testimony to the power of Monica's prayers is not only significant in itself but adds important data for any final assessment of the excellence of the "unlearned Christian."

Although Augustine says more to Monica than to Alypius, it is Alypius who responds to him. Alypius praises his friend for making the towering but often remote wise figures of the past seem more real by virtue of his own daily example. He singles out Pythagoras, comparing his "venerable and almost divine discipline" to what Augustine has just taught. It was Augustine's focus on number that no doubt brought Pythagoras to mind, as Pythagoras was renowned for his mathematical metaphysics: one tradition even posits that Plato visited Italy in order to learn number from the Pythagoreans.¹⁹¹ And Alypius is most likely thinking of Pythagoras when he praises Augustine for revealing what is hidden in "the sanctuaries of truth" (2.20.53). Pythagoras was famous not only for his teaching but also for his concealment of it, saving his "esoteric" teachings only for those of his disciples who were worthy of it.¹⁹² Alypius recognizes Augustine as a wise man in the same vein as Pythagoras but one who takes a different approach to the disclosure of truth. Alypius's citation of the *Aeneid* implies that Augustine is not afraid to reveal

the very workings of the universe to his listeners, albeit heuristically (2.20.53). Alypius is careful to qualify his characterization, however, by adding his opinion that Augustine has not revealed all of what he knows. Augustine may not be esoteric in the tradition of Pythagoras (or, as *Against the Academics* suggests, in that of Cicero), but he is still somewhat stinting in his disclosure of the truth. Indeed, it can be safely concluded that one of the premises of the dialogue is that it is unproductive and even dangerous to reveal certain things to unconverted minds.

Augustine is grateful for Alypius's compliments in general and for his reference to Pythagoras in particular, as it enables him to make one final remark for the benefit of the group. He recalls the tradition handed down by Varro that one of the things Pythagoras would reveal only to his worthy disciples was the art of ruling the republic, and that it was always the last thing he would reveal (similarly, it is the last part pertaining to education that Augustine reveals now). Augustine's interpretation of this seemingly minor detail is that ruling should literally be the last thing on one's mind even though it is an art so excellent that it should be revealed only to the best. Augustine is essentially telling his noble pupils that the life of the statesman is honorable and good, but that the life of the wise man is even better. Licentius and Trygetius should not be unmindful of their civic obligations, but the bulk of their youthful zeal should be directed toward becoming wise rather than powerful. Wisdom alone, Augustine points out, bestows that immovability of soul that Licentius had so ardently defended (2.1.3–2.5.7).

Finally, the conclusion of the dialogue brings us back to its two beginnings. Just as the opening of the cover letter mentions men amidst the rocks and storms of this life (1.1.1), the closing here mentions a man like a rock in the midst of a storm. And just as the dialogue proper begins in darkness (1.3.6), so too does the dialogue

end the same way. The differences between the two sets of passages, however, are telling. The men described in the cover letter are struggling to see above the storm, while the man described here stands immovably untouched by it. Augustine's recitation of *Aeneid* 7.587–90 both demonstrates anew the value of poetry for the philosopher and points to the supremacy of the philosophical life over the political. The immovable rock in these verses is King Latinus, a relatively good leader who nonetheless yields to the frenzy of a mob: shortly after these verses, this ostensibly immovable rock is forced to move in compliance with their demands. There is no true stability, no immovability, in the realm of the political or the sensible. For that, one must turn to the immovability that Licentius described, albeit inaccurately (2.6.18–19), an immovability that paradoxically involves a higher kind of motion.

Likewise, a total darkness enveloped the group when they began their disputation, but here they are given a lamp to find their way home. The discrepancies may be accounted for by what has since been discovered, namely, the nature of one's own mind and of reality. The intellectual conversion by which one knows one's own knowing endows one with a light to pierce the darkness of the most obscure problems and to return to one's true home. This, in turn, renders one unmoved by the apparent difficulty of these problems. Not inappropriately, we may say that the dialogue has come full circle.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

And since the dialogue has come full circle, it would also not be inappropriate to return to its many radii and ultimately to its center. It will be recalled that book one made several important contributions to our understanding of order, not the least of which

is the fact that there is an order of things. It did not, however, fully answer two questions: the containment of evils (i.e., mini-disorders) by order and the commencement of evil. Book two, on the other hand, answers the first question more fully and offers guidelines for answering the second. Evils are contained in order precisely because a limit (*modus*) is placed on the amount of damage they can do (hence Augustine refers to *modus* as the “father of order” [2.19.50]), while their destructive qualities are co-opted by God (the *summus modus*) to have a just effect as punishments on the evil itself. Such is the case even though God Himself is in no way responsible for evil.

If, however, nothing can exist apart from God’s order, then how did evil originate, or did it originate at all? Augustine asks the more difficult question, passing over the relatively easy question of evil within human history and focusing on a “cosmic” evil not directly related to space and time. But because the unlocking of this riddle requires a proper grasp of the difference between the spatiotemporal and the immutable and eternal, Augustine instead directs his listeners to the place where they can acquire this wisdom.

Augustine’s discourse on the liberal arts takes the form of a narrative of reason’s journey to wisdom. This journey, it should be noted, marks a shift in the dialogue from the objective order of things to the human subject’s acts of knowing. Reason follows its various grades of knowing from the lower to the higher like an ascending chain back to itself and then on to God, from which point it may at last unravel the problems entangling it. Augustine’s method also suggests a striking parallel: the knowing of the human subject is isomorphic to the structure of objective reality. Just as the whole is “enchained” as links ascending to God, so too is the whole of human knowing.

Further, the image of a chain brings to mind the self-referentiality of the dialogue. Certain hints in the cover letter led us to suspect that the text was in some way imitating what it was signifying.¹⁹³ On a more general level, this mimesis implied that the dialogue was somehow similar to its main theme, the order of things. The possible answer to how this could be came when Augustine called his dialogue a chain of words (1.9.27). The whole, it can be said, is structured as a chain: like words in a sentence, it is arranged successively so that the mind can proceed link by link to its Ultimate Meaning.¹⁹⁴ This chain is not unlike the mind itself, which also ascends successively (i.e., discursively) through each of its own kinds of knowledge to the same Source. The problem, however, is that neither the objective chain of the whole nor the subject's chain of human knowing is easily pursued. In most cases, the soul is too weighed down by bad habits to follow the tracks either of the mind's activity or of the interconnectedness of being. Therefore other chains, such as the liberal arts, philosophy, and faith,¹⁹⁵ become vitally important. All of these—to various degrees and in various ways—help the mind return to its own interlinked structure, to the Light of that structure, and to the structure of the whole. This brings us back, again, full circle. For it is *On Order's* own chainlike quality that makes it an ideal introduction to these other chains. By imitating the whole, the dialogue ipso facto imitates both the procession of the human mind and the education by which the mind is perfected. And by making ourselves a part of the order of *On Order*, we are initiated into the return to ourselves, a return by which we may at last discern the red thread running through the fabric of all of what we know and what can be known.

The import of all this is that the reader is challenged not simply to read but to live *On Order*. Augustine's various admonitions to Zenobius and his interlocutors to become educated whenever

possible and to undertake the same kind of grand journey of the soul from “outward” observations to “inward” kinds of knowing to an “upward” embrace of God should all be read as existentially relating to the reader. Not without reason do we suspect the dialogue to have the same encircling power for us as the discussion has for Licentius (1.5.14); not in vain may we hope that this encircling will lead us to the center, to the light of self-knowledge and to the immovability of soul that alone comes from wisdom; and not without confidence do we therefore pray for conversion to see God’s face (1.8.22).

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TIME LINE

THE PROBABLE CHRONOLOGY OF THE CASSICIACUM RETREAT

For the most part the following chronology is based on the conclusions drawn in Denis J. Kavanaugh's *Answer to Skeptics* and Desiderius Ohlmann's *De Sancti Augustini Dialogis*.

NOVEMBER 386

7th

8th

9th

The party is said to have arrived a "few days" before the beginning of book one of *Against the Academics* (1.1.4), most likely on one of these dates.

Trygetius and Licentius have read Cicero's *Hortensius* either shortly before or after their arrival and are eager for philosophy (*Against the Academics* 1.1.4).

NOVEMBER 386

10th

11th

12th

[Book one of *Against the Academics*]

[Mostly Augustine, Trygetius, and Licentius take part.]

A stenographer is first used (1.1.4) to record a discussion between

The group does chores around the villa and studies book one of the *Aeneid* (1.5.15). A

A recorded discussion is held between Licentius and Trygetius on happiness that takes

continued...

Licentius and Trygetius on happiness and the quest for truth that takes place at an undisclosed location “that seemed suitable for the purpose” (1.2.5). During the discussion, Alypius departs for Milan (1.2.5, 1.4.11, 1.6.16). The group takes a leisurely stroll during which many topics are discussed (but not recorded) (1.4.10). Licentius and Trygetius try to resume their dispute at dusk, but Augustine persuades them to postpone it until tomorrow (1.4.10). They all take a trip to the baths (1.4.10).	recorded discussion is held (1.4.11) between Licentius and Trygetius on happiness and the quest for truth that takes place near sunset at an undisclosed location (1.5.15).	place at dawn at an undisclosed location (1.6.16). Lunch (1.9.25).
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NOVEMBER 386

13th

14th

15th

[*On the Happy Life*]

[Augustine, Navigius, Monica, Adeodatus, Lastidianus and Rusticus,
 Licentius, and Trygetius all take part.]

[Augustine's birthday] A light lunch (1.6). Afterwards, a recorded discussion is held in the	Lunch (3.17). Later in the day, a recorded discussion is held in the bathhouse (for the same reason as before	Because the afternoon is sunny, the final discussion on happiness is held and recorded in the “little meadow . . .
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bathhouse (on account [4.23]) on who “has”
of the morning mist) God (3.17).
concerning happiness as
“having” God (4.23).

nearby” (4.23). After
supper, Licentius chants
a verse from the Psalms
while answering the
call of nature; Monica
overhears and
disapproves (*On Order*
1.8.22). [This is assuming
that book one of *On*
Order begins on the 16th;
if *On Order* begins on the
17th, the outhouse
incident happens
on the 16th].

NOVEMBER 386

16th

17th

18th

[Book one of *On Order*, either on the 16th and 17th or on the 17th and 18th]
[Augustine, Licentius, and Trygetius take part, with a brief appearance by
Monica at the end.]

A discussion takes place in the
middle of the night in the
bedroom that Augustine,
Licentius, and Trygetius share
(1.3.6) and lasts until the early
dawn (1.7.20). Shortly after,
Licentius and Trygetius rise
while Augustine remains in
prayer. After Monica and
Licentius return from the
outhouse, Augustine hears

Early in the morning, the
group gathers “in the
usual place” (probably
the baths) and continues
their discussion on order
(1.9.27). Near the end
Monica joins the group
(1.11.31). The discussion is
the only business that
Augustine does on this
day (1.11.33).

continued...

him chanting the same verse
that had gotten him in trouble
with Monica the night before
(1.8.22). Augustine and
Licentius have a brief
conversation (1.8.22ff).

Augustine rises from bed, and
the group “renders its daily
vows to God” (a possible
allusion to a primitive version
of Lauds) (1.8.25).

After prayer and on the way to
the baths, the group witnesses
a cockfight (ibid.).

Once at the baths, they write
down all that transpired that
day (1.8.26). Before supper,
they read half a book of Vergil
and do nothing else for the
day (ibid.).

NOVEMBER 386

20th

21st

22nd

[Or possibly the 19th, 20th, and 21st]

[Books two and three of *Against the Academics*, which take place on
three consecutive days (2.4.10, 2.11.25, 3.1.1) about seven days after the end
of book one (2.4.10)]

[Augustine, Licentius, Trygetius, Navigius, and Alypius take part.]

A beautiful clear day; Alypius has returned from Milan at some point (2.4.10). The group arises early and does a small amount of farm	An equally pleasant and calm day (2.11.25). Augustine spends the day writing letters (2.11.25), Trygetius reveling in Vergil’s	The weather is too gloomy for the meadow, so the bathhouse is chosen for a recorded discussion (3.1.1). (Earlier, Licentius had
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work (2.4.10). In the field, the group walks about as the first discussion is read to Alypius, an activity that takes up most of the late morning (2.4.10). While on the way back to the villa, a recorded discussion is held (2.4.10). Lunch at the villa (2.5.13). After lunch, a recorded discussion is held in the field (2.6.14). At sunset the discussion ends, and all return to the house (2.10.24).

poems, and Licentius in writing or studying verse (3.1.1). Two hours before night, a recorded discussion is held in the meadow near the “usual tree” (2.11.25). At darkness all return to the house (2.13.30).

been singing verses from “Greek tragedies” that he did not understand [3.4.7].) Lunch at the villa (3.3.6). Licentius leaves early, returns to the bathhouse, and works more on his verses (3.4.7). Discussion at the bathhouse is resumed (3.4.7). At dusk a lamp is fetched so the recording can continue (3.20.44). At night the discussion comes to a close (3.20.44–45).

NOVEMBER 386

22nd

23rd

24th

[Book two of *On Order*, beginning either the day after the last discussion of *Against the Academics* or shortly thereafter, most likely the 23rd, but possibly the 22nd or 24th]

A warm day invites Augustine, Licentius, Trygetius, Monica, and Alypius out on the lawn, where Licentius defends his definition of order in a recorded discussion (2.1.1).

At one point of the discussion Licentius leaves and then returns (2.3.10, 2.5.17). After being summoned by a boy from the house, the group has lunch (2.6.18). After lunch, a cloudy sky compels the group to reconvene in the bathhouse for a recorded discussion on various topics related to order (2.6.19). The discussion culminates in Augustine’s explication of the liberal arts and closes at night, after a lamp has been fetched (2.20.54).

NOVEMBER 386–JANUARY 387

Day One

Day Two

Day Three

[Book one of the *Soliloquies*, which takes place either sometime during the other dialogues, when Augustine is alone by himself, or shortly thereafter (see *Retractations* 1.4.1). No mention of the date of book two of the *Soliloquies* is made, but given Augustine's impatience to continue his conversation with Reason, it presumably takes place not long after (see 2.1.1). The *terminus a quo* of the *Soliloquies* is Augustine's birthday on November 13, 386 (see 1.10.17); the *terminus ad quem* is January 6, 387, when Augustine presumably would have returned to Milan to enroll his name as a candidate for baptism. Augustine would be received into the Catholic Church during the Easter Vigil on April 24–25, 387.]

Soliloquies 1.1.1–1.13.23:

At an undisclosed location. Augustine and Reason hold a discussion, and most likely during the day (*Soliloquies* 1.13.23, 1.14.25), which is similar to the meditations Augustine was accustomed to holding at night (compare *Soliloquies* 1.1.1 and *On Order* 1.3.6). The discussion is concluded in order to spare Augustine's health (*Soliloquies* 1.13.23). At night, as Augustine mentally reviews these things, his mind drifts to the enticements of a woman's charms (1.14.25).

Soliloquies 1.14.24–

1.15.30: The next day (see 1.14.25). Augustine and Reason hold a discussion near a tree, possibly the one in the meadow where the group was accustomed to meeting (see *Soliloquies* 1.15.28; *Against the Academics* 2.11.25).

Soliloquies 2.1.1–2.20.36:

Presumably on another day (given the conversation of 1.15.30), although this is not explicitly stated. At an undisclosed location, Augustine and Reason hold a discussion.

GLOSSARY OF SELECT NAMES

Adeodatus. The only child of Augustine and his unnamed mistress of fifteen years (*Confessions* 6.15.25). Adeodatus, whose name means “given by God,” was born in Carthage in A.D. 372. He went with his parents to Italy and remained there with his father and grandmother after his mother was forced to return to Africa. At Cassiciacum Adeodatus was fourteen or fifteen years old; along with Augustine and Alypius, he was there as a catechumen to prepare for baptism. Augustine comments that his son was “more intelligent than many a grave and learned man” (*Confessions* 9.6.14) and that he was “least of us all in age” but had an “intellectual aptitude, if my love does not deceive me, [that] promises something great” (*On the Happy Life* 1.6). *On the Happy Life* is the only Cassiciacum dialogue in which Adeodatus participates; his participation betrays a high regard for moral purity (see *On the Happy Life* 2.12, 3.18). Adeodatus was baptized along with his father by St. Ambrose in Milan on April 24–25, 387; he was also present at Monica’s death, accompanied his father back to North Africa, and joined his father’s lay community in Thagaste. The later dialogue *On the Teacher* consists of a conversation between Augustine and Adeodatus that is said to have taken place at this time. Adeodatus died of an undisclosed illness around 389, when he was seventeen or eighteen years old (*Confessions* 9.6.14).

Alypius, St. A native of Thagaste, born after A.D. 354 into a family nobler than Augustine’s. He became one of Augustine’s students and followed him into the Manichaean sect (*Confessions* 6.7.11–12). According to Augustine, Alypius went on to become a courageous and conscientious lawyer (*Confessions* 6.10.16). He converted to Christianity moments after

Augustine, taking and reading the same epistle from St. Paul that prompted Augustine's conversion (*Confessions* 8.12.30). He has a cardinal role to play in *Against the Academics* and *On Order* and is even significant in absentia in *On the Happy Life*. Described as somewhat short and stout (*On the Happy Life* 2.15), Alypius is the closest to an intellectual peer that Augustine has at Cassiciacum. Later he serves as a sort of assistant editor of the Cassiciacum dialogues (see *Against the Academics* 1.1.4, *Confessions* 9.4.7). A close friend of Augustine, who calls him his "heart's brother" (*Confessions* 9.4.7), Alypius eventually became the bishop of Thagaste and died sometime around 427 or 428. Although he is not commonly known as such, Alypius is considered a saint in the Catholic Church. For his feast day on August 15, the *Roman Martyrology* states: "At Tagaste in Africa, St Alipius, Bishop, who was of old a disciple of blessed Augustine, and afterwards his fellow-convert, his colleague in the pastoral office, a gallant fellow-warrior in his contests against the heretics, and lastly his consort in heavenly glory."

Ambrose of Milan, St. The bishop of Milan, Ambrose is called "our priest" by Augustine in *On the Happy Life* (1.4 and 4.35; see also Ambrose, *On Jacob and the Happy Life* 10.43). Elsewhere Augustine calls him "famed among the best men of the whole world" (*Confessions* 5.13.23). As the consular governor of Liguria and Aemilia, Ambrose addressed the Catholic faithful of Milan in order to resolve a dispute as to who should succeed their recently deceased bishop. While he was delivering an eloquent speech on the importance of peace and moderation, the congregation demanded that he be made their bishop (even though he was only a catechumen), and so Ambrose was baptized and ordained in a period of eight days. He went on to become a strong defendant of orthodox Christianity from the Arian heresy and the encroachment of civic power on the affairs of the Church (see *Confessions* 9.7.15–16). From him Augustine learned at least two important lessons: the figurative reading of Scripture (*Confessions* 5.14.24) and the Christian teaching on the immateriality of God's essence (*Confessions* 6.3.4). Monica also held Ambrose in high regard (see *Confessions* 6.1.1–6.2.2); his effect on her piety is evident in *On the Happy Life* 4.35.

