

EDUCATION IN THE COSMOS:
AUGUSTINE'S PLATONIC CURRICULUM OF PHILOSOPHY AND RHETORIC

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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Tell all the Truth, but tell it slant—
Success in Circuit lies.

-Emily Dickinson

INTRODUCTION

That mouth of Plato which, in philosophy, was most pure and full of light, shone forth from the separate clouds of error most especially in Plotinus, who as a Platonic philosopher was judged so similar to the former that one might have supposed they were contemporaries, or given the difference in time, that Plato lived again in him.¹

This passage sounds like it might have come from the hagiographical biography of Plotinus written by his student, Porphyry. Instead, these words belong to Augustine: they come from the *Contra Academicos*, the first of his Cassiciacum dialogues. The dialogues purport to be a record of a philosophical retreat Augustine took in central Italy with a cadre of friends and family in the fall of 386 CE, shortly after his famous conversion to Christianity but before his baptism at Milan. As such, they represent his earliest extant texts. It is no doubt due to passages like this one that much of the scholarly debate surrounding the dialogues in the twentieth century was consumed with the question of whether or not Augustine had actually converted to Christianity at this point in his biography:² to many readers, it was inconceivable that the bishop who wrote the *Confessions* could have held the same Christian commitments at evidence in that text when he wrote a series of dialogues so steeped in the Platonic tradition.

Scholars now agree, for the most part, that Augustine's thought in the Cassiciacum dialogues is largely consistent with what one finds in his later works. The main difference is that, at Cassiciacum, Augustine expresses these ideas primarily through the lens of philosophy mediated through Cicero and the Platonic tradition. He does so in what appears to be a school setting: he recounts in the introduction to the first dialogue, and in the *Confessions*, how a bout of ill health had finally convinced him to resign his prestigious post of rhetoric at Milan and pursue a Christian philosophy. Two young students, Licentius and Trygetius, serve as his

¹ CA 3.18.41: *os illud Platonis quod in philosophia purgatissimum est et lucidissimum, dimotis nubibus erroris emicuit, maxime in Plotino, qui platonicus philosophus ita eius similis iudicatus est, ut simul eos vixisse, tantum autem interest temporis ut in hoc ille revixisse putandus sit.* The Latin text of the Cassiciacum dialogues is taken from the PL unless otherwise noted.

² For an overview, see Kenyon (2018:4-6); and below, pp. 6-7.

primary interlocutors. Though the conversations are concerned with the basic questions of ancient philosophy, the group spends their mornings reading Virgil and quote other key authors of the rhetorical schools throughout their discussions, which has prompted comparisons between Augustine's role as teacher in the dialogues and the post of rhetoric he had just left. Given these aspects of the text--and readers' awareness of them--it may sound absurd to say that scholarship on the dialogues still has not taken Augustine seriously as a philosopher and rhetor in these texts.

And yet there are plenty of reasons not to do so. In the preface of the *Contra Academicos*, the first Cassiciacum dialogue, Augustine tells us that in embarking upon a retreat of philosophical otium, he has eschewed the "windy profession" of rhetoric.³ This has likely detracted from readers' enthusiasm for hunting for comparisons between the dialogues and rhetorical education as taught in Roman schools. In the *Retractations*, the catalogue-cum-evaluation of his works which Augustine published near the end of his life, he relates that at the time of writing he was still "inflated with the conventions of secular literature"⁴--a sentiment which has understandably been taken by many readers to indicate that he was, in his later years, displeased with the enthusiasm of his engagement with a wide range of literary and philosophical texts Cassiciacum. That the mature Augustine appears unimpressed with his early foray into philosophy has, perhaps, lowered other readers' expectations as well. Moreover, in the same passage he suggests that readers might benefit from reading his works in the order he wrote them, a sentiment which has prompted readers to suppose that the primary reason for the dialogues' inclusion in the *Retractations* was so that readers could profit from witnessing the evolution of his thought over time.⁵

³ CA 1.1.3, *ventosam professionem*. Translations are mine except where otherwise stated. Citations of the Cassiciacum dialogues are drawn from the PL except where otherwise stated.

⁴ *Retractationes*, prol. 3, *adhuc saecularium litterarum inflatus consuetudine*.

⁵ Ibid.

These self-imposed critiques of his work can be read as a series of rejections. Augustine rejects rhetoric in the dialogues themselves. Later on, he appears to reject the more philosophically oriented content as insufficiently Christian, and finally the texts *qua* texts on the grounds that they are immature representations of his thought. Readings which privilege what we might call this “lens of rejection” have been bolstered by Augustine’s biographical circumstances at the time of writing: as a new Christian and recently unemployed, it is only natural that the dialogues should record what he might later see as a liminal and exploratory phase of his life. In light of this, it is perhaps unsurprising that the texts have not been seriously interrogated from the perspective that Augustine might wish to fashion himself as an authoritative rhetor and philosopher.

The problem with this approach, however, is that for every instance of “rejection,” there is another piece of evidence which favors the notion that at Cassiciacum, Augustine takes his role as rhetor and philosopher very seriously indeed. He says he has eschewed rhetoric, but concludes each dialogue with a finely wrought speech. He says he was puffed up with secular learning, but in the *Confessions* goes out of his way to advertise the fact that he incorporated Christianity into a genre which had not seen it before.⁶ He refers to the dialogues as *juvenilia*, and yet by the standards of publication in late antiquity, the very fact that he includes them in the *Retractations* at all means he still considered them valuable at the end of his career.