Lartidianus. Also known in some manuscripts as Lastidianus. Along with Rusticus, Lartidianus is described as a cousin of Augustine who never had to endure "even a single grammar school teacher" but whose common sense Augustine considered indispensable to the undertaking of *On the Happy Life* (1.6). Lartidianus and Rusticus appear only in *On the Happy*

Life, the least philosophically demanding of the Cassiciacum dialogues, and although they participate in the discussion, neither has a recorded line (see *On the Happy Life* 2.12). Nothing else is known of them.

Licentius. The son of Romanianus and thus a relative of Augustine and a native of Augustine's hometown of Thagaste in North Africa. At Cassiciacum he is described as an *adulescens*, a young man somewhere between the ages of fifteen and thirty. Licentius is one of Augustine's two pupils and a principal participant in the dialogues. He is bold and impetuous, with a newfound passion for poetry (*Against the Academics* 2.3.7; *On Order* 1.2.5) and an equally recent but sporadic passion for philosophy (*Against the Academics* 1.1.4, *On Order* 1.3.8–1.4.10). Around A.D. 395, fewer than ten years after their retreat together, Licentius sent Augustine a poem he had composed praising their time at Cassiciacum and asking for further guidance. In his response, Augustine chides his former pupil for still missing the point about the right relationship between the love of wisdom and the love of poetry (see *Epistle* 26).

Monica, St. Augustine's remarkable mother. Possibly a native North African, she married a Roman named Patricius and bore him three children: Augustine, Navigius, and a daughter whose name we do not know. Although her husband was not a Christian at the time, Monica made sure that Augustine was initiated into the catechumenate the moment he was born (*Confessions* 1.11.17). Monica bore Patricius's marital infidelities and bad temper with patience and eventually brought him into the Catholic Church before he died around A.D. 370–371. Although she was initially preoccupied with Augustine's worldly prospects (*Confessions* 2.3.8), she grew more concerned about his spiritual welfare as he fell into debauchery and the Manichaean heresy. Monica prayed for her son constantly, followed him to Italy despite his efforts to evade her, and pestered at least one bishop for help in bringing back her wayward son (see *Confessions* 3.12.21). In the *Confessions*, Augustine credits his embrace of the Christian faith to her intercession (5.7.13, 5.8.15, 5.9.17); in the Cassiciacum dialogues, he writes that he owes everything to her (*On the Happy Life* 1.6) and praises her for her philosophical zeal (*On the Happy Life* 2.10; *On Order* 1.11.32, 2.1.1), for having "a mind utterly attentive to God" (*On the Happy Life* 4.27), and for having a soul "afame for things divine" (*On Order* 2.1.1). Monica figures prominently in *On the Happy Life* and to a lesser extent in *On Order*; but having little patience for exhaustive epistemological debate (see *On the Happy Life* 2.16), she has only a brief and rather comic cameo, so to speak, in *Against the Academics* 2.5.13. Monica

lived to see her son and grandson baptized on April 24–25, 387; shortly after, she succumbed to a deadly fever as she and her family waited in the Roman port town of Ostia for passage back to Africa. She was fifty-six years old.

Navigius. Augustine had at least two siblings, one of them a sister. Little is known of his brother Navigius other than that he was present at Cassiciacum with Augustine (see *Against the Academics* 1.2.5, *On Order* 1.3.7) and later at Ostia when their mother died, where he displayed a somewhat worldly concern for his mother's burial arrangements (*Confessions* 9.11.27). Most likely he accompanied Monica when she followed Augustine to Italy around A.D. 385. Nothing is known of Navigius's education, but he appears to have been more well read than his cousins Lartidianus and Rusticus, showing a familiarity with some of Cicero's writings and an intellectual wariness around Augustine (*On the Happy Life* 2.14).

Romanianus. A relative of Augustine (*Epistle* 26) and his most generous patron. At Carthage he funded Augustine's studies and provided him with a home (see *Against the Academics* 2.2.3); at Milan he enthusiastically supported a plan by Augustine, himself, and their friends to live together in community, and he was willing to use his own resources to make it happen (*Against the Academics* 2.2.3; *Confessions* 6.14.24). Many misfortunes had recently befallen Romanianus, which is why Augustine urges him to take these as a sign to study philosophy (see *Against the Academics* 1.1.2; *Confessions* 6.14.24). Augustine tries to repay his debt to his old friend as well as to atone for leading him into Manichaeism (see *Against the Academics* 1.1.3) by dedicating two works to him: *Against the Academics*, a call to the study of philosophy, and the treatise *On True Religion*, an invitation to convert to the Christian faith. Some conjecture that Romanianus accepted at least one of these invitations, possibly converting to Christianity in A.D. 396. As we learn in *Against the Academics* 1.1.4, he is also the father of Licentius, one of the main participants of the Cassiciacum dialogues.

Rusticus. Along with Lartidianus, Rusticus is described as a cousin of Augustine who never had to endure "even a single grammar school teacher" but whose common sense Augustine considered indispensable to the undertaking of *On the Happy Life* (1.6). Lartidianus and Rusticus appear only in *On the Happy Life*, the least philosophically demanding of the Cassiciacum dialogues, and although they participate in the discussion, neither has a recorded line (see *On the Happy Life* 2.12). Aside from

his being particularly shy (*On the Happy Life* 2.12), nothing else is known of Rusticus.

Theodorus. Manlius Theodorus (his first name is mentioned in the *Retractations* but not in the Cassiciacum dialogues) was made consul of the Roman Empire in A.D. 399; before that he held several other important administrative offices under several emperors. He was the subject of a panegyric written in verse by the poet Claudian. Augustine asserts in *On Order* 1.11.31 that his mother Monica knew him and that his philosophical works are so erudite that “both now and in the coming generations, no class of men may rightly complain about the writings of our times” (see also *Soliloquies* 2.14.26). In the *Retractations* Augustine reiterates that Theodorus was a “learned and Christian man,” though he now regrets having attributed more to him than he should have (1.2). Little is known about the personal acquaintance between Augustine and Theodorus in Milan, as well as how well Monica knew him. Although Theodorus wrote on a variety of subjects, his only extant work is the treatise *On Meters* (*De metris*). Augustine dedicated *On the Happy Life* to him as a way of petitioning him to evaluate his spiritual progress (*On the Happy Life* 1.1, 1.4). It is doubtful that Theodorus ever complied with the request.

Trygetius. One of two pupils of Augustine at Cassiciacum, a fellow townsman of Thagaste, and a principal participant of these dialogues (see *On the Happy Life* 1.6). Trygetius is referred to as an *adulescens*, a youth between the ages of fifteen and thirty. Augustine writes of him in *Against the Academics* 1.1.4: “It is as if military service had conscripted the young man for a while in order to remove his distaste for the disciplines, and so it restored him to us extremely passionate and hungry for the great and noble arts.” Given that the average age of a recruit in the Roman army was eighteen or older, he may have been a couple of years older than Licentius. In *On Order* 1.2.5, Augustine again mentions Trygetius’s military service and describes him as someone “who has fallen in love with history like an old soldier.”

Verecundus. A generous and relatively wealthy friend who lent his villa at Cassiciacum to Augustine and his friends (*Confessions* 9.3.5). A grammarian by profession living and working in Milan, Verecundus may have been part of the circle of friends that desired to live together in a life of philosophical leisure (*Confessions* 6.14.24). When he heard of Augustine’s and Alypius’s conversions to Christianity, Verecundus not only wanted to convert as well but to join them in leading celibate lives. Verecundus, however, was married (to a Christian woman), and so he reluctantly

deferred conversion as Augustine and Alypius encouraged him to remain faithful to his married state. Although he worried that his friendship with the group would suffer, he gladly lent out his villa for their baptismal preparations (*On Order* 1.2.5). Verecundus eventually did convert and died shortly thereafter (*Confessions* 9.3.5).

Zenobius. A mutual friend of Augustine, Romanianus, and Verecundus. Zenobius was the victim of some kind of political or financial misfortune and had been forced to leave Milan (*On Order* 1.7.20), probably northward to the Alps (*Soliloquies* 2.14.26). Augustine portrays Zenobius as a man of outstanding moral character (*On Order* 1.2.4) and a lover and composer of poetry (*On Order* 1.7.20); he wrote a “good poem” about the difficulties of reconciling God’s goodness with the existence of evil (*On Order* 1.7.20), as well as a poem that helps conquer the fear of death (*Soliloquies* 2.14.26). Augustine hints, however, that Zenobius is in need of more intellectual formation and philosophical training (*On Order* 2.5.15). Augustine also wrote a brief letter to Zenobius while he was at Cassiciacum (*Epistle* 2).

NOTES

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE CASSICIACUM DIALOGUES

1. “Fruitful leisure”: *On Order* 1.2.4; farm work: see *Against the Academics* 1.5.15; violent poultry: see *On Order* 1.8.25; Augustine states that stenographers, possibly hired by Romanianus, were used to record the conversations of the group: see *Against the Academics* 1.1.4, 1.5.15, 1.9.25, 2.7.17, 2.9.22, 3.7.15; *On Order* 1.5.14, 1.7.20, 1.9.27, 1.10.29–1.11.31, 2.20.54; on Augustine’s health, see *Against the Academics* 3.7.15; *On Order* 1.2.5; on recording these conversations for those not present, see *Against the Academics* 1.1.4, 1.5.15, 1.9.25, 2.7.17, 2.9.22, 3.7.15; *On Order* 1.2.5, 1.5.14, 1.7.20, 1.9.27, 1.10.29–1.11.31, 2.20.54; on Alypius as collaborating editor, see *Against the Academics* 1.1.4; *Confessions* 9.2.4. Unlike the other three dialogues, the *Soliloquies* is not derived from transcribed conversations but is nonetheless—as I argue in the introduction to the *Soliloquies*—an integral part of the Cassiciacum corpus.
2. See *Soliloquies* 1.1.3.
3. The language of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion is borrowed from Lonergan, *Method*, 238–43. It should be noted that these conversions often overlap, that they do not follow the same chronological order in every case, and that an individual may not necessarily undergo all three.
4. Knowing God and the soul: see *Soliloquies* 1.2.7, 1.15.27, 2.18.32; “return to ourselves”: see *Against the Academics* 1.1.1, 2.2.5, 2.3.8.
5. “Inquiry into inquiry”: Kenyon, *Augustine*, 30; “look foremost”: *ibid.*, 12; “cognitive norms of thought”: *ibid.*, 34; “most if not all acts of rational inquiry”: *ibid.*, 40.

6. “And what did it profit”: *Confessions* 4.16.30, trans. Frank J. Sheed; “the order for living”: *On Order* 2.8.25; sharp criticism: see *On Order* 1.10.29–30; Reason’s embarrassing questions: see *Soliloquies* 1.14.25–26.
7. On baptism, see *Confessions* 9.3.6, where Augustine refers to his baptism as his *conversio*; on religion as binding, see *On True Religion* 55.111, 113 (in *Retractations* 1.13.9, Augustine notes that although there is some uncertainty regarding the etymology of *religio*, he prefers the interpretation that traces it to *religo*, “to bind”); on Christianity and freedom, see *On True Religion* 17.33; on Monica on faith, hope, and charity, see *On the Happy Life* 4.35.
8. For instance, Robert J. O’Connell, S.J., spent the bulk of his career arguing for a disjunction between an early Augustine imbued with a Neoplatonic, anticorporeal “angelism” and a later Augustine more properly informed by an incarnational Christianity: see O’Connell, *St. Augustine’s Early Theory, St. Augustine’s Platonism*, and *Art*. For a critique of O’Connell’s thesis, see Fortin, “Reflections,” 99, Review, *Birth of Philosophic Christianity*, 317–19; and Harrison, *Rethinking*.
9. On the necessity of intellectual conversion, see *On Order* 1.8.24 and *Confessions* 4.16.30; on the order of conversions, see *Against the Academics* 3.17.38 and *On Order* 2.8.25–2.9.26.
10. Plato, *Republic* 10.607b.
11. The distinctive traits of the philosophical dialogue are aptly summarized by Cicero, who introduced the genre to Rome: it hides the author’s opinion, frees the reader from error, and helps the reader reach the most probable or plausible truth (*Tusculan Disputations* 5.4.11).
12. See Plato, *Phaedrus* 275d–277c. Compare Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* 4.9.23 and St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Boethius*, q. 2, a. 4.
13. On the esoteric and exoteric, see Crosson, “Esoteric Versus Latent Teaching.” The prevalence or even existence of an esoteric literature was debated in ancient Greece and Rome and again during the Renaissance and early modern period (the *Commentary on Against the Academics* cites several ancient passages on this topic). In the twentieth century the debate was controversially revived by Leo Strauss; the most thorough treatment on the topic to date is Melzer, *Philosophy Between the Lines*. On Augustine, Strauss, and esotericism, see Kries, “Augustine as Defender.”
14. On Augustine’s conjectures about Academic esotericism, see *Against the Academics* 2.10.24, 3.7.15–3.20.43; on the few versus the many, see *Against the Academics* 1.1.1, 2.1.1, 2.2.6, 3.17.37; *On the Happy Life* 1.1; *On Order*

- 1.1.1, 1.11.32, 2.5.16, 2.9.26, 2.11.30; *Soliloquies* 1.1.2, 1.1.4, 1.13.22; on the danger of teaching the truth, see *Against the Academics* 3.17.37; “return to their very selves”: *Against the Academics* 3.19.42.
15. On joke-telling, see *Soliloquies* 2.9.16; on Augustine’s irony, see *Retractations* 1.3.2; “in sport”: *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, 69/1–2; “holds as trivial”: Cicero, *On Duties* 1.20.67; on the comic structure of philosophical dialogue, see Downey, *Serious Comedy*; on “untruths,” see *On Order* 2.14.40.
 16. On engrafting, see *On Order* 1.2.4. For the sake of readability, the current translations do not follow the convention of using “he says” in the present tense.
 17. See *Against the Academics* 2.1.1; *On the Happy Life* 4.34; *On Order* 1.1.3; *Soliloquies* 1.1.1ff.
 18. For Augustine’s opinion of Cicero, see *Against the Academics* 1.3.8 and 3.16.36; on Augustine’s first encounter with *Hortensius*, see *Confessions* 3.4; on the *Hortensius* at Cassiciacum, see *Against the Academics* 1.1.4; “cedars of the gymnasia” and “Church’s wholesome herbs”: *Confessions* 9.4.7. It should be noted that Augustine also modifies the Ciceronian dialogue even as he adopts it. One of his most significant changes is rearranging the chronology of a Ciceronian dialogue from (1) aporetic confusion, (2) plausible explanation, and (3) reflection on the act of debating to (1) aporetic confusion, (2) reflection on the act of debating, and (3) plausible explanation. This reordering lends to Augustine’s dialogues a more dramatic element similar to that of a mystery novel. See Kenyon, *Augustine*, 13, 77–79.
 19. “Living happily”: Cicero, *On Divination* 2.1.2; for more on this thesis, see Foley, “Cicero, Augustine”; on boredom after mastery, see *Against the Academics* 3.4.7.
 20. On intellectual conversion, see *Confessions* 7.9.13; “When behold”: *Against the Academics* 2.2.5.
 21. For a summary of the debate on Augustine’s familiarity with Plato, see O’Donnell, *Augustine Confessions*, vol. 2, 421–24.
 22. See Pucci, *Virgilian Retreat*. Pucci prefers the terms “recuperating” (xiii).
 23. On Augustine’s literary regrets: Augustine writes in the *Retractations* that he wishes he had not mentioned the Muses and other pagan figures, even though the allusions were not meant to be taken literally (1.3.2), and he laments being “puffed up” with the “conventions of worldly literature” (Prologue, 3). It should be borne in mind, however, that Augustine tells his reader that in the *Retractations* he is approaching his earlier writings with a judgment more exacting and severe than even God’s in order to avoid His

- final judgment (Prologue, 1). Such a hermeneutic has several advantages, but not included among them is giving the benefit of the doubt to possibly innocuous passages. On fighting fire with fire: In response to accusations like Julian the Apostate's that Christianity was no more than a religion of "theologizing fishermen," Church Fathers such as Minucius Felix endeavored to refute the pagans with their own literary weapons (see *Octavius* 39; see also Jerome, *Epistle* 70.2; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 43.11).
24. See *On the Happy Life* 4.31–36. These alignments will be discussed in greater detail in the Commentaries.
25. On Ambrose's influence, see *Confessions* 5.13.23, 6.1.1–6.4.6; on Marius Victorinus's influence, see *Confessions* 8.2.3–5.
26. On neologisms, see Bogan, *Vocabulary*, 43; "beatific vision": *Soliloquies* 1.7.14; on cuckoo clocks, see *Soliloquies* 2.6.12.

ON ORDER

Introduction

1. Wilder, *Bridge of San Luis Rey*, 5–7.
2. Wilder, *Bridge of San Luis Rey*, 6, 7.
3. Wilder, *Bridge of San Luis Rey*, 7.
4. Wilder, *Bridge of San Luis Rey*, 9.
5. See Tooley, "Problem of Evil."
6. *Retractations* 1.3.1.
7. See *On Order* 1.1.2.
8. Wilder, *Bridge of San Luis Rey*, 97, 98, 8.
9. *Retractations* 1.3.1.
10. *On Order* 1.1.3.
11. See "Augustine at Cassiciacum" in the General Introduction.
12. *On Order* 1.2.3.
13. *On Order* 1.1.1.
14. See *Confessions* 7.12.18–7.13.19.
15. For more on insights into nonbeing, see "Two Kinds of Knowing (4.29–31)" in the Commentary on *On the Happy Life*.
16. See *On the Trinity* 9.11.16.
17. *On Order* 2.3.10.
18. See *On Order* 2.3.8–10. "Nature" is in quotation marks because what is grasped by "knowing according to privation" is not so much a thing's nature but its lack of a nature. Folly, for instance, does not consist of a positive content but the absence of a particular positive content (wisdom). The

same can be said of other concepts grasped or formulated by these kinds of insights, such as forgetfulness, evil, etc. And perhaps quotation marks should also be used for “understanding,” for as Trygetius points out in the case of folly, “It doesn’t seem to me that that by which folly itself is understood ought to be called understanding, for folly is either the chief or sole cause of *not* understanding” (*On Order* 2.3.10).

19. See Oliver, *Philosophy, God and Motion*, 1–7.
20. See *On the Immortality of the Soul* 8.15.
21. See *On Order* 2.16.44.
22. See *On Order* 2.1.3–2.2.4.
23. For example, because of the need to revise the Newtonian worldview in light of relatively recent advances in quantum theory, the value of Augustine’s analogical understanding of motion is becoming more evident (see Oliver, *Philosophy, God and Motion*, 156–90).
24. See *On Order* 2.3.8.
25. See *On Order* 1.8.22–23.
26. See *On Order* 1.11.31–33.
27. See *On Order* 1.10.29–30.
28. See “The Platonic Template” in the General Introduction.
29. See Downey, *Serious Comedy*, 121–26.
30. See *On Order* 1.3.8–1.8.24.
31. *On Order* 1.2.4.
32. *On Order* 1.1.2.
33. See *On Order* 1.2.3.
34. *On Order* 1.9.27. See also 1.5.13, where Augustine describes the less studious being as “drawn, as if by a chain of questions, into the fellowship of discussants.”
35. *On Order* 2.12.35.
36. See *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.2.3–4.
37. See *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.1.1, where Cicero begins by stating that the question concerning the gods is important for *controlling* religion (*ad moderandam religionem necessaria*) and then later implies that the loss of religion is more to be lamented for its social and political consequences than for any potential insult to the gods (1.2.4). For an examination of Cicero’s “impiety,” see Crosson, “Cicero and Augustine.”
38. See *On Divination* 1.4.7.
39. See *On Order* 1.1.1.
40. This does not mean, however, that Augustine is apolitical or antipolitical. See Foley, “The Other Happy Life.”
41. See *On Order* 1.1.1.

Book One

1. More literally, the order of things proper to each. See Cicero, *On Divination* 2.72.148.
2. See Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.22.58, *Tusculan Disputations* 4.33.70.
3. Drawing from classical philosophy, Augustine distinguishes between the few who are philosophical from the many who are not (see 1.11.32, 2.5.16, 2.9.26, 2.11.30 below; *Against the Academics* 2.1.1, 2.2.6, 3.7.37; *On the Happy Life* 1.1; *Soliloquies* 1.1.2, 1.1.4, 1.13.22).
4. See 2.20.54 below; *On the Happy Life* 1.3. The expression “rocks of life” (*scopuli vitae*) is from Cicero’s *Consolation* fig. 9: “It is best by far not to be born and not to fall upon these rocks of life.”
5. Plotinus raises a similar question in *Enneads* 3.2.15–17.
6. As Pliny puts it: “It is ridiculous that that Supreme Being, whatever it is, should have any care for human affairs. Should we believe, or rather should we have any doubt, that It would be polluted by so dreary and manifold a ministry?” (*Natural History* 2.7.20.) This belief was especially associated with the Epicureans (see Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 1.57–59, 2.646–48; Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.17.45, 1.19.51–1.20.56; *On the Laws* 1.7.22). It was also the position of Plotinus, who held that it was not a part of the law of providence that the gods should put aside their divine lives to tend to humanity’s daily concerns (see *Enneads* 3.2.9). Finally, the Manichaeans believed not only that God’s providence did not extend to these “nethermost areas,” but that it could not.
7. The Stoics held that divine intervention accounts for regularly recurring natural phenomena such as ocean tides, planetary orbits, etc. The Epicureans, on the other hand, criticized the Stoics for “fleeing to a god” anytime they could not give a rational explanation for a natural phenomenon and for attributing things to the divine that can just as easily be credited to nature (see Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 3.10.24–25).
8. That is, inanimate objects, plants, and animals do not possess the faculty of reason yet behave in ways that accord with its laws (see Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.38.97).
9. As Pliny remarks, “in none of her works has Nature more fully displayed her inexhaustible ingenuity” than in the minute intricacy of insects’ bodies (*Natural History* 11.1.1).
10. For asterisked words, see the Translation Key.

11. *Coaptatio* is the first of several neologisms in the dialogue. See also Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.46.119.
12. Augustine later regrets not having added “of the body” when speaking of the bodily senses (*Retractations* 1.3.2) because there is also a sense-perception unique to the mind (*Retractations* 1.1.2). See *Epistle* 3.4, where Augustine writes that the senses should be resisted by acquiring a habit of not needing them and of desiring better things.
13. See *Against the Academics* 1.8.23. In the *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero speaks of the “great intellectual aptitude” (*magnum ingenium*) that is needed “to remove the mind from the senses and to detach thinking from the force of habit” (1.16.38). In *On the Laws*, he claims that self-knowledge comes from philosophy alone and that the person who knows himself is aware of a divine character within him that is a consecrated image of God (1.22.58–59). For Plotinus, this self-knowledge involves not one part of the mind knowing another part or the mind knowing its various contents, but the mind knowing itself in such a way that the knower is not distinguished from the known (*Enneads* 5.3). In *Against the Academics* 3.17.38, Augustine observes that because of habit, “it is extremely easy yet harmful to believe that all reality is corporeal.” See Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.2.5.
14. For the return to oneself, see 2.11.30, 2.11.31 (as a return to one’s reason); *Against the Academics* 1.1.1, 2.2.4, 2.2.5, 2.3.8, 3.19.42; *Soliloquies* 2.6.9, 2.19.33; *Confessions* 7.10.16; Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.9.
15. There is an echo of this etymology in juridical terminology, although its use here is novel (see Ulpian, quoted in the *Digest* 3.4.7: *universitas ad unum redit*).
16. See Porphyry, *Thoughts Leading to the Intelligibles* 15.
17. That is, the center. According to most manuscript traditions, Augustine follows Cicero in using the original Greek term (see Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.17.40). For the center of the circle as self-possession, see Plotinus, *Enneads* 4.2.1. Plotinus also compares the Soul to a circle in motion with the Good as its center (4.4.16), providing Augustine the opportunity here to compare knowledge of a circle to knowledge of one’s soul. The pairing of circle and soul may be traced to Plato’s *Timaeus*, when Timaeus opines that the cosmic and perfectly spherical “Living Creature” has a soul in Its center radiating outwards (*Timaeus* 34b; see 36e). Further, the motion of reason or intelligence resembles the circular motion of a sphere spinning on its axis (see Plato, *Laws* 898a). See also *Soliloquies* 2.19.33.

18. See Augustine, *Epistle* 3.2.8: “Intelligible number grows infinitely.” For the metaphor of the circle as both unity and multiplicity, see Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.8.8.
19. See Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.6.1: “the greater the extension [into multiplicity], the greater the disorder and ugliness.”
20. See Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.7, and Augustine, *On the Happy Life* 3.17, on the importance of purification for beholding God.
21. A collusion is an agreement between two parties for the purpose of fraud. Augustine uses legal imagery throughout this paragraph to describe how disordered desires and beguiling pleasures can conspire against Zenobius to bring about his downfall.
22. See 2.5.17 below.
23. See 1.11.31 below; *Against the Academics* 2.2.4. In a similar vein Cicero refers to the life of philosophy as “the mother and creator” of all praise-worthy arts (*On the Orator* 1.3.9).
24. On co-fitting, see 1.1.2 above.
25. Augustine describes the ailment that forced his retirement from the burden of teaching rhetoric as a *pectoris dolor*, a chest pain (see *Against the Academics* 1.1.3, *On the Happy Life* 1.4, *Confessions* 9.2.4) and as a *stomachi dolor*, a pain in the gullet or esophagus (here and 1.11.31 below). His most detailed account is in the *Confessions*: “My lungs began to give way under the great hardship [of teaching], and I inhaled with difficulty. And the pains in my chest were witnessing to the fact that my lungs were not well and were keeping me from speaking in a loud voice for a prolonged amount of time. At first this greatly disturbed me, since it was forcing me to cast off, almost now by necessity, the burden of this teaching position—or at least, if I could convalesce and be cared for, to put it off intermittently” (9.2.4; see 9.5.13). This respiratory problem continued to vex Augustine at Cassiciacum (see 1.11.33 below, *Against the Academics* 3.7.15, *Soliloquies* 1.1.1).
26. For strain on the voice in oratory, see Cicero, *On the Orator* 1.61.261, *Brutus* 91.313.
27. Stenographers, possibly hired by Romanianus, were used to record the conversations of the group (see 1.5.14, 1.7.20, 1.9.27, 1.10.29–1.11.31, 2.20.54 below; *Against the Academics* 1.1.4, 1.5.15, 1.9.25, 2.7.17, 2.9.22, 3.7.15). Allegedly, the stenographers used wax tablets on which they imprinted words with sharp *styli*; their transcriptions would later be edited and transferred to parchment by Augustine and Alypius (see *Against the Academics* 1.1.4, *Confessions* 9.4.7).
28. See Seneca, *Epistle* 56.6.

29. Or, to “dwell within itself,” a concept originating in Plato (*Phaedo* 67c) and borrowed by, among others, Cicero (*On Old Age* 14.49) and Seneca (*Epistle* 2.1).
30. It was not uncommon for the estates of Roman villas to have private bath-houses, some with multiple rooms and set apart from the main residence. These could be connected to inground water channels lined with stone (see “Inlices” in Flaccus, *Lexicon of Festus*). Later Augustine mentions that the channels he is hearing are made of wood (see 1.4.11 below).
31. Augustine later regrets mentioning the Muses, even though the allusion was made in jest (*Retractations* 1.3.2). The humor is redolent of Cicero (*Academica* 1.1.1) and Plato (*Phaedrus* 237a et passim).
32. A Vergilian echo (see *Aeneid* 12.284).
33. Calliope was the head of the Muses and the goddess of epic poetry; in Ovid she is associated with love poetry (*Lamentations* 2.568). In a poem that he writes years later, Licentius refers to Calliope as “mine” (Augustine, *Epistle* 26, v. 111).
34. Even though he is being ironic in this passage, Augustine later regrets calling wonder a *vitium*, a vice or defect (see *Retractations* 1.3.2). Wonder is the beginning of philosophy and all intellectual inquiry (Plato, *Theaetetus* 155d; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982b12–21). Yet both *vitium* and wonder imply a lack: the former a lack of perfection, and the latter a lack of knowledge or intellectual attainment (see *On the Happy Life* 4.30). It is the existence of this lacuna to which Augustine is here trying to call Licentius’s attention.
35. See Cicero, *On Divination* 2.22.49, where he states that not knowing the cause behind a new thing is itself the cause of wonder. For the Stoic, wonder is a fall from wisdom (see *Tusculan Disputations* 5.28.81).
36. Augustine uses the image of standing aright as a symbol of reason’s coming into its own, its ability to rise above obscure or apparently contradictory data and attain a higher, more intelligent viewpoint (see *On the Happy Life* 1.4).
37. Helicon (now called Zagara) is a mountain in Boeotia, Greece. In ancient times it was considered sacred to the Muses (see *Against the Academics* 3.4.7).
38. In the tragic love story of Pyramus and Thisbe, the young lovers secretly communicate to each other through an unnoticed crack in a wall shared by the two warring families (see Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* 4.55–166).
39. Terence, *The Eunuch* 5.6.1024. The full quotation is, *Egomet meo indicio miser quasi sores hodie perii* (“I, by my disclosure, wretched as a shrew, am lost today”).

40. See Cicero, *On Divination* 1.44.99, where Quintus (Cicero's brother) repeats the historian Sisenna's account of the prodigies surrounding the Marsian War (91–89 B.C.), the most ominous of which was mice gnawing on the shields of Lanuvium (see *On Divination* 2.27.59; Pliny, *Natural History* 8.57.221).
41. This odd expression (especially for a shrew) is redolent of Seneca's "sojourning with myself" (*Epistle* 2.1).
42. Licentius is using the same word for "wall" as Ovid in his account: *paries* (*Metamorphoses* 4.66, 4.73). In his allusion to the story Augustine had used the word *murus*, which is more typical for a city wall.
43. See book one of *Against the Academics*, which would have taken place the previous week.
44. *Captatorius* means "pertaining to legacy-hunters." Just as legacy-hunters try to steal the inheritance of the vulnerable, the Academic skeptic is trying to trick the unlearned out of the treasures of wisdom by convincing them that it is impossible to know the truth (see Cicero, *Academica* 2.14.45).
45. Vergil, *Aeneid* 10.875. The full verse, which is included in some manuscripts of *On Order*, is *Sic pater ille deum faciat, sic altus Apollo* ("Thus may the father of the gods bring it to pass, thus the high Apollo"). By saying *deus* instead of *deum*, Augustine has changed the meaning from "the father of the gods" to "God the father."
46. Literally, where to put the seat (*ubi ponere sedem*), with *sedes* being metaphorically used to signify any kind of dwelling place. See Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.88, 89, when Aeneas prays in the temple of Apollo:

Whom should we follow? Whither do you command us to go, and
where to put the seat?

Give, Father, the omen, and glide into our souls.

47. Augustine mocks (1) the location, (2) the sacrifices, and (3) the smells of Apollonian worship, common in the *Aeneid* and elsewhere. See (1) *Aeneid* 6.9–10, 11.785; *Eclogues* 6.73; (2) *Aeneid* 8.719–20; (3) *Aeneid* 6.656–67.
48. The word Augustine uses here is *vates*. In Vergil, it can refer either to a poet (*Eclogues* 7.27, 9.34) or to a prophet (*Georgics* 3.491, 4.387, 4.392; *Aeneid* 3.246, 5.524). It is used here by Augustine as a contrast to the madmen just mentioned.
49. The *Aeneid* 11.785–93, where Arruns alludes to the ancient rite on Mount Soracte of walking three times through a fire in honor of Apollo (see also Pliny, *Natural History* 7.2.19).
50. Literally, whence does it seem to you (*unde tibi videatur*). See *Soliloquies* 1.2.7.

51. One of the teachings of the Academics (see Cicero, *Academica* 2.39.122; Augustine, *Against the Academics* 3.1.1).
52. Cicero makes the same point (using a virtually identical statement) in *On Divination* 2.26.60–61 (see also *On Fate* 13.34; *On the Ends* 3.5.18).
53. In classical Latin a *percontator*, translated here as “inquisitor,” is a rare word for a persistent questioner. In Plautus’s play *The Brothers Menaechmus*, it is used by a character to insult a doctor who is trying to help him overcome his alleged insanity (5.5.31). With the same (unintentional) comic effect, Licentius likewise uses this word to insult Augustine, who is trying to cure the youth of his unhealthy poetic attachments.
54. Licentius shrewdly rejects a key tenet in the Stoic defense of providence (see Balbus’s speech in Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.14.37, 2.53.133).
55. See Augustine’s letter to Nebridius: “I do not want you to think that we have attained . . . a certain manhood of the mind. For we are boys, but, as they often say, perhaps we are fine boys—or rather, not bad ones” (*Epistle* 4.2).
56. For the source of this expression, see Cicero, *On Fate* frg. 2.
57. The Latin word is *ratus* (see Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.20.51).
58. A *nodus* is literally a knot, but judging by the context and by its use in *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.43.111, Licentius seems to be thinking of a *harmonia mundi* in which celestial bodies such as the stars are placed into their proper orbits. See also *Against the Academics* 3.6.13 and the “knots of comprehension.”
59. See 1.2.5 above.
60. The Chaldeans were an Assyrian people renowned in antiquity for their knowledge of astrology and soothsaying (see Cicero, *On Divination* 1.1.2, 1.41.91).
61. Similar points are made by Cicero in *On Fate*, though with the intention of rejecting a predictable nexus of necessity (*On Fate* 7.14, 14.32, 33, frg. 2; see *On Divination* 2.4.14–2.7.19).
62. That is, the falling of the leaves and the activities of the shrews.
63. Book three of Cicero’s *On the Nature of the Gods* and book two of *On Divination* offer extensive criticisms of divination. In the latter, Cicero ridicules his brother’s allusion to the shield-eating mice at Lanuvium (see note 40 above), arguing that by this logic, mice gnawing at his copy of Plato’s *Republic* would foretell the fall of Rome and mice gnawing at his copy of Epicurus’s *On Pleasure* would foretell a rise in the market price of food (2.25.59). When speaking of men of quality, Augustine might also have in mind Vindicianus, who is mentioned in the *Confessions* for his vehement denial that an art for foreseeing the future exists (7.6.8). The *Confessions*

passage begins with an invocation of God as the Wisdom “by which the world is governed, even to the flying leaves of the trees.”

64. *Medietas* can also mean a “midpoint.”

65. See Cicero, *On Divination* 1.55.125, where Quintus upholds the Greek definition of fate (*eimarmenê*) as “the order and series of causes, where cause is linked to cause [so that] each cause produces something from itself.” Cicero, however, objects that those “who introduce an everlasting series of causes rob the human mind of free will and enchain it in the necessity of fate” (*On Fate* 9.20).

66. Middling disciplines (*mediocres litterae*) are the lower or less advanced branches of learning (see Cicero, *On the Commonwealth* 1.3.4). Augustine is possibly punning on the middling disciplines and the midpoint of philosophy (see also 1.5.13 above). These unnamed disciplines may be in contrast to the also unnamed “best liberal disciplines” mentioned at 2.9.16 below.

67. *Mens*, translated elsewhere as “mind*.”

68. Literally, his drunkenness having been dissipated (*digesta ebrietate*), a medical image (Cornelius Celsus, *On Medicine* 5.18). Drunkenness was said to be conducive to divination (see Cicero, *On Divination* 2.59.121).

69. See Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.43.121.

70. According to Cicero, distinction (*distinctio*) pertains to contrary elements (see *On the Laws* 2.5.14, *On Duties* 1.29.104).

71. See Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.2.16–17.

72. An *antitheton*, or antithesis, is a rhetorical figure involving contrasts (Cicero, *Orator* 50.166).

73. See *On the Commonwealth* 2.42.69, where Scipio speaks of the harmony of spoken discourse.

74. *Intersileo*, “to be silent in the meantime,” appears to be a neologism coined by Augustine.

75. Trygetius’s bed could have been a bunk bed, which were used in Roman military installations; or it could have been elevated, since some Roman bedsteads were so high that steps were required to ascend them; or Licentius may have simply gotten up from his bed to approach Trygetius’s. Whatever the case, “rising up” (*sese erigens*) is evocative of the cover letter’s men with heads held high (*erecti*, see 1.1.1 above and 1.8.24 below).

76. See *On the Nature of the Gods* 3.15.38.

77. Terence, *Lady of Andros* 4.3.730, quoted without alteration. In the play, Davos is a cunning servant who has asked Mysis to do something for him so that if he is then interrogated by his master, he can swear that he has not

done anything. Mysis remarks ironically that in becoming so conscientious Davos has now “got a new religion.”

78. See 1.2.5 above.

79. For the return to God, see 1.8.23 below; *On the Happy Life* 4.36; *Soliloquies* 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.1.6, 1.10.17, 1.11.18, 2.6.9. Augustine also speaks of returning to heaven as a metonymy for returning to God (*Against the Academics* 2.1.2, 2.9.22), returning to the light (*On the Happy Life* 4.35; *Soliloquies* 1.6.13, 1.13.23, 2.19.33), and returning to our homeland (*Against the Academics* 3.19.42, *On the Happy Life* 1.2).

80. According to Cicero, polishing a writing requires one to remove inconsistencies (*Brutus* 24.93) and therefore relates to order (see 1.10.28 below).

81. Literally, the straits (*angustiae*) of time. See 1.3.7 above.

82. Augustine is probably referring to the Arian attempt to take one of the Catholic basilicas in Milan in the spring of 386 (see *Confessions* 9.7.15). In *Soliloquies* 2.14.26 Augustine mentions that Zenobius is “somewhere beyond the Alps,” presumably where he went after his misfortune in Milan.

83. Romanianus (see Glossary of Select Names).

84. Here, being inflamed (*conflo*) has a negative connotation, like inflammation in medical conditions (see Aurelianus, *Tardae* 3.2.18).

85. See 1.4.10 above; Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.8.

86. Ps 79:8 (80:7).

87. According to Quintilian, this was a euphemism used by Sallust (see Quintilian, *Oratorical Instruction* 8.6.59).

88. The music mentioned here was most likely what St. Ambrose used for his congregation in Milan, viz., his own hymns (see *On the Happy Life* 4.35) as well as compositions imported from the East (see *Confessions* 9.6.15). Either way, since sacred music was designed to differ from the profane, it would have struck Licentius’s ears as novel.

89. For the return or con-version to God, see 1.7.20 above.

90. A *scrupulus* can also mean a small stone.

91. See *Against the Academics* 3.19.42 for more on the themes of bodily filth and spiritual darkness.

92. Augustine’s use of *suppressius* for “subdued” echoes his use of *pressius* for the “muffled” leaves in the channel (see 1.3.6 above).

93. *Modesta* means moderation but also connotes gentleness and mildness.

94. Augustine later regrets praising the liberal disciplines so much because there are many who do not know them and are saintly, as well as many who do know them and are not (*Retractations* 1.3.2).

95. Not unlike the group’s reaction to Augustine in *On the Happy Life* 2.13.

96. For more on the indigence of the soul, see *On the Happy Life* 4.26–30.
97. For the reluctance of the sick to undergo treatment because of the discomfort involved, see *Soliloquies* 1.6.12.
98. Augustine's description of the lovers of Truth or the Divine Spouse is reminiscent of Plotinus's description of the lovers of beauty (*Enneads* 1.6.7). St. Ambrose speaks of the soul's spouse as "God the Word, to whom the soul is joined by a certain legitimate contract of marriage" (*On the Good of Death* 20). For other testimonies to the beauty of God, see *Soliloquies* 1.1.2, 1.1.3, and 1.7.14.
99. See 1.3.8 above.
100. See Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.5–7, on the nature of purified love.
101. *Dotatae*, translated here as "gifted," literally refers to being provided with a dowry; *copulare*, translated as "joined," can refer to sexual union. The imagery bespeaks the betrothal, wedding, honeymoon, and happy life of souls that are wed to understanding with the help of philosophy.
102. For Cicero, the happy life is conferred by the art of dialectic and the virtues (*Tusculan Disputations* 5.25.72).
103. That is, their prayers (see 2.20.52 below, where *vota* is translated as "petitions"). The expression is inspired by Ps 60:9 (61:8): "I will sing a psalm to Thy name forever and ever; / that I may pay my vows from day to day." It is likely that the group practiced an early form of the Divine Office (see *Confessions* 9.4.8–12).
104. It was not unusual for even private bathhouses to have warm water and rooms heated by hot air (see Cicero, *Epistle to Quintus His Brother* 3.1). The baths would thus have been an attractive alternative to the outdoors on an overcast day (see 2.6.19 below; *Against the Academics* 3.1.1; *On the Happy Life* 1.6, 4.23).
105. Literally, lest the beauty of reason give the nod.
106. The Latin word *modificare* implies setting a limit to something.
107. Augustine coins the neologism *nescientia* to denote things that are incapable of attaining knowledge. His description of reason's governance of unknowing things calls to mind Plotinus's description of irrational animals as "enreasoned" (*lelogôtai*).
108. *In voce atque motu*: literally, in voice and in motion. I am indebted to Robert P. Russell's translation of this phrase.
109. Literally, where is there not a shadow of constancy. See 1.3.6 above for another mention of regularity and irregularity. For more on constancy, see *On the Happy Life* 2.8; *On the Immortality of the Soul* 3.3; *On Music* 6.14.44; *Retractations* 1.10.4.

110. The Latin here is *modus*, from which comes the word “moderation” (see *On the Happy Life* 4.32). It will be translated throughout either as “measure” or “limit,” depending on context. With extensive roots in both Cicero and Plotinus, measure is an important concept in the Cassiciacum dialogues (see 2.5.14 and 2.19.50 below; *Against the Academics* 2.2.4, 2.3.9; *On the Happy Life* 2.7, 4.32, 4.34–35).
111. Cicero likewise makes mention of health at the end of a day of philosophizing (see *Tusculan Disputations* 1.49.119).
112. See 1.10.30, 1.11.30, and 2.19.50 below. For the *modus* or measure of things, see Cicero, *On Duties* 1.27.93. For the importance of measure in conversation and speeches, see *On Duties* 1.37.135, *On the Commonwealth* 2.1.1, *Tusculan Disputations* 4.38.82 and 5.28.80, *Against Verres* 2.2.118; in words and deeds, see *On Duties* 1.4.14; in appetites, see *On Duties* 1.29.102, 1.30.106; in pleasure, see *On Old Age* 14.46; in emotions, see *Academica* 2.44.135. Cicero, however, thinks that the pursuit of the truth should be without measure, and he chastises those who think otherwise (*On the Ends* 1.2.2–3). While Augustine agrees (see 2.20.52 below; *Soliloquies* 1.13.22, 2.1.1), he also appears to be concerned with the pursuer’s growing fatigued or apathetic from overexertion (*On the Happy Life* 4.32) since self-restraint is the key to fruitfulness (see *On the Happy Life* 2.8, 4.31–32). Eustathius in Macrobius’s *Satumalia* offers a similar opinion when he says that Lady Philosophy, as a teacher of moderation in all things, must herself be moderate in her activities (7.1.6).
113. *Consedere* can mean to sit together or, more officially, to hold a session.
114. See *Confessions* 9.2.4.
115. *Tenere*, or to keep, can also mean to comprehend. Augustine’s functional definition of order here differs from his formal definition in the *City of God*: “Order is an arrangement of similar and dissimilar things, assigning its proper place to each one” (19.13).
116. That is, Alypius and Navigius, who were in Milan at the time.
117. See 1.2.5 above.
118. *Disciplina*, translated here as “instruction,” is translated as “discipline” elsewhere (see 2.2.7, 2.5.17, 2.7.24–2.8.25, 2.17.45, 2.20.53 below). The language of this paragraph is redolent of 1.2.4 above.
119. Every rational treatment of a subject ought to begin with a definition (see Cicero, *On Duties* 1.2.7).
120. See 1.5.14 above, where Licentius speaks of spirits that visit soothsayers (see *Against the Academics* 1.7.20).

121. The Latin word translated here as “guided” is *agere*. It has been previously translated as “to set in motion” or “to do.” Licentius’s definition resembles the Stoic argument in *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.30.76: “I therefore say that the world and all the parts of the world were constituted from the beginning and have been administered for all time by the providence of the gods.”
122. See John 5:36, 20:21.
123. Literally, disturbed by religion. For other uses of the word *religio* in this dialogue, see 1.7.20, 1.8.22, 1.11.33 above.
124. See 1.2.5 above.
125. See *Against the Academics* 1.3.8. A philosophical debate should aim “at the discovery of truth, not the conquest of another as an adversary” (Cicero, *On the Ends* 1.5.13).
126. The blush is an important motif in a philosophical dialogue, revealing as it does the conventional human restraint of shame. Licentius’s blush seems to have the same meaning as Thrasyarchus’s in the *Republic* (350d): that he is, as Alan Bloom puts it, “a lover of applause more than of truth” (Plato, *Republic*, 336).
127. *Morbi dementia* may also refer to a foolish ignorance of disease. Hence their laughing would indicate how oblivious they are to their own sorry state.
128. See *Against the Academics* 1.1.1, where the same image is applied to Romanianus, Licentius’s father (see 2.17.45 below). The image comes from Cicero (*On the Ends* 3.14.48).
129. See 1.1.3 above.
130. For an example of these prayers, see *Soliloquies* 1.1.5.
131. The school of rhetoric at Milan mentioned at the beginning of their disputation (1.9.27).
132. *Pudere*, to blush. See Licentius’s reaction in 1.10.29 above.
133. Or, zeal for instruction (*studia doctrinae*).
134. Literally, how we will be more purged in the future. On the importance of purification, see 1.2.4, 1.2.6, and 2.9.27; *On the Happy Life* 3.17; Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.7.
135. See note 27 above.
136. The image may be inspired by St. Ambrose (see *Exposition of Twelve Psalms*, Ps 37.2, 48; see also *On Isaac, or the Soul* 8.65).
137. A more literal translation of *non parum desudabimus* would be, we will sweat not a little. The verb *desudo*, to sweat greatly, can also mean to exert oneself.

138. See Plato, *Phaedrus* 275a–c.
139. For earlier examples of this image, see Seneca, *Epistles* 52.15, 95.64, 64.103.4. Augustine's term for "inner sanctum" (*penetralia*) is borrowed from pagan rather than Christian parlance.
140. Augustine is referring to the reading sessions that were taking place at Cassiciacum, such as the daily recitation of Vergil before supper (see 1.8.26 above) or the studying of certain books during the afternoon (see 1.3.6 above).
141. Fortune is a word that Augustine later wishes he had not used so often in these dialogues because it may discourage some of his readers from thinking in terms of divine providence. Even though in *Against the Academics* 1.1.1 Augustine defines fortune in terms of providence, such subtlety is not enough to break men from the "very bad habit of saying 'Fortune willed this' " instead of "'God willed this' " (*Retractations* 1.1.2).
142. Manlius Theodorus. See *Soliloquies* 2.14.26, where Augustine offers similar praise to a man who is most likely Theodorus.
143. Noble birth significantly increased the likelihood of receiving an education and of being free from the necessity of servile labor.
144. Augustine mentions this unusual class of philosophers only once again during his lifetime in *On the Work of Monks* 13.55, where he discusses lowliness of rank: "Even the philosophers had among themselves honorable shoemakers." The classical referent to Augustine's allusion (if any) is unknown, although the principle that "Wisdom often dwells under a dirty cloak" (a verse of Caecilius cited in the *Tusculan Disputations* 3.23.56) was generally accepted by philosophers. A tradition of using shoemakers to represent the lowest class begins with Plato's *Republic* (see, e.g., 369d, 370d, 370e, 372a, 374b–c) and is picked up later by Latin writers (see Cicero, *For Flaccus* 7.17; Juvenal, *Satires* 3.293).
145. Augustine regrets making this statement about the philosophers because they "lack true piety" (*Retractations* 1.3.2). In his critique of the philosophers in the *City of God*, he argues that philosophers cannot be considered truly virtuous because the virtues they possess are linked to their pride (19.4, 19.25).
146. Literally, they would never change their goods (*bona sua*) with those of another class. Augustine is contrasting the philosophical nobility of intellectual excellence with the conventional nobility of a hereditary aristocracy.
147. Augustine may have had in mind Diotima of Mantinea, who taught Socrates the nature of love and initiated him into its mysteries (Plato,

- Symposium* 201aff); Axiothea of Phlius and Lastheneia of Mantinea, students of Plato at the Academy; Leontium, a disciple of Epicurus; Seneca's mother Helvia, whose mind imbibed philosophy despite her husband's prohibitions (*To Helvia on Consolation* 17.4); the two Geminas as well as Amphiclea, all serious students of Plotinus (Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 9); or Marcella, Porphyry's wife (see Porphyry, *Letter to Marcella* 3). Socrates declares that women can become philosophers as much as men provided they have the requisite natures (Plato, *Republic* 540c).
148. See Col 2:8.
149. John 18:36. The exegesis given here later prompted Augustine to offer his lengthiest reflection on any single passage in *On Order*. Augustine prefaces his remarks by explicitly asserting that this statement was made not in the name of Plato or the Platonists but his own (*Retractations* 1.3.2). If he regrets using Plato's phrase, "the intelligible world," it is not because Plato's definition of the term is inaccurate. In fact Augustine insinuates that one cannot reject its definition and remain an orthodox Christian, since by it Plato was referring to the "eternal and unchangeable plan according to which God made the world," i.e., the Word through whom all things were made (see John 1:3). Augustine, however, regrets the phrase itself because "world" in the Christian lexicon has a different connotation; if he had been more familiar with the Christian usage of Latin (present in "certain ecclesiastical writings"), he would not have used it. As for his interpretation of John 8:36, Augustine came to hold that the other world implied in Christ's statement can be more fittingly understood as the new heaven and the new earth that will follow the Second Coming.
150. See *Tusculan Disputations* 5.2.5, where Cicero praises philosophy for destroying the fear of death. In Plato's *Phaedo*, Socrates describes philosophy as the art of dying (64a–c, 67e). For Augustine's uses of the metaphor of a citadel (*arcs*), see *Against the Academics* 1.9.24; *On the Happy Life* 2.10; *Soliloquies* 1.10.17.
151. The word translated here as "devoted way" is *religiose* (see 1.7.20 and 1.10.29 above and 2.10.29 below).

Book Two

1. See *On the Happy Life* 4.23.
2. See *On the Happy Life* 2.10. Cicero heaps similar praise on "outstanding men" and "great men" in *On the Commonwealth* 6.18.18 and 6.23.25. *Ingenium*, translated here and elsewhere as "intellectual aptitude," refers to

a natural capacity for thinking things through and for explaining, embellishing, and remembering (see Cicero, *On the Orator* 1.25.113). In *On the Orator*, *ingenium* is contrasted with *ars*, schooling or training (see 1.33.151, 2.35.147–51).

3. *On the Happy Life*. Augustine refers to his co-retreatants as banqueters (*convivae*, see *On the Happy Life* 2.16) because the conceit of the dialogue is a feast of words in the spirit of Plato's *Symposium* and *Timaeus*.
4. See 2.5.16 below, where Augustine describes what true philosophy is (see also *Against the Academics* 3.19.42). For Augustine's assessment of Monica, see 1.11.32 above and *On the Happy Life* 2.10.
5. See 1.10.29–30 above.
6. See 1.10.28 above.
7. See 1.5.14 and 1.6.15, respectively.
8. See Porphyry: "That which is always in motion is separated from Being" (*Thoughts Leading to the Intelligibles* 44).
9. On the motion of the heavens, see 2.15.42 below. See also Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.38.97; *On the Orator* 1.42.187; *Timaeus* 10.36 (Cicero's translation); *Tusculan Disputations* 5.24.69; Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.250; Ennius, *Annals* 211.
10. For Cicero's opinion on this subject, see *On the Orator* 1.11.47. For places where Augustine frowns on semantic disputes, see 2.7.21 below; *Against the Academics* 2.10.24, 3.12.29; *City of God* 9.5.
11. By its nature, definition is explanatory rather than descriptive (see Cicero, *On the Orator* 1.42.189).
12. The Greek *pallium* or cloak is associated with the philosopher (see *Against the Academics* 3.8.17).
13. *Sensus iste corporis*, "this sense of the body" (in the singular rather than the plural) appears in a summary of Epicurean teaching from the *Tusculan Disputations*, where it is said to judge pleasure and pain (5.33.95). See also Augustine's *Epistle* 2 to Zenobius and *Against the Academics* 1.1.3.
14. See 1.1.3 above.
15. *Verecundia*, translated here as "shyness," can also be the virtue of considerateness, the habit of not offending (see Cicero, *On Duties* 1.28.99).
16. For earlier formulations of this distinction, see Cicero, *Timaeus* 8.28; *Tusculan Disputations* 1.20.46, 1.22.52, 5.25.70; *On the Ends* 5.12.34.
17. See *Soliloquies* 1.6.12, where the mind* (*mens*) is defined as the soul's sensation or faculty of sense, and *Soliloquies* 2.2.3, where Augustine opines that sensation belongs to the soul rather than to the body. See also *Against the Academics* 1.1.3.

18. Plotinus uses similar language, although he treats purification not as a step to clinging to God but in some respects as the means to become God (see *Enneads* 1.2.4–5). Cicero, on the other hand, states that the mind which knows itself is aware “that it is united to the Divine Mind, whence it is filled with insatiable joy” (*Tusculan Disputations* 5.25.70). See also Cicero, *Hortensius* frg. 97 (Müller): if “we have souls that are eternal and divine, we must then believe that the more that these will have stayed on their own proper course—that is, in reason and in the passion for inquiry—and the less they will have mixed and entangled themselves in the vices and errors of men, the more easily they will ascend and return to heaven” (see *On the Trinity* 14.19.26). See also Cicero, *On the Laws* 1.22.59–1.23.61.
19. The Latin word *sordes*, which is translated here as “dirty rags,” refers to both squalor and a mourning garment (which was usually soiled), while *exuviae* are clothes that have been stripped off. The image is probably inspired by Plotinus’s description of the converted soul’s ascent to the good after it has stripped itself of its carnal “clothes” (*Enneads* 1.6.7).
20. *Nec exspectatur ut sit nec metuitur ne desit*. I am indebted to Robert P. Russell for this translation.
21. For Plotinus, *Nous* or the Divine Intellect abides forever without change (see *Enneads* 5.1.4; see also 3.7.6).
22. A *peculium* is the property that a master allowed a slave to possess and use as if it were his own.
23. Assuming that the statement to which Augustine here alludes is included somewhere in the Cassiciacum dialogues, it is most likely *Against the Academics* 2.9.22, when Augustine refers to memory as a rather unreliable custodian. The remark would have been made several days before the present discussion.
24. For the expression, *bona mens*, see Cicero, *Hortensius* frg. 81 (Müller), *Tusculan Disputations* 5.23.67.
25. Velleius uses a similar expression in *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.8.19 when he speaks of the “interior eyes of the soul.” For more on the eyes of our mind, see *Soliloquies* 1.6.12–1.7.14.
26. Licentius has changed the sex of the metaphorical servant from female to male by replacing *famula* with *famulus*. Whereas Augustine has portrayed memory as the mind’s obliging and cooperative handmaid, Licentius compares it to a haughty and rebellious butler.
27. The Latin verb *asserere*, translated here as “claiming,” means to declare a slave free.

28. *Ex dispositione*. According to Cicero, a *dispositio* is a number of arguments placed in order (*On Rhetorical Invention* 1.7.9).
29. See Cicero, *On the Orator* 1.5.18.
30. See 2.2.4 above.
31. See 2.2.5 above.
32. The expression *di meliora* can be found in classical Latin literature (see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7.37; Cicero, *On Old Age* 14.47). It literally means, May the gods [grant] better things [than what you say]. Alypius has changed the plural *di* to the singular *deus*. For Alypius's legal skills, see *Confessions* 6.10.16.
33. *Humanitas*, translated earlier as a "humane cultivation" (1.11.31).
34. See 2.2.5 above.
35. Literally, to be shoved into foreign straits (*alienae angustiae*). See 1.3.7 above for similar language about the water channel (see also 1.7.20).
36. The questions are evocative of the three classical *loci* or *topoi* of oratory as articulated by Cicero in *On Oratorical Classification* 18.62, but Augustine has changed the first from "whether a thing is or is not" (*sit necne sit*) to "which kind is it" (*quae sit*).
37. See *On the Happy Life* 4.29, where folly is depicted as a lack or need.
38. See the *Tusculan Disputations* 3.4.9–3.5.11, where Cicero discusses the philosophical idea of folly as a state of being out of one's mind. On teaching what one does not understand, the character Hortensius complains that using ambiguous things to explain other ambiguous things "is like bringing an extinguished torch into the darkness" (Cicero, *Hortensius* frg. 99 [Müller]; see also Augustine, *On Dialectic* 9).
39. See 2.2.5 above; Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.33.95.
40. See Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.8.9.
41. On the mind's inability to know things because of the darkness that envelops reality, see Cicero, *Academica* 1.12.44, 2.39.122. St. Maximus of Turin, a disciple of St. Ambrose, speaks of the "blackest darkness of the mind" (*taeterrime tenebrae mentis*) taking possession of you when "your head is emptied of wisdom" (*Sermon* 30).
42. See 1.10.28 above.
43. For the nature of a *complexio* (dilemma), see Cicero, *On Rhetorical Invention* 1.19.45.
44. That is, Trygetius is confident that Augustine will assist him as he did with Licentius by anticipating what he is trying to articulate (see 2.1.3 above).
45. *Locus* is the translation of the Greek *topos*, which Plotinus uses when he speaks of the Rational Principle (*Logos*) assigning each thing in the universe a place to dwell so that a sort of harmony may result (*Enneads* 3.2.17).

46. In Cicero's *On the Commonwealth*, Laelius speaks of an eternal law when he says, "True law is right reason conforming to nature, extending to everyone, constant and eternal, which calls us to duty by commanding us and deters us from crime by forbidding us" (3.22.33).
47. See 1.1.2 above.
48. See 1.3.10 above and 2.5.13 below.
49. The "hangman" or *carnifex* (flesh-wrecker), who not only executed but tortured as well, was considered so disgraceful that he was not permitted to live in the city (see Cicero, *For Rabirius* 10–11; see also Martial, *Epigram* 2.17.1).
50. Public policy on prostitution was a much-discussed topic at the time. The year before, Emperor Theodosius I had enacted repressive legislation against brothels in Rome. For the contrast between a prostitute and a matron, see Cicero, *On the Ends* 2.4.12.
51. Cicero writes that whereas nature has given the body's more beautiful parts a place of prominence, she "has covered up and hidden those parts of the body that are given for the needs of nature which would present a deformed and ugly appearance" (*On Duties* 1.35.126). Following Cicero's admonitions, Augustine also politely refrains from giving the proper names of these parts (see *On Duties* 1.35.127).
52. See 1.8.25 above.
53. These examples accord with Plotinus's observation about good and bad being assigned places that fit their character (*Enneads* 3.2.17); in fact, Augustine's examples of the hangman and the body's "lower parts" are lifted directly from the *Enneads* 3.2.17 and 3.2.8, respectively. But whereas Plotinus describes evils as necessary to make the universe beautiful, Augustine describes the placement of evils as making the whole *more* beautiful.
54. Since only healthy "eyes of the mind" (2.4.11 above) can see the beautiful harmony of beautiful and ugly things, they are avariciously sought after by the many (see 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.8.24, 2.5.15). Augustine describes these valuable eyes later on (2.19.51 below). See also *Soliloquies* 1.6.12.
55. See Pseudo-Cicero, *Rhetoric for Herennius* 4.18.17, where the author, after mentioning that the two things which defile "Latinity" are solecisms and barbarisms, defines the former as the clash between two words in a phrase and the latter as the defective pronunciation of a word.
56. *Schemata et metaplasmata*. A *schema* in rhetoric is a figure of speech while a *metaplasma* is a grammatical alteration or irregularity.
57. See Cicero, *On the Orator* 3.46.185; *The Orator* 6.21; *Brutus* 74.259.

58. See Cicero, *On the Orator* 3.25.98–100.
59. See Cicero, *On the Orator* 3.53.203, where Cicero includes among a list of valid modes of argument adding or subtracting from the truth and “that by which one most effectively creeps, so to speak, into men’s minds” (see also Plato, *Republic* 6.487b–d).
60. Literally, placed in their own seats. See 1.3.10 and 2.4.11 above.
61. See 2.14.39–2.15.43 below.
62. Using the same word (*penetrare*), Eustathius says that Lady Philosophy ought to be worshiped only in her own sanctuary (Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 7.1.5).
63. Eustathius in Macrobius’s *Saturnalia* offers a similar opinion when he says that Lady Philosophy, as a teacher of moderation in all things, must herself be moderate in her activities (*Saturnalia* 7.1.6). See 1.8.26 above and *On the Happy Life* 2.13.
64. See Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.2.5 for the metaphor of philosophy as a general (*dux*).
65. See 2.9.27 below; Augustine, *Epistle* 15.2; Cicero, *On the Commonwealth* 6.26.29.
66. That is, God the Father (see 2.19.50 below; *Against the Academics* 2.2.4; *On the Happy Life* 4.34). Plotinus describes a Measure (*metron*) reigning above to which the measure in civic virtues bears a resemblance and which is “the Highest Good in the Supreme” (*Enneads* 1.2.2); he also describes the transcendent Good as “the Measure and Term of all” (*metron pantôn kai peras*) (*Enneads* 1.8.2). The Supreme Measure, then, is not merely the highest measurement but that by which all is measured and from which all measure is derived (see Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.5.4, which describes the One as “Measure unmeasured”). As such it is similar to Aristotle’s notion of *telos* as the final cause or good for which all else exists or is done (see *Metaphysics* 994b9, 996a26; *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.1097a22). Other passages from Plotinus may have also influenced Augustine in this regard (see *Enneads* 1.8.4–6, 5.1.2, 5.1.6–7, 5.2.1, 5.5.1, 5.5.2, 5.5.11, 6.5.11). For more on the notion of measure, see book one note 110 above.
67. A property of virtue (see 2.20.54 below; Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.1.4).
68. For a similar phrase, used in reference to Marc Antony’s mother Julia, see Cicero, *Philippics* 2.24.58.
69. See Vergil, *Georgics* 2.507.
70. See Horace, *Satires* 2.2.103.
71. See 1.1.1 above.

72. Literally, they cannot introduce into their heart/mind (*animus*) such a thing.
73. See Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.2.15.
74. A discreet reference to Zenobius, who matches the profile given here (see 1.7.20 below and 1.1.4 above).
75. Literally, our wretched Getulia, a region in present-day Morocco bordering the Sahara Desert. See Augustine, *Explanations of the Psalms* 148.8: “Many fools, unable to contemplate and discern creation in its different regions and in its order . . . sometimes say to each other: ‘If it is God who gives rain, then surely He would not make it rain into the sea? What sort of providence . . . is this? Getulia is thirsty, and it rains into the sea.’ They think that they handle the matter cleverly. One should say to them, ‘Getulia does indeed thirst, but you do not.’” For the discrepancy between rainy and arid climates, see Vergil, *Georgics* 1.100.
76. An expression used by Cicero to describe how obvious Catiline’s stratagems against the republic were (*Catiline Conspiracy* 1.3.6). Augustine later regrets his statement here about the indispensability of a liberal education (*Retractations* 1.3.2).
77. The mysteries are those realities revealed by God through Scripture or sacred liturgy or any other aspect of ecclesial tradition (see 2.6.16, 2.9.27, 2.17.46 below; *Against the Academics* 2.1.1; *On the Happy Life* 1.4).
78. See *On the Happy Life* 4.36, where God is described as “the liberator of souls” and John 3:15, where God becomes man so that “whosoever should believe in him should not perish” (see also *Against the Academics* 3.19.42).
79. For the expression “principle-less Principle” (*Principium sine principio*), see Marius Victorinus’s *Letter to Candidus* 16. For Victorinus’s influence on Augustine, see *Confessions* 8.2.3–5.
80. According to Augustine, God the Father is the “First and Supreme Principle” (*On True Religion* 31.58); God the Son is the Intellect or Understanding (*Intellectus*) who was made flesh and dwelt among us (see *Against the Academics* 3.19.42); and God the Holy Spirit is the Person who proceeds or emanates (*manavit*) therefrom (for the Paraclete and emanation, see 2.19.51 below; *On the Happy Life* 4.35). Much of the terminology here has been adapted from Neoplatonism. Augustine adds “without any degeneration” to contradistinguish the divine persons of the Trinity from some of the emanations in Plotinus’s philosophy (such as Reason) that suffer decay or are subordinate to the One (see Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.2.3; see also *On the Happy Life* 4.35, which describes the Paraclete as “perfect without the impediment of any corruption”). Although the Neoplatonists

had a flawed understanding of the divine, they nevertheless saw through “blurry eyes” the Triune Reality toward which “we should be striving” (*City of God* 10.29).

81. The polemical treatises of Celsus (*The True Word*) and Porphyry (*Against the Christians*) accuse the Christian faith of incoherence and of denigrating human reason.
82. The unusual *tripotens* (thrice-mighty) was used only twice before by Marius Victorinus in his polemic *Against Arius* (1.50, 56) and does not seem to have been used again except for its appearance here. Similarly, the association of faith in Christ, liberation, and the sacred mysteries evidenced here and in 2.5.15 above is influenced by Marius Victorinus’s *Commentary on Ephesians* 1.4 and 3.2.
83. See *Against the Academics* 3.19.42.
84. In classical Latin, *clementia* signifies a certain lenience about the failings of others (see Seneca, *On Clemency* 2.3.1: “Clemency is a moderation of the mind regarding the power of punishing, or the leniency of a superior toward an inferior when imposing penalties”). In the Cassiciacum dialogues, Augustine uses “clemency” and “clement” especially in relation to God’s kindness in bringing about the Incarnation (see 2.9.27 and 2.10.29 below; *Against the Academics* 3.19.42; *Soliloquies* 1.1.5, 1.1.6, 1.14.26, 1.15.30).
85. While he is circumspect here, Augustine is not shy decades later about identifying some of the proud and clever men he has in mind. In the *City of God* he chastises Plotinus and especially Porphyry for failing to recognize how Christ became incarnate in order to purify us (10.24), even though these philosophers recognized much that was true about the Triune God (see note 80 above). For Plotinus, the law of providence does not warrant the wicked expecting someone else to sacrifice himself for their sakes (see *Enneads* 3.2.9), nor would the Divine ever deign to incline down to what is below Itself (see *Enneads* 5.3.3).
86. The question can also mean, “What does it guide here?”
87. See *On the Happy Life* 1.5. These questions about the soul foreshadow the subject of the *Soliloquies*.
88. See 2.19.50 below.
89. See *On the Ends* 5.2.6 and 5.18.49–5.19.50, where Cicero contrasts the “studious” who strive to know the highest goods with the “curious” who want to “know all things of whatever kind.” *Curiositas* is a disordered intellectual itch that is keen to acquire useless or trivial information such as gossip or grotesque sights or that has an appetite for laudable knowledge but in a perverse or inordinate manner (see 2.9.27, 2.15.42 below; *Confessions* 10.35.54–57).

90. *Intentio* (translated here as “purposefulness”) can refer to a mental effort or exertion ordered toward philosophy (see Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 4.2.3; Seneca, *Epistle* 106.7). By speaking of a purposefulness that is hidden, Augustine may also be correlating this concept with the concealed power of nature by which an individual may eventually come to know himself (see Cicero, *On the Ends* 5.15.43).
91. See 2.3.10–2.4.11 above.
92. See 2.2.4 above.
93. See 2.1.3 above.
94. The analogy is taken from Aristotle’s *On the Soul* 406a5–8. Augustine may have learned of it from Macrobius (*Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* 2.14.8).
95. See Cicero, *On the Commonwealth* 3.28.39, fig. 1. Augustine later cites it in the *City of God* 19.21 and in *Against Julian* 4.12.61.
96. According to Augustine, the example is Varro’s (see *City of God* 19.3).
97. See 1.10.28, 2.2.4 above.
98. Augustine borrows the last line of Tacitus’s *A Dialogue on Orators* examining the decline of oratory in the Roman Empire (42). The same line is used at the end of *Against the Academics* 3.3.6.
99. For the group’s use of the baths, see 1.8.25 above; *Against the Academics* 3.1.1; *On the Happy Life* 1.6, 4.23.
100. See Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.9.18 on life, soul, and body.
101. See 2.2.4 above.
102. That is, the topic of order. See 2.4.11 above.
103. See 2.2.4 above.
104. *Infantia* means “infant” as well as “nonspeaking.” Licentius may be playing on the fact that he is but a baby in the arena of philosophy (see 1.5.13 above).
105. According to Plotinus, the Principle of being possesses everything (*Enneads* 5.5.9).
106. See *On the Happy Life*, where Augustine and the other discussants conclude that “the soul’s possession of God is its enjoyment of God” (4.34).
107. See 2.2.4 above; *Against the Academics* 2.10.24, 3.12.29.
108. See 1.10.28 above.
109. See 1.6.15 above.
110. See 2.4.11 above.
111. Terence, *Phormio* 419, where Phormio offers this advice to a father trying to dissolve his son’s marriage.

112. See 2.3.10, 2.4.11, 2.5.17 above.
113. See 1.7.19 above.
114. Cicero, *Catiline Conspiracy* 1.9.23.
115. Literally, the straits (*angustiae*) of time. See 1.3.7, 1.9.20, 2.3.9 above.
116. See 1.3.9 above.
117. See Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.2.4.
118. See 1.7.20 above, where it is translated as “oblivion.” See also *Soliloquies* 2.14.25, 2.20.34, 2.20.36; *On the Immortality of the Soul* 4.6.
119. The passage “Order was always with God . . . order of life” is found in only some of the extant manuscripts.
120. The clause can also mean “by which one comes to the intelligence of that ineffable Majesty.” For uses of *majestas* in reference to the divine, see 1.1.2 above; Cicero, *On Divination* 1.38.82, 2.49.102.
121. See Quintilian, *Oratorical Instruction* 1.1.24.
122. See 1.1.1 above; *Against the Academics* 1.1.1.
123. According to Augustine, the two great topics of philosophy (see 2.18.47 below, *Soliloquies* 1.2.7).
124. See *Against the Academics* 2.3.9: “we must not despair of obtaining knowledge and that it will be more obvious than those numbers.”
125. See 1.1.1 above; see also Plotinus’s *Enneads* 5.3.4, which states that our becoming one with the Intellectual Principle (*Nous*) may be brought about by “laws of conduct engraved upon our souls as tablets.” Cicero, on the other hand, speaks of “right reason” as a law that humans and the gods share in common (see *On the Laws* 1.7.23).
126. See Cicero, *Hortensius* frg. 51 (Müller): “Good mores [render people] more restrained and more amenable to latching onto precepts.”
127. The venereal includes sexually erotic material and activity.
128. The advice in this paragraph is similar in some respects to that offered by Cicero to his son Marcus in book one of *On Duties*.
129. See Seneca, *On Anger* 3.1.1.
130. See Matt 20:28; Gal 5:20–21; Eph 4:21–25.
131. See Matt 7:12.
132. *Perfectus* can mean mature, complete, or perfect. See 2.20.54 below.
133. Augustine appears to agree with Censorinus in *The Birthday Book* 14 when he defines adulthood as the ages of thirty to forty-five and the senatorial age as forty-five to sixty (see *Confessions* 7.1.1).
134. For converting and converting late, see Cicero, *On Divination* 2.1.5; *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.4.7.
135. See 2.2.7 above.

136. For the difference between reason and authority, see 2.16.44 below; *Against the Academics* 3.20.43. For the difference between the temporal order and the natural, see Cicero, *On Duties* 3.25.95.
137. According to Aristotle in *Categories* 14a25–b20, there are four kinds of priority: (1) priority of time, where A is older than B; (2) priority of existence, where A's existence follows from B's but B's does not follow from A's; (3) priority of arrangement, where one thing is said to be prior to another according to some order, such as letters being prior to syllables; and (4) priority of nature, where one thing is said to be prior to another if it is honored more. In *Confessions* 12.29.40, Augustine renames them the priority of time, eternity, choice, and origin.
138. "Intellect (*Nous*) possesses all; It is all" (Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.8.2; see 5.3.5).
139. Reason, Understanding, Principle: a probable allusion to the Holy Spirit, the Son, and the Father, respectively (see 2.5.16 above). Porphyry's triad of Existence, Life, and Intellection (*Huparxis*, *Zôê*, *Noêsis*) was applied, in that order, by Marius Victorinus (after due modification) to the Christian Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (see *Against Arius* 4.21; for an instance of this triad in Plotinus, see *Enneads* 1.6.7). In this parallel, the Holy Spirit is the principle of knowledge, who teaches all things (John 14:26, 16:13) and gives witness to Christ (John 15:26, 1 John 5:6). Victorinus even goes so far as to imply that the Divine Logos is dyadic: the Logos as manifest is the incarnate Son of God Jesus Christ, while the Logos as hidden and interior is the Holy Spirit, "chatting with our souls" (*Against Arius* 4.33). See also *Against the Academics* 3.19.42.
140. The Latin word *vota*, which can mean a wish or desire, also refers to a vow (see 1.8.25 above).
141. Augustine later regrets his high praise of the liberal arts (see book one note 94 above).
142. In the *Hortensius* Cicero writes: If "we have souls that are eternal and divine, we must then believe that the more that these will have stayed on their own proper course—that is, in reason and in the passion for inquiry—and the less they will have mixed and entangled themselves in the vices and errors of men, the more easily they will ascend and return to heaven" (frg. 97 [Müller]).
143. The aerial beings are demons, which inhabit "this air" and "the high places" (see Eph 2:2, 6:12). According to some pagan thinkers, the gods are to be associated with the ether, *daimons* with the air, and souls with the earth (see Porphyry, *Letter to Anebo*). Augustine here links them to divination (see also *Against the Academics* 1.7.20 and Acts 16:16–18), which is

- attractive to people who have one or more of the three parts of their soul in a disordered state and are thus beset with curiosity, greed, or fear. For the power of demons over the imagination but not the mind, see *Against the Academics* 1.7.20–21 and Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 26–28. For demonic possession, see *On the Happy Life* 3.18.
144. Plotinus speaks of the highest part of the soul as “winged for Intellection (*noêsis*)” (*Enneads* 5.3.4). For the extent to which God has lowered Himself for our sake, see *Against the Academics* 3.19.42.
 145. Power, humility, and precept may be a reference to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or all three could refer to the Son of God who teaches by miraculous deeds, by humbly becoming incarnate, and by His commandments to “fly up” or return to Him.
 146. For more references to the sacred mysteries of Christianity, see 2.5.15 and 2.6.16 above; 2.17.46 below; *Against the Academics* 2.1.1; *On the Happy Life* 1.4. Cicero also juxtaposes the circumlocation of disputation with the finality of authority (see *On the Orator* 1.43.194). Disputation for Augustine here seems to be a reference to philosophy (see *Against the Academics* 3.19.42).
 147. See *On the Happy Life* 4.25; *Soliloquies* 1.10.17 (where Augustine credits Cicero’s *Hortensius* with convincing him of this teaching). Perhaps Augustine has in mind men like Manlius Theodorus, who quit his office as prefect at the height of his power (see 1.11.31 above; *On the Happy Life* 1.5).
 148. For the phrase “divine men,” see Cicero, *On the Commonwealth* 1.29.45. For an example of the kind of work that Augustine has in mind, see book one of Cicero’s *On Duties*, which offers much of the advice given here regarding how the youth are to live (1.9.28, 1.11.34, 1.17.58, 1.19.63, 1.20.68, 1.25.87, 1.25.88, 1.34.122, 1.34.123, 1.36.131, 1.42.150). Augustine also seems to be taking from Cicero an appreciation of authority as reason’s cradle (*Tusculan Disputations* 1.21.49; *On Old Age* 21.77), where prominence is given to reason (*Academica* 2.18.60). For Augustine, however, divine authority manifested in the sacred mysteries replaces the philosopher’s authority as the most conducive to reason (see *Against the Academics* 3.20.43).
 149. See 2.16.44 below, *Against the Academics* 3.20.43.
 150. Augustine appreciates Alypius’s strategy of arousing an audience by exhorting them to the knowledge of virtue after the “door has been opened” (see Cicero, *On the Orator* 1.47.204).
 151. In the *Confessions* Augustine remarks that Alypius was “immeasurably better” than him in giving himself over to God’s goodwill and purpose

- (8.12.30). It is the second time in the dialogue that Augustine has rendered himself the disciple of one of his interlocutors (see 1.11.32 above).
152. That is, Zenobius.
 153. See Cicero, *Academica* 1.12.45.
 154. See Cicero, *Timaeus* 8.27; *Tusculan Disputations* 1.28.70; *On Old Age* 22.80.
 155. Like, perhaps, Augustine himself after he resigned his position as a teacher of rhetoric (*Confessions* 9.2.2, 9.5.13).
 156. Such as tragic love poetry (see 1.8.21–23 above).
 157. See *Against the Academics* 3.19.42, where Augustine describes the effect of the Incarnation as enabling the multitude for the first time “to return to their very selves and even gaze upon their homeland.” See also 2.5.16 above.
 158. Distinguishing and connecting are constitutive of all true acts of knowing (see 2.13.38 below; *Soliloquies* 2.11.21; Cicero, *On the Ends* 2.14.45; Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.3.2; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1027b18–1028a1).
 159. See Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 3.27.69, where Cotta remarks that only the very few ever make good use of their faculty of reason. For reason’s ultimate achievement, the understanding of God and the soul, see 2.18.47 below; *Soliloquies* 1.2.7.
 160. The juxtaposition may be a contrast between the individual soul and the World Soul (see *On the Immortality of the Soul* 8.14, 15.24; Plotinus, *Enneads* 4.7.9 [14]).
 161. See 1.2.3 above.
 162. *Mirus*, translated elsewhere as “wonderful.” See Augustine’s earlier definition of wonder (1.3.8 above).
 163. See Cicero, *Academica* 2.7.21 and, later, Quintilian, *Oratorical Instruction* 5.10.56.
 164. For this method of distinguishing, see Cicero, *On the Orator* 1.42.189; Quintilian, *Oratorical Instruction* 7.3.3.
 165. See *City of God* 10.30, where Augustine ascribes similar terminology to Porphyry.
 166. In *Soliloquies* 1.1.3 Augustine equates the soul’s fall with its “turning away” from God; in *On True Religion* 14.28 and 15.29, he argues that an act of the will has plunged the body into weakness and mortality. Although this image is common in philosophical literature (see Cicero, *On Old Age* 21.77), it is generally associated with Neoplatonic thought (see Plotinus, *Enneads* 4.8, 1.6.8). For more references to the soul’s falling or sinking, see 2.17.45 below; *Against the Academics* 3.15.34; *On the Happy Life* 4.33; *Soliloquies* 1.14.25.

167. The words translated here as “going forth” and “coming back” are *progressus* and *reditus*; in the previous paragraph they are translated as “advanced” and “returned.” Emanation and return are key concepts in the philosophy of Plotinus (see *Enneads* 6.8.14).
168. See *Against the Academics* 1.8.23; see also Cicero, *On Old Age* 21.77 and *Tusculan Disputations*, where it is said that reason is divine (1.27.66) and that animals have no trace of reason (1.32.80). In the *Hortensius* Cicero contrasts the position that our souls are “mortal and perishable” with that of our souls being “eternal and divine” (frg. 97 [Müller]). For the soul as divine and for the contrast between the mortal and divine, see also Cicero, *On the Laws* 1.22.59–1.23.61.
169. See Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.27.66, 1.33.80.
170. The likely origin of the distinction between *rationale* and *rationabile* is the *Enneads* 6.7.4 (see Plotinus’s use of *logikos* and *logizesthai*).
171. Augustine describes this procession in terms that are redolent of Reason (*Logos*) proceeding from the World-Soul (see Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.2.3).
172. See Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.20.46.
173. For harmony’s relation to reason, see Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.2.16.
174. Romans considered bathing to be conducive to good health, with different regimens (combinations of hot baths, cold baths, perspiring in a steam room, oil rubdowns, etc.) being prescribed for different ailments (see Cornelius Celsus, *On Medicine* 1.1 et passim; Augustine, *Soliloquies* 1.10.17).
175. The distinction in some respects anticipates Augustine’s teaching on use (*usus*) and enjoyment (*frui*) (see *On Christian Doctrine* 1.4.4).
176. See Cicero, *On the Laws* 1.20.52.
177. See the *Enneads* 1.6.2, where Plotinus states that a thing is beautiful when its form has turned a multiplicity of parts into an integrated unity.
178. *Suavitas* also means agreeableness or pleasantness and is used to denote pleasures of the senses and of the mind.
179. Literally, an uneven dimension of parts (*iniqua dimensio*).
180. “An architect should have no greater concern than that his buildings have exact ratios (*rationes*) that are in proportion to a certain part” (Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture* 6.2.1).
181. See Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture* 3.1.1.
182. Augustine is describing a pantomime, a form of Roman theater derived from tragedy in which a masked actor performs a sort of ballet recounting a sacred myth about the gods. The pantomime described here, however, has the traditional costumes for Venus and Cupid reversed and is thus offensive to the discriminating observer. As can be seen from the ruins of

- Pompeii, Cupid was typically depicted with wings and Venus with the mantle of a Roman lady.
183. See the *Enneads* 1.6.2, where Plotinus speaks of the soul's delight in recognizing the beautiful traces of higher being in material things.
 184. The Stoics drew a similar distinction (see Arnim, *Stoicorum* 2, no. 122).
 185. Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.745–46 (*Georgics* 2.481–82).
 186. See 2.14.40 below, where reason studies meter in the field of grammar. See also Servius, *Commentary on the Aeneid* 1.745.
 187. See Cicero, *Academica* 1.5.19, where it is said that Plato has given us a “three-fold *ratio* of philosophizing: one on life and mores, another on nature and hidden things, and the third on discussion.” Augustine has changed the order, placing contemplation last (see 2.10.30 above).
 188. See Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.59.148, where Balbus speaks of speech as “enchaining” us into the society of justice, law, and the city (*haec nos iuris legum urbium societate devinxit*). Also, see Cicero's *On the Commonwealth* 3.2.3, where reference is made to the “chain of words” (*sermonis vinculum*) that join men together.
 189. The Latin word is *vocabula*. It was a part of Cicero's specialized terminology for discussing words, usually nouns (see *On Rhetorical Invention* 1.24.34; *On the Orator* 3.40.159; *For Aulus Caecina* 18.51; *On the Laws* 1.13.38; *On Divination* 1.1.2; *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.15.38). Varro seems to have used the word in the same way (*On the Latin Language* 8.11, 8.12, 8.45, 8.52, etc.).
 190. See Varro, *On the Latin Language* 8.12.27.
 191. Reason and speech are the bonds that unite human beings in a natural fellowship (see Cicero, *On Duties* 1.4.12, 1.16.50).
 192. See Varro, *On the Usefulness of the Word* frg. 92.
 193. The description of language and the like take their precedent from a passage in Cicero (*On the Commonwealth* 3.2).
 194. A *calculo* could also be someone who taught children their *primae litterulae* or ABCs.
 195. The work to which Augustine alludes is lost. However, according to Martianus Capella, the word in question is *grammatistikê* (*On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury* 3.229). This is the second time Augustine has told the group that he has forgotten something (see 2.7.23 above). As before, he does so to illustrate a point: in this case, that writing is necessary, lest forgetfulness “disperse our labors” (see *Against the Academics* 1.1.4).
 196. Literally, by the mouth's variously modulated opening (*moderato varie hiatu*).

197. According to Quintilian, there are seven semi-vowels (*f, l, m, n, r, s, x*) while mutes are the remaining consonants of the alphabet (see *Oratorical Instruction* 1.4.6, 1.7.14). Etymologically, a consonant is a letter that must “sound with” (*con-sonare*) a vowel in order to be pronounced.
198. A *motus* in rhetoric signifies a trope, i.e., a substitution of one thing for another (see Cicero, *Academica* 2.6.16, *On the Orator* 3.44.176).
199. *Integritas* denotes a purity or correctness of language (Cicero, *Brutus* 35).
200. In rhetoric, a *junctura* signifies a connection or relationship between words (see Quintilian, *Oratorical Instruction* 9.4.32); in grammar, a joining together of words (see Horace, *Art of Poetry* 47). For the possible roots of this triple distinction, see Varro, *On the Latin Language* 8.1.1: “Oration: the first part of which is how words (*vocabula*) are attached to things; the second, by what means these inflections go into [various] divisions; the third, so that joined together by reason they may make a sentence” (see also Quintilian, *Oratorical Instruction* 9.1.2, 1.5.68, 9.4.32, respectively).
201. A *mora* is a stop or pause in speech (see Cicero, *The Orator* 16.53).
202. “Grammar” comes from *gramma*, the Greek word for letter.
203. See Quintilian, *Oratorical Instruction* 2.1.6.
204. See Varro, *On the Usefulness of the Word* fig. 92.
205. For history as a derivative of grammar, see Seneca, *Epistle* 88.3.
206. For the successful flight of Daedalus on wings made out of wax and feathers, see Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.14–17; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.183–235. *Soliloquies* 2.11.20 may offer a clue as to why Augustine treats the myth so severely: if he and his classmates did not memorize it perfectly, they would be soundly beaten.
207. It is a trick question since the name of Euryalus’s mother is never given (see *Aeneid* 9.474–75). Augustine is using the question as an example of what haughty pedants ask to embarrass the less educated.
208. For *curiositas*, see note 89 above. Seneca reserves similarly strong words for “annoying, wordy, unreasonable,” and “pointless” additions to the liberal arts, such as Didymus the Grammarian’s lengthy speculation on who Aeneas’s real mother was (*Epistle* 88.37).
209. *Inreptio*, translated here as “encroachment,” is literally a creeping in. See 2.5.14 above.
210. *Machinamenta et instrumenta*. A *machinamentum* is a machine or device, but Apuleius uses it to signify that which, in the presence of reason, equips the senses “to assent to and judge essential characteristics [*qualitates*]” and thereby aid in the “truth of understanding things and perceiving

- them clearly” (see Apuleius, *On Plato and His Doctrine* 1.13). An *instrumentum* is a tool or instrument, but in Cicero’s *On the Orator*, Sulpicius uses it to designate what is essential to the orator as opposed to what is ornamental (2.90.366).
211. See *Against the Academics* 3.17.37; *Soliloquies* 2.11.19, 21; Cicero, *On the Ends* 2.6.18.
 212. Another way to translate *scit scire* is “it knows knowing.”
 213. See Cicero, *Academica* 1.8.32, where the character Varro contrasts the “restricted speech” (*oratio conclusa*) of dialectic with oratory’s “continuous speech adapted for the sake of persuasion” (*oratio perpetua ad persuadendum accommodata*).
 214. The paradox of being filled with need is explored in *On the Happy Life* 4.29.
 215. See Cicero, who sees *eloquentia* as important because it is “capable of moving the sensibility of the multitude” (*On Oratorical Classification* 23.79). A similar understanding is outlined in Cicero’s *On Rhetorical Invention* 1.1.1–1.3.5, especially in 1.2.3, where eloquence rather than rational demonstration is singled out as the best way to make the populace submit to justice without recourse to violence.
 216. Finding beauty in various degrees of things and gradually ascending to them and beyond them are themes of Plotinus’s treatise on beauty (*Enneads* 1.6.1–9). See *Soliloquies* 1.13.23.
 217. See Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.4: “The soul, deriving no help from the organs, sees and proclaims [sublime beauties]. To the vision of these we must mount, leaving sense-perception in its own lowly location.”
 218. See Cicero’s *On the Ends* 5.18.49, where Ulysses’s encounter with the Sirens is interpreted as a tempting of the wise man with the offer of knowledge. See also Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.8.
 219. See Quintilian, *Oratorical Instruction* 3.5.1.
 220. See Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.58.146.
 221. The three kinds of musical instruments mentioned here (voice, wind, and percussion) possibly correspond to the vowels, semi-vowels, and mutes mentioned in 2.12.36 above (see Varro, *On Agricultural Topics* 1.17).
 222. See 2.12.36 above.
 223. According to Aulus Gellius, Varro taught that *metrikê* (meter) is “that through which the combination (*junctura*) of long and short and medium syllables is examined by the measure of the ears” (Gellius, *Attic Nights* 16.18.5–6). Such measurement allows scholars to identify and classify different kinds or “orders” of meter.

224. The Latin is *caesa et membra*. A similar sentiment (though with different terminology) was held by Varro and reported by Marius Victorinus: “A verse is a combination (*junctura*) of words which through articles and commas and rhythm are measured in feet” (frg. 1 [Funaioli]).
225. According to Marius Victorinus, Varro taught that the word *versus* (“turning”) comes from the reader’s “turning away” once he has come to the end of the line (*Grammar* 1.13).
226. See Cicero, *The Orator* 20.67; Quintilian, *Oratorical Instruction* 9.4.54.
227. See Cicero, *The Orator* 20.68 (music, etc.). Augustine’s praise here contrasts with the “demotion” of poetry in 1.3.8 and 1.8.21. For the word translated here as “untruth” (*mendacium*), see *Soliloquies* 2.8.16.
228. See Cicero, *On Divination* 1.18.34, where Quintus mentions in passing the grammarians’ supremacy over the poets.
229. The notion that numbers perfect the whole is probably derived from Pythagoras (see Seneca, *Epistle* 90.29), who taught that number is “the greatest in nature” (see Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.10.20). Philus in Cicero’s *On the Commonwealth* 3.2.3 calls number the “only thing immutable and eternal.” See also Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.6.1–18.
230. Augustine agrees with those philosophers who hold that voice is corporeal rather than incorporeal (see Gellius, *Attic Nights* 5.15.1–8). For the “discoloration” of matter, see 1.8.23 above.
231. See 2.2.6 above.
232. According to Augustine in *On Christian Doctrine* 2.17.27, Varro is responsible for this genealogy. The fable, however, may be found centuries earlier in the writings of Hesiod (see *Theogony* 52–53).
233. See *On the Happy Life* 1.4.
234. For the motion of heaven, see 2.1.3 above.
235. See *Tusculan Disputations* 5.4.10 and 5.24.69, where Cicero describes the movements of the heavens in similar terms (see *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.38.97; see also Hesiod, *Theogony* 53–74).
236. Following Cicero, Augustine uses the term *astrologia* for “astronomy” (see *On the Commonwealth* 1.14.22).
237. See Augustine’s *On Music*, where he states that “passing harmonies” give rise to curiosity (6.14.45; for curiosity, see note 89 above). The subject, however, remains “mighty” for those who, like Augustine, can use it to disprove false religions like Manichaeism (see *Confessions* 5.3.3–6).
238. See *Epistle* 4.2, where Augustine describes being filled with a great anticipation “of certain permanent things.”

239. See *Tusculan Disputations* 5.25–70, where Cicero states that the soul which has gained self-knowledge reckons itself to be immortal. For more on the soul's immortality, see *Soliloquies* 2.3.3–2.20.36 and *On the Immortality of the Soul*.
240. Such was the opinion of Xenocrates of Chalcedon, a pupil of Plato, whose view is recorded in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* (1.10.20). See Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.6.16: "Our essence participates in number and harmony and is also number and harmony. . . . Soul, then, is number, since it is essence." Plotinus also teaches that in self-knowledge we come to know the power that knows the Divine Mind and that we may even become this power (*Enneads* 5.3.4).
241. When discussing the myth of Proteus (see the following note), Alypius referred to a deity acting as a guide (*index*) who helps us seize the truth. Here, Augustine refers to the number seized by reason as the guide (*index*) of the whole truth. This divine Guide may be a reference to the Holy Spirit, who is a witness of the Truth, that is, of Christ (see John 15:26; 14:6), and who leads the believer to all truth (see John 16:13, *Soliloquies* 1.1.3). Augustine may also be evoking the meaning of *index* as the index finger, for the Holy Spirit is also called the Finger of God (Luke 11:20). Later, Augustine implicitly links reason to the Holy Spirit (see 2.9.26 below).
242. Proteus was a sea-god, the "old man of the sea" who would turn into various terrifying shapes when captured in an effort to escape. If, however, the captor held on to him, Proteus would relent and answer truthfully any question posed to him (see Homer, *Odyssey* 4.360–570; Vergil, *Georgics* 4.387–452). Augustine opines that the story of Proteus aptly illustrates the difference between the false images of corporeal reality and understanding's true grasp of intelligible reality (see *Against the Academics* 3.5.12, 3.6.13).
243. In the *Soliloquies* Augustine gives as an example the difference between geometrical truths and the (false) material images that imitate them (2.18.32). The importance of recognizing this difference is stressed by Plotinus in *Enneads* 1.6.8.
244. See Augustine, *City of God* 6.2, explicating Varro. Licentius uses this sentiment in the poem that he will send to Augustine years later (*Carmen* v. 5, in Augustine's *Epistle* 26).
245. In the Cassiciacum dialogues, *species* (translated here as "form") stands in contrast to matter. See *Soliloquies* 2.12.22, 2.18.32; *On the Immortality of the Soul* 8.13, 16.25.
246. See *Soliloquies* 1.1.4; *Literal Meaning of Genesis* 4.12.23.

247. For more on this list of things to know, see the Commentary.
248. The phrase, which occurs in a different context, is adapted from Porphyry's *Thoughts Leading to the Intelligibles* 25.
249. See 2.9.26 above.
250. Augustine is a beneficiary of the latter (see *On the Happy Life* 1.4; *Confessions* 9.2.4).
251. The division of the liberal arts into what is pursued for its utility (*usus*) and what is contemplated for its own sake is implied in Cicero (*On the Ends* 5.1.53) and stated more explicitly in Seneca (*Epistle* 94.45). It also foreshadows Augustine's later distinction between use (*uti*) and enjoyment (*frui*) in *On Christian Doctrine* 1.4.4.
252. A Ciceronian image (see *The Orator* 3.12, 41.139).
253. See note 166 above.
254. See *Confessions* 1.14.23.
255. See *Confessions* 1.18.29, where the word *sonus*, translated here as "sound," is used to signify pronunciation. North Africans spoke Latin with a different accent than the Italians; Augustine, as a trained rhetorician, is less concerned about regional pronunciation than sonority, having a full, rich, and strong style of speaking (see Quintilian, *Oratorical Instruction* 10.1.68).
256. Largius Licinius, for example, composed a work called *Ciceromastix*, "the scourge of Cicero" (see Gellius, *Attic Nights* 17.1.1).
257. Diomedes the Grammarian, for example, finds Cicero's first Catiline oration guilty of mytacisms, the improper or excessive use of the letter *m* (see *Grammar* 2, p. 453 in Keil, *Grammatici latini*). For Cicero's role in foiling the Catiline conspiracy, see 2.7.22 above.
258. See 2.12.36 above.
259. See 2.9.26 above, where Augustine speaks about those content with authority alone. "Vigilance" also describes the faith of Monica and her memory in *On the Happy Life* 4.35.
260. Augustine has borrowed some questions from Plotinus (see *Enneads* 3.2.1) in addition to several of his own that arise in light of the Christian doctrine of creation.
261. Augustine's friend Nebridius advanced a similar argument against Manichaean dualism (see *Confessions* 7.2.3).
262. Augustine is most likely referring to the Manichaeans, who thought that the human soul was a particle broken off from the divine essence (see *Confessions* 4.16.31).
263. A Pythagorean concept (see Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras* 48–52). Dialectic pertains to auditory signs (2.13.38 above) and numbers to visual (2.15.43

- above). *Scientia*, translated here as “science,” is translated elsewhere as “knowledge*” (see Translation Key).
264. The phrase “the ‘one’ in numbers” refers to the underlying unity of numerical entities and is taken from Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.6.9. See Augustine, *Epistle* 3.2: “For whoever understands these [intelligible] numbers loves nothing quite like the monad; nor is this a surprise, since it is through it that all the other numbers are loved by him.”
265. Augustine has lifted some of his language here from Cicero, *On Fate* frg. 2: “Fate is the connection of things holding each other together through all eternity, which is variegated by its own order and law, yet in such a way that the variety itself is eternal.” Augustine is recommending a deeper reflection on the unity of external objects as a springboard to grasping that internal unity by which we grasp other unities, i.e., that number by which all things are numbered (see 2.15.43 above).
266. That is, not simply the unity of quotidian things, but Absolute Unity (see Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.6.9, 6.6.11). The discipline of philosophy was ostensibly the last one to be treated in Augustine’s series of treatises on the liberal arts, a series that was never completed (see *Retractations* 1.5.3).
267. These are also the only two subjects that Augustine wants to know (see *Soliloquies* 1.2.7).
268. A similar teaching is articulated in Cicero’s *On the Laws* 1.22.59.
269. For the two worlds (the sensible and the intelligible), see *Against the Academics* 3.17.37, 3.19.42. The distinction may ultimately be traced to Plato’s *Timaeus* 28a (see also *Phaedo* 65a–68b; *Parmenides* 126a–135c).
270. See 2.16.44 above. Like Cicero, Augustine states that the soul knows its origin when it knows that it comes from God; but Augustine parts company with Cicero and sides with Neoplatonic philosophers like Plotinus and Porphyry in holding that the soul cannot (at least in this life) fully understand God’s nature (*Tusculan Disputations* 1.27.66). “Parent of the whole” (*Parens universitatis*) is most likely borrowed from Cicero’s translation of Plato, *Timaeus* 28c, where the expression is used by Timaeus in reference to the Demiurge that makes the physical world with the Eternal Forms as His template. The Christian apologist Minucius Felix also uses the phrase in *Octavius* 18.
271. In the *Soliloquies*, Augustine does not know whether reason is his very self, is outside of him, or is inside of him (1.1.1).
272. On the identification of soul, reason, and number, see note 240 above.
273. See 2.11.30 above.

274. For Plotinus, Understanding (*Nous*) has as its origin and object the One (*Enneads* 5.2.2).
275. See Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.9.1: “By the One are all beings beings.”
276. This example is found in Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.9.1.
277. See Cicero, *On Friendship* 25.92: “For when the power of friendship is in it, it is as if there were one soul out of many” (see *On Duties* 1.17.54).
278. See Cicero, *On the Commonwealth* 1.25.39, where Scipio declares that “the commonwealth is the common possession of the people” (*res publica, res populi*), bound together by a single compact of justice.
279. The ideal city is that which thinks and feels as one (Plato, *Republic* 462b–e). See Cicero, *On the Commonwealth* 6.1, frg. 3 (Bréguet): “the dissension of citizens, in which some go off separately to others, is called sedition.”
280. See Vergil, *Aeneid* 10.182.
281. A *cuneus* is a wedge-shaped troop formation. Augustine coins the term *couneus* to illustrate the principle of unity underlying the success of this battle tactic. His inspiration may be from Vergil, *Aeneid* 12.457–58.
282. E.g., the friends Nisus and Euryalus, of whom Vergil writes, “There was one love between them” (*Aeneid* 9.182).
283. See Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.8.15: sorrow is part of the “dissolution of a composed unit.” See Vergil’s description of Dido, *Aeneid* 4.474–79.
284. See *On the Happy Life*, where it is concluded that the soul should strive above all to possess what cannot be taken away from it (2.11).
285. For the skills of birds and bees, see Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.52.129 and Vergil, *Georgics* 4.179, respectively; for the superiority of man by virtue of his reason, see Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.13.39.
286. See *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.59.149, where a similar description of speaking is made.
287. See 2.11.31 above.
288. See Cicero, *On the Commonwealth* 3.2.3 and 3.22.33: number is “the only thing immutable and eternal.”
289. For the distinction between the sensible and intelligible worlds as described here, see 2.18.47 above; Cicero, *The Orator* 3.10.
290. For similar arguments on the soul’s immortality, see *Soliloquies* 2.13.24 and *On the Immortality of the Soul* 1.1, 2.2, 4.5.
291. In *On the Immortality of the Soul* 2.2, Augustine writes that “reason is either the soul or is in the soul” (see Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.1.13).
292. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.117b32; Porphyry as relayed by Augustine, *City of God* 13.19.

293. See *On the Happy Life* 4.34, 35 for a complementary treatment of limit (*modus*); see also 1.8.26 and 1.11.33 above for a limit to conversation and writing. Cicero connects order and *modus* in *On Duties* 1.5.17, and he likewise uses *modus* when referring to the limit of conversation (see *Tusculan Disputations* 4.38.82; *Against Verres* 2.2.118; also, see book one note 110 above). The treatment may be Stoic in origin.
294. See *Soliloquies* 1.13.23. The importance of a gradual ascent to the highest realities may be found throughout classical philosophy, including the Allegory of the Cave and Socrates's proposed education of the philosopher (Plato, *Republic* 514a–16c and 7.522c–34e, respectively), Cicero (see *On the Ends* 5.14.40, *Academica* 20.10.30), and Plotinus (*Enneads* 5.3.9).
295. See 2.9.26 above.
296. See Seneca, *Epistle* 88.9: “You teach me how the treble and bass are in accord with each other and how a harmony is produced from the different notes of the strings. Instead, make it so that my soul is in harmony with itself, and let not my plans be out of tune. You show me what the sorrowful keys are. Instead, show me how to refrain from making a sorrowful sound in the midst of adversity.” Nine years later, Augustine will write to Licentius expressing his worry that Licentius, who remained infatuated with poetry, is more obsessed with disordered syllables and verses than his own disordered life (*Epistle* 26.3).
297. See Seneca, *Epistle* 11.9, where the happy man is said to “compose and order himself.”
298. A Trinitarian allusion, the Font being the Father, the Truth the Son, and the Holy Spirit He Who flows or emanates (*manare*) from the Font of Truth (see 2.5.16 above; *On the Happy Life* 4.35; Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.9, where Plotinus, borrowing a phrase from Plato, refers to the Good as the “spring and origin” of beauty). The unusual use of “and” after “to see God” as a way of setting the stage for this Trinitarian reference is most likely a hendiadys.
299. See 2.5.14 above. Both reactions—hating the unborn, loving the newborn—describe Augustine's past attitude toward his illegitimate son Adeodatus as well as the typical attitude of those engaged in “the mere bargain of a lustful love, where if children come they come unwanted—though when they are born, they compel our love” (*Confessions* 4.2.2). See Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.2.14.
300. See *Against the Academics* 1.1.1; *On the Happy Life* 1.2.
301. For the difference between whole and part in the sensible and intelligible worlds, see Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.2.2.

302. Augustine later regrets this statement, as it implies that God does not hear sinners. Even though this line appears in the Gospels (John 9:31), it was spoken by a man who did not yet believe in Christ (*Retractions* 1.3.3).
303. See *On the Happy Life*, where it is concluded that earthly possessions are transient and unfulfilling (2.11) and that only the “possession” of God will make human beings both happy and good (4.35). The emptiness of temporal goods is also a theme of Cicero’s *Hortensius*.
304. See Monica’s prayer, citing St. Ambrose, in *On the Happy Life* (4.35).
305. See book one note 112 above.
306. According to Scipio in Cicero’s *On the Commonwealth* 1.10.16, Pythagoras treated moral questions along with “numbers, geometry, and harmony.” See *Against the Academics* 3.17.37.
307. Alypius’s expression *campos ac liquida aequora* (the translation of which I have borrowed from Robert Russell) is reminiscent of Father Anchises’s words to Aeneas as he unfolds before him the workings of the universe:

To begin with, the sky and the lands and the watery plains (*terras camposque liquentis*),
And the luminous globe of the moon and the star of Titania,
A spirit within does support; and infused through the whole by art,
Mind moves the mass and mixes itself into the great body. (*Aeneid* 6.724–27)

308. A *sacrarium* was a place where sacred things were kept. Alypius is drawing upon an image common in classical philosophy. See Seneca, *Epistle* 95.64: “In philosophy the hidden things in the Holy Place (*sacram*) are shown [only] to those who have been admitted and received”; Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.8: “How can one see the inconceivable beauty which stays within the Holies (*hieroi*) and does not come out where the profane may see it?” See *On Order* 1.11.31, where the phrase *sacrosancta penetralia* is used.
309. Augustine, in other words, denies that this is an accurate portrait of him but praises the impetus behind it.
310. Zenobius. Earlier, Augustine had said that they could not lie about themselves in front of Zenobius because he knew the truth about them (2.10.28). Here, he says that Zenobius lies frequently on their behalf.
311. *Amans*, translated here as “loved one,” is a gerund for a friend or patron that is derived from the verb *amo* (to love).
312. Marcus Terentius Varro (ca. 116–27 B.C.) was one of classical Rome’s most prolific and eminent scholars, author of as many as seventy-four

- works on topics such as the liberal arts, linguistic studies, agriculture, and architecture. Quintilian refers to Varro as the “most learned of the Romans” (*Oratorical Instruction* 10.1.95).
313. Augustine later regrets praising Pythagoras so much for fear that it portrays his teachings as infallible, which is far from the case (*Retractations* 1.3.3).
314. See 2.8.25 above.
315. The work of Varro that mentions Pythagoras’s custom has been lost, although it was most likely the *Nine Books of Disciplines*. A similar sentiment is found in Cicero’s *Tusculan Disputations* 5.25.72: the wise man who has perfected the various branches of philosophy should “move on to looking out for the republic. What more excellent [a course] could there be for him?” See also Plato, *Alcibiades I*: “Practice yourself, sweet friend, in learning what you ought to know, before you enter into politics; and then you will have an antidote which will keep you out of harm’s way” (132a). Pythagoras was traditionally associated with having an “exoteric” or “outer” teaching that he would teach to his less gifted or less advanced disciples and an “esoteric” or “inner” teaching consisting of “those doctrines which were not deemed fit to be communicated to profane and insufficiently prepared ears” (Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.7; see 1.3).
316. Vergil, *Aeneid* 7.586. The line is in reference to King Latinus standing in the midst of a mob fueled by Juno’s machinations and “demanding a war unspeakable” (583). In *On the Constancy of the Wise Man* 3.5, Seneca offers a similar thought: “Just as the hardness of certain stones is imperious to steel. . . . and just as certain rocks which jut out into the deep break the force of the sea and show no traces of its fury (even though they are buffeted year after year), so too the soul of the wise man is solid through and through, and it has gathered such a measure of strength that it is as safe from injury as the things I have mentioned.”
317. The rest of the passage Augustine has quoted is:
- Like a rock on the seashore, when a great crash comes,
 Standing firm in its weight amid the many howling waves.
 In vain the crags and foaming rocks roar round about it,
 And the seaweed, dashed against its side, is flung back. (*Aeneid*
 7.587–90)
318. For other nighttime endings to philosophical dialogues, see *Against the Academics* 3.20.44; Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 3.40.94–95; *On the Ends* 4.28.80.

COMMENTARY

1. See “Theodicy?” in the Introduction to this volume.
2. *Enneads* 3.2.9.
3. See *Against the Academics* 3.17–37, 3.19–42.
4. For more on intellectual conversion, see “Augustine at Cassiciacum” in the General Introduction.
5. See *On the Happy Life* 1.4.
6. See also *Soliloquies* 2.19.33.
7. See *Soliloquies* 2.19.33.
8. *Confessions* 10.11.18.
9. *Enneads* 5.3.
10. See *On Order* 2.15.43; *Against the Academics* 3.6.13.
11. See “Proteus and the Normative Nodes of Comprehension” in Foley, *Against the Academics*, 180–83.
12. *Enneads* 4.2.1.
13. See *Enneads* 6.6.3.
14. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*.
15. See “Co-Fitting into the Chain” in the Introduction.
16. See *On the Happy Life* 2.16.
17. See *Against the Academics* 2.3.7, 2.4.10, and 3.1.1.
18. See *Against the Academics* 1.5.15, 2.10.24, 2.13.30, 3.20.44; *On Order* 2.20.54.
19. Augustine describes similar exercises in self-knowledge in *Confessions* 10.40.65 and *On True Religion* 29.52–35.65.
20. See Plato, *Symposium* 174d–75d, 223c–d.
21. See *Against the Academics* 3.14.30–3.16.36 and “(c) ‘Assent should be given to nothing’ (3.14.30–3.16.36)” in Foley, *Against the Academics*, 195–200.
22. *Against the Academics* 1.1.4.
23. Plato, *Republic* 10.607b.
24. Line 1067.
25. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1453a–54a.
26. See Downey, *Serious Comedy*, 62.
27. Plato, *Republic* 10.595b.
28. For the language of enchantment or incantation, see *Soliloquies* 2.14.26.
29. This connection is not unlike the parallel between the trees’ *folia* (leaves), which dam the canal, and the poets’ *folia* (pages), which dam the flow of Licentius’s wonder. It is also significant that *folium* can refer to trifles, which is exactly what Augustine accuses love poetry of being.
30. See Time Line.

31. *Aeneid* 11.787–88.
32. Harald Hagedahl's conclusion that this allusion attests to a "broad-minded attitude towards pagan piety . . . [and] a certain eclecticism" overlooks the significant modifications Augustine has made to the original passage (*Augustine*, vol. 2, 438).
33. At the same time, there is no mechanistic determinism in his apologia. The principles of sufficient reason and causality do not necessarily imply that all cause and effect behave in a mechanistic manner.
34. *Physics* 2.5.197a6–8.
35. *Against the Academics* 1.1.1.
36. Tkacz, "Designer Universe," 20.
37. See Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.2.4, 2.53.95.
38. See Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.54.105.
39. I am grateful to Joseph Koterski, S.J., for this observation.
40. See *On Order* 1.2.3. Also note that Licentius again affirms that an encirclement has occurred without claiming to know of what exactly it consists.
41. See *Against the Academics* 1.3.8.
42. *On Order* 1.3.9; see *On Divination* 1.44.99.
43. *On Order* 1.5.12; see *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.14.37, 2.53.133.
44. Gaius Cotta's critique is lost.
45. 14.31–33. See *On Order* 1.5.14.
46. *Against the Academics* 1.3.8.
47. Licentius is described as having recovered from a sort of drunkenness, a possible allusion to the fact that intoxication was said to help in the act of divination (see Cicero, *On Divination* 2.59.121).
48. It should also be noted that Trygetius's accusation would be more effective against Plotinus, whose theory of necessary emanation might force us to concede that the One produces evils.
49. *On Duties* 1.35.127.
50. *Enneads* 1.8.14.
51. See O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Platonism*, 20; Gilson, *Introduction*, 58, fn. 2; Mandouze, *L'aventure*, 514, fn. 4, and 525, fn. 9.
52. First with the shrew (1.3.9) and then with the leaves pushed by the water (1.5.13–14).
53. *Confessions* 8.12.29. The *Confessions*, from its narration of Augustine's life to its commentary on Genesis, is about learning how to understand the providential unfolding of one's life in terms of the Scriptures.
54. See Bennett, "Conversion of Vergil," 54.
55. *Murmur blanditiae*: Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.70.

56. See *Against the Academics* 3.4.7.
57. Plato, *Symposium* 223d.
58. This fragment, cited by Aelius Donatus in his commentary on Terence's comedies, is believed by some to have come from the *Hortensius* (frg. 10 [Grilli]).
59. The philosophical dialogue may be seen as a genre of comedy insofar as it goads the audience to "get the punch line," to arrive at an act of understanding that brings delight (see Downey, *Serious Comedy*). The first three Cassiciacum dialogues—*Against the Academics*, *On the Happy Life*, and *On Order*—easily fit into the genre of a philosophical dialogue, specifically, a Ciceronian philosophical dialogue. Augustine, therefore, is writing philosophical comedy, and by inviting Licentius to satirize the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in light of classical virtue ethics, he is inviting Licentius to do the same.
60. See *Against the Academics* 3.4.7.
61. See *Against the Academics* 3.1.1. Augustine describes Licentius's poetizing here as injurious to his love of philosophy, not subordinate to it.
62. Years after their retreat at Cassiciacum, Licentius sent one of his poems to Augustine, which is preserved in *Epistle* 26 of Augustine's correspondence. The poem betrays a lack of philosophical and religious excellence, and its style is considered wanting. Some of the old frustration that Augustine experienced at Cassiciacum with his pupil no doubt welled up when he read Licentius's verses expressing a desire to follow in Augustine's footsteps while ignoring Augustine's urgent advice. "May your ears yield to your own poem," Augustine wrote back to him. "Listen to yourself, you who are most inflexible, most excessive, and most impervious. What is your golden tongue to me when your heart is iron?" (*Epistle* 26.4). At least to Augustine's mind, Licentius was still overly attached to poetry.
63. See Plato, *Symposium* 206b–e; Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.7; Ambrose of Milan, *On the Good of Death* 20.
64. Augustine, *City of God* 5.6.
65. St. Ambrose, for example, speaks of the soul's spouse as "God the Word, to whom the soul is joined by a certain legitimate contract of marriage" (*On the Good of Death* 20).
66. In *On Order* Augustine does not explicitly state that the liberally educated also need the Divine Physician. In *Confessions* 9.1.1, however, he uses the scab metaphor to describe the state of his soul even after it had been intellectually converted.
67. See Plato, *Republic* 7.515c–16a.

68. Augustine will offer similar advice to Licentius years later (see *Epistle* 26.2).
69. See *On the Happy Life* 2.10; see also *On Order* 1.11.32.
70. In the *Confessions*, for example, Augustine chastises himself for being distracted from more important things by a dog chasing a hare or a lizard catching a fly (10.35.57).
71. *Satyricon* 45.11.
72. *On Divination* 1.34.74 (“Quintus defends divination”), 2.26.56 (“as Cicero notes”).
73. A heuristic is something that is instrumental in finding (*euriskein*); often, it is a method or series of clues for discovering the solution to a problem. Augustine has a penchant for heuristic definitions at Cassiciacum (see *Against the Academics* 1.2.5; *On the Happy Life* 4.33).
74. See Cicero, *On Duties* 1.40.142. Augustine’s own definition in the *City of God* is not much different: “Order is an arrangement of similar and dissimilar things, assigning its proper place to each one” (19.13).
75. See *On Order* 1.3.6, 1.3.8; see also *Against the Academics* 3.4.7.
76. See *Confessions* 3.8.16.
77. See *Against the Academics* 1.2.6ff.
78. *Against the Academics* 3.18.41.
79. *Against the Academics* 1.3.8.
80. *On True Religion* 19.37.
81. For an analysis of this scene, see Fortin, “Reflections,” 100ff.
82. See *Confessions* 9.8.17–18.
83. See *Confessions* 2.4.9.
84. See Plato, *Euthyphro* 5a. Euthyphro, whose name means “straight thinking,” is anything but a straight thinker and anything but truly pious. There is therefore a double irony operative here, for Monica is both truly “most religious” (1.8.22) and a good thinker in her own way.
85. See *On the Happy Life* 2.8.
86. *On the Happy Life* 2.10.
87. *On the Happy Life* 2.16.
88. *On the Happy Life* 3.19; *On Order* 2.7.22–24.
89. See *On the Happy Life* 2.10.
90. *On the Happy Life* 1.5.
91. For more on Augustine’s appreciation of philosophy and its etymological meaning, see *Confessions* 3.4.7–8.
92. Further, although Augustine tells Monica that he likes “her philosophy” (1.11.31) and certainly implies that she is a philosopher (1.11.32), he does not call her a philosopher directly.

93. See *Against the Academics* 2.2.4, 2.3.8, 3.8.17, 3.9.18–20; *On Order* 1.3.8, 1.11.31. Augustine uses the word “philosophy” in reference to Christians but more as a gerund than as a static noun: that is, it is in reference to the activity of philosophizing rather than philosophy as a way of life or a set of doctrines (see *Against the Academics* 3.9.18 and the last sentence of *On Order* 1.11.31).
94. Torchia, “Significance,” 270. See Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will* 1.15.31–32. Similarly, Eric Voegelin defines order as “the structure of reality as experienced as well as the attunement of man to an order that is not of his making—i.e., the cosmic order” (*Autobiographical Reflections*, 76).
95. *Against the Academics* 1.1.1.
96. See *On Order* 1.5.14, 1.7.20, 1.9.27, 1.10.29–1.11.31, 2.20.54; *Against the Academics* 1.1.4, 1.5.15, 1.9.25, 2.7.17, 2.9.22, 3.7.15; *Confessions* 9.4.7.
97. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.1177b. Hence, Cicero’s philosophical dialogues, which provide the model for the Cassiciacum dialogues, often take place in one of his country villas (see *On Divination* 2.3.8; *On the Ends* 3.2.7; *On Fate* 1.2).
98. Plato, *Timaeus* 24c.
99. See *Against the Academics* 3.1.1 and my corresponding commentary in Foley, *Against the Academics*, 173–76. See also *On the Happy Life* 4.23 and my corresponding commentary in Foley, *On the Happy Life*, 96.
100. 2.1.2. We may thus draw a second connection between the boys’ altercation and the cockfight. Just as the roosters’ battle for dominance happened according to an orderly law of nature, so too did the boys’ battle for rhetorical victory happen within an order managed by God.
101. See “Motion” in the Introduction to this volume.
102. Plato, *Laws* 896a.
103. *Phaedo* 79c–d.
104. Licentius, in other words, seems to be grasping a point made explicitly in the *Soliloquies*. Any act of truly knowing happens because of God’s presence to the human mind since God is the “Intelligible Light, in whom and from whom and through whom all those things that shine intelligibly shine intelligibly” (1.1.3).
105. *On the Immortality of the Soul* 8.14.
106. See Lacey, *Nature*, 105.
107. See *On the Trinity* 9.11.16; see also *On the Immortality of the Soul* 8.13.
108. See “Two Kinds of Knowing (4.29–31)” in Foley, *On the Happy Life*, 100–102.

109. See *On Order* 2.3.10.
110. See *Confessions* 7.13.19.
111. See *On the Happy Life* 4.29–31 (worthlessness, neediness, darkness, and nakedness); *On Order* 2.8.22–23 (evil); *Soliloquies* 2.9.16 (falsehood) and 2.17.31 (emptiness). See also *On the Teacher* 2.3 (nothingness); *On True Religion* 19.37 (vice); *Confessions* 7.13.19 (evil) and 10.16.24 (forgetfulness).
112. See *Against the Academics* 1.2.5, 2.8.21.
113. *Epistle* 12.19.
114. See the Allegory of the Cave in *Republic* 7.514a–20e.
115. See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.1095b.
116. Thus, Augustine also responds to Trygetius’s point about the importance of properly disposed “eyes of the mind” via the liberal arts.
117. See Cicero, *On the Orator* 3.58; Seneca, *Epistle* 88.1–2.
118. See 1.8.26; see also *On the Happy Life* 4.32ff.
119. The word “trivium,” which is Latin for “triple way,” was commonly used in the Middle Ages to denote these three arts. It was contrasted with the quadrivium, or “quadruple way,” of arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. Although he does not use these terms, Augustine appears to be the first thinker to group the liberal arts into these two categories.
120. See *Confessions* 1.18.29.
121. The mystery of the Incarnation occupies a more prominent place (see *On Order* 2.5.16).
122. See *Confessions* 7.9.13–15.
123. For example, Plotinus’s understanding of Reason as a divine emanation subject to decay is an error that Augustine corrects by speaking of “what has emanated . . . without any degeneration” (2.5.16, emphasis added).
124. See *Confessions* 7.9.13–14. Curiously, though, Augustine does not refer to the Prologue of the Gospel According to St. John in his early dialogues.
125. See Greene, *Power and Glory*, 97.
126. See Aristotle, *Physics* 3.2.201b; Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.3.22.
127. See Aristotle, *Physics* 5.1.225a; Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.3.24.
128. See Aristotle, *Physics* 5.1.225a; Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.1.20, 6.3.25.
129. See Aristotle, *Categories* 15a14–15b17; Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.3.21–22, 25. Plotinus, inspired in large part by Plato’s *Timaeus*, has an especially robust philosophy of motion. In his *Enneads* one finds discussions of natural and unnatural motions (6.3.22, 26), organic and inorganic motions (6.3.26), and motions that are natural (e.g., growth and decay), artificial (architecture and shipbuilding), and purposive (learning, government, and all

speech and action) (6.3.26). Motions can also be classified as bodily vs. psychic, spontaneous vs. externally induced, and original (actions) vs. derivative (passions) (6.1.19). Musical performance (6.3.21), life and happiness (6.1.19), and desire (6.1.21) are treated as types of motion. More importantly, motion “provides for the intellectual act” (5.1.4); knowledge, as “the observation of Being,” is “motion originating in the self” (6.2.18; see 6.3.21).

130. See Aristotle, *Physics* 3.1.201a; Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.3.22.
131. *Enneads* 6.1.16.
132. *Enneads* 6.2.8. Indeed, there is only a rational but not a real distinction between Motion and Being itself (6.2.7, 6.2.8, 6.2.15). Motion is coterminous with Being. The Motion of Being, in turn, is known by the motion within ourselves (6.2.8).
133. *Enneads* 6.3.22.
134. See Oliver, *Philosophy*, 8–28.
135. As the passage from potency to act, motion cannot be pure act, though that is its direction. It is, as Aristotle calls it, incomplete act (see *Metaphysics* 9.6.1048b; see also Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.1.16). Augustine holds a similar view: see *On the Immortality of the Soul* 8.15.
136. *On the Immortality of the Soul* 8.15.
137. See *On the Immortality of the Soul* 8.14.
138. *Literal Meaning of Genesis* 4.12.23.
139. *City of God* 5.9.
140. This view is also promulgated in *On Order* by Augustine himself (2.17.46).
141. It is likely that this is what John Rist labels “cosmological”—as opposed to “moral”—evil (see “Plotinus and Augustine,” 496). If so, then Augustine’s question, which is on an evil outside of the material matrix, marks a departure from the Plotinian worldview, which holds *matter* as the prime example of cosmological evil, since it is “above all . . . the privation of finite being” (499; see *Enneads* 2.4.13.8). Rist, however, does not bring his perceptive treatment to bear upon *On Order* because of a misunderstanding of one line (505). See also Bezancon, “Le mal,” 140–41.
142. *Confessions* 3.7.12.
143. *Confessions* 7.13.19.
144. John J. O’Meara contends that this shift betrays Augustine’s failure as a writer, but by the same logic Plato could likewise be dismissed as a poor author because of Socrates’s detour on the three waves of ridicule in the *Republic* (see “Historicity,” fn. 11).
145. See “Augustine at Cassiciacum” in the General Introduction.

146. It is not brought up here because it has already been discussed in *On the Happy Life* (4.31–32). Augustine is being moderate in his discussions of moderation.
147. *On the Happy Life* 4.32.
148. *On the Happy Life* 2.8.
149. For Cicero's care of the youth, see *Against the Academics* 3.16.35.
150. Significantly, Augustine uses the same word for "rule" (*dominor*) as he did for the roosters (1.8.26). Unlike the roosters' pecking order, however, human hierarchy can be infused with charity in such a way that it is delightful to be a part of it.
151. See "Augustine at Cassiciacum" in the General Introduction.
152. Even the fallen angels can in this sense be said to speak with divine authority. For Augustine's use of the word "authority," see *On Order* (1.5.14; 2.10.28; 2.11.31; 2.14.39, 41; 2.16.44; 2.17.45, 46; 2.20.53, 54).
153. 2.5.15. Charles Boyer's conclusion that Augustine did not really know at this stage of his life what submission to Church authority meant ignores Augustine's assessment of the role that authority—especially divine authority—plays in the rational ascent to the truth. As can be seen from *On True Religion* and *On the Usefulness of Believing*, that assessment remains unchanged after his baptism (see Courcelle's treatment of Boyer in "Litiges").
154. That human reason, even when improved by philosophy, needs the authority of revelation can also be seen by comparing this passage to *Against the Academics* 3.19.42.
155. See *Confessions* 6.6.9.
156. See *Soliloquies* 2.9.16.
157. See *Confessions* 12.4.4–12.6.6; *On Order* 2.15.42.
158. See 2 Cor 4:4 and 1 Cor 1:24, respectively.
159. Augustine offers an important qualification to this statement in *Against the Academics* 3.11.26.
160. Augustine has already offered a general moral guideline in his treatment of the "order of living" (2.8.25). It also appears to be his conviction that ethics should be practiced but not formally studied by the young. Augustine's repeated insistence that both ruling and the knowledge of ruling be taken up last by students (2.8.25, 2.20.54) bears witness to this conviction, since ethics was traditionally viewed as a subset of the master art of politics (see Plato's *Republic*, where all matters of justice are examined within the context of the city, and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.10.49b, 10.1179b25ff).

161. The equation of contemplation with true delight confirms that the contemplative life is the highest.
162. The terms are medieval in origin, but as mentioned earlier Augustine may be the first person to have divided the seven liberal arts into these two categories. The distinction is also operative in Capella's *On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, written ca. A.D. 410–420.
163. Cicero, *On the Commonwealth* 3.2.
164. For example, the progression from a prelapsarian perfect language to the fragmented permutations of Babel in the Book of Genesis.
165. Rousseau's *First Discourse*, for example, argues that the arts and sciences are the result of various kinds of human selfishness and vice.
166. See 1.1.1–3, 2.8.24, 2.9.26, 2.11.30.
167. Plato, *Republic* 532b and c, respectively.
168. 533d. See Augustine's description of self-knowledge as the result of the soul's "returning to itself" (1.1.3).
169. Cicero, *Academica* 1.8.32.
170. A precedent for this demotion can be found in Cicero, *Academica* 1.8.32.
171. Hence, Augustine's transformation of the function and utility of rhetoric can also be seen as an indication of how he will use his rhetorical skills as a Christian.
172. *Republic* 5.450a, 6.498c.
173. *Tusculan Disputations* 1.4.7.
174. Fortin, "Viri Novi," 187. See Plato, *Phaedrus* 266b–c.
175. The fourth, arithmetic, is wholly concerned with intelligible realities.
176. See Plato, *Republic* 2.376e.
177. Plato, *Republic* 7.527b.
178. Plato, *Republic* 7.529a.
179. Plato, *Republic* 7.529b.
180. Plato, *Republic* 7.529d, e.
181. In Augustine's own case, his conversion to philosophy upon reading Cicero's *Hortensius* was not sufficient to keep him from believing Manichaeian astrology (5.3.3–6) and horoscopy (4.3.4, 7.6.8–10). Eventually, the science of astronomy delivered him from the former (5.3.3–6) while several logical considerations delivered him from the latter (4.3.4, 7.6.8–10).
182. Cicero, *On the Commonwealth* 3.2.
183. See *Soliloquies* 2.18.32; "Real Reality, Bodily Reality, and Emptiness (2.17.31–2.19.33)" in Foley, *Soliloquies*, 205–9. See also "The History of Philosophy (3.17.37–3.19.42)" in Foley, *Against the Academics*, 203.

184. See *Against the Academics* 3.6.13. The use of the shadows and footprint metaphor, however, bespeaks a closer relation between the sensible and intelligible than might exist in Platonic thought. Shadows in the allegorical cave are cast by the artifice of the fire, not by the light of true realities (Plato, *Republic* 7.514a–b). Torchia's assertion that there is a dualism in Augustine's distinction between the sensible and intelligible therefore strikes us as unmerited ("Significance," 271).
185. For more on God as transcendent Being who is not known like any other object of knowledge, see *Soliloquies* 1.2.7ff.
186. See *Retractations* 1.3.2.
187. Olivier Du Roy's confidence that the early Augustine believed evil to have always existed prescind from the fact that Augustine is making a list of options rather than an assertion of his own opinion. It also ignores Augustine's constant warnings about the importance of intellectual conversion before statements can be affirmed or denied (see *L'intelligence*, 184, fn. 4).
188. That it is not used to summarize the whole movement is significant.
189. Augustine betrays by his diction that he has not been doubting the necessity of faith for living the best life; if there is any point to debate, it is not the importance of faith but of reason.
190. That reason, which has been perfected by philosophy, is no longer able to speak amounts to a subordination of philosophy to the truths revealed by faith. Philosophy can prepare reason for the highest knowledge, but it cannot deliver it. Augustine must therefore speak in his own voice on behalf of the promise made by God to give us this knowledge of Himself.
191. See Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.17.39; see also *Against the Academics* 3.17.37.
192. See Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.7.
193. See "The Great Chain of Being (1.9.27)" above. *On Order* 2 possesses a similar mimetic quality. It is no coincidence, for example, that Augustine's remark about learning to rule last occurs in his last statement and that the dialogue which begins by describing a circle ends by bringing us full circle back to its beginning.
194. Significantly, Augustine elsewhere refers to the whole as a poem in which "earthly things are made subject to celestial, while the hinges of their times join together in a numerous succession" (*On Music* 6.11.29).
195. Augustine refers to each of these, significantly enough, as a chain (see 2.12.35, 1.5.13, and 2.5.15, respectively).

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