Thus, much of one’s reading of the dialogues depends upon how one weights Augustine’s apparent “rejections” against evidence that signals an embrace of these same aspects of the text--evidence like the quote about Plotinus with which I opened this introduction. While Augustine walks back the fervency of his praise of philosophers in the *Retractations*, he does not go so far as to say that he ought not have engaged with them in the dialogues. This highlights the tension between what Augustine *says* and what he *does*--the

⁶ Conf. 9.4, *quoque modo ipsum etiam Alypium, fratrem cordis mei, subegeris nomini unigeniti tui, domini et salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi, quod primo dedignabatur inseri litteris nostris. magis enim eas volebat redolere gymnasiorum cedros, quas iam contrivit dominus, quam salubres herbas ecclesiasticas adversas serpentibus.*

former lends itself to rejection; the latter, not so much. This dissertation begins with the suspicion that on the balance, the lens of “rejection” has been over-privileged in readings of the Cassiciacum dialogues. My central question is what the texts reveal when one focuses instead on the ways in which Augustine cultivates and celebrates rhetoric, philosophy, and even the very notion that the texts are *juvenilia*: what does his embrace of these aspects of the dialogues tell us about their place in the context of late ancient education, and particularly the tradition of Cicero and Plato whom he so self-consciously references throughout?

Historiography

In this dissertation, I approach the Cassiciacum dialogues within two traditions of scholarship: that of work on the dialogues themselves, and that of their place within late ancient education. The one, of course, cannot be completely distinguished from the other. The main point I hope to make in this survey, however, is that both categories of historiography are premised on narratives which depend upon a wide distinction between the Cassiciacum dialogues as “early” works and Augustine’s later, “more mature” thought. In this way, one might say that the common thread in readings of the Cassiciacum dialogues is that they are approached first and foremost as *juvenilia*, or as a first step in the development of Augustine’s thought. It is perhaps this dimension of the dialogues which ultimately has influenced readers’ views of them more than any other.

Scholarship on the dialogues themselves has revolved around three debates of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the “historicity” debate, the issue of Augustine’s Platonism, and “the Pauline question.” Arguably, one cannot understand why readers often perceive the dialogues through a “lens of rejection” without knowing how these debates have colored the dialogues’ reception. The “historicity debate” was initiated by Rudolf Hirzel in 1895 when he challenged the idea that the dialogues represent transcripts of actual conversations held

between Augustine and his students.⁷ Desiderius Ohlmann took up the opposite stance shortly thereafter, thus perpetuating a debate which has trickled down to the present.⁸ Hirzel offered an early objection to what is still a tendency when reading ancient dialogues today: namely, that they represent something spontaneous and “authentic” in an author’s thought--and are generally less scripted--than texts of other genres.⁹ O’Meara and Madec each sought a middle ground on opposite sides of the debate: the former has argued historicity is a *topos* of dialogues, the latter that Augustine modeled actual dialogues on the literary precedent of Cicero.¹⁰ Today, scholarly assessments of the dialogues tend to lie somewhere on the spectrum carved out by O’Meara and Madec, though in practice there is still a fair degree of range with respect to which aspects of the dialogues readers take to be *topoi* vs. transcript.¹¹ That Augustine includes descriptions of a *notarius* recording the groups’ conversations, and offers asides in which students criticize each others’ arguments, and make jokes about their food renders it unlikely that this debate will ever be fully put to rest. However, for the purposes of this dissertation perhaps the conclusions (or lack thereof) of this debate are less important than the fact that the dominance of the historicity question has entrenched what might be called a hyper attention to the realism of the text into the minds of its readers.

This attention to realism has served to focus readers’ attention on the biographical circumstances of Augustine’s life at the time of writing--even readers who take the position that the dialogues are wrought with literary device. Thus, many of Augustine’s off-handed

⁷ Hirzel (1895: vol 2, 377).

⁸ Ohlmann 1897. For summaries of the debate, see Hoffmann 1966, Harrison (2006:8), and Kenyon (2018: 3-4).

⁹ De Plinval (1951) says this explicitly of the Cassiciacum dialogues.

¹⁰ O’Meara (1951) and Madec (1986: 207-231).

¹¹ Goldhill (2008: 2) sees dialogue as still fundamentally related to its origins in “democratic” Greece, reading them as tending to be less dogmatic than other forms of thought--a viewpoint which seems to imply on some level that dialogues reflect the original thought of their characters and not solely their authors. Against the thesis of Goldhill’s volume that Christian ceased to dialogue in the fifth century, see Cameron 2014.

comments about the circumstances of his writing--such as his avowed rejection of rhetoric--are taken at face value. On a more pervasive level, this focus on the biographical circumstances of Augustine's life has contributed to narratives of the dialogue which emphasize the liminality and transitional nature of Augustine's thought at this time. Such arguments are to be found even in studies which do not take up the "historicity" question directly. Such is the case with Catherine Conybeare's *Irrational Augustine*.¹² Conybeare makes a sophisticated literary reading of the dialogues and does not view them as historical documents. At the same time, much of her reading on Augustine's "irrationality"--i.e., encouragement of open inquiry and uncertainty in his students' debate--is founded upon her sense that Augustine filters that uncertainty through his own life circumstances. In a similar vein, Gillian Clark reads the dialogues as an open-ended attempt at debate which Augustine later abandons as his thought trends towards the dogmatic.¹³ While such readings ought to be taken seriously, a side-effect of this category of narrative is that it tends to de-emphasize Augustine's position vis-a-vis the philosophical tradition in which he wrote. Another off-shoot of the historicity debate is that of the dialogues' order, which I treat in Chapter Two.¹⁴

The second of the three prominent lines of inquiry into the dialogues, the Platonism debate, was initiated in 1918 when Prosper Alfaric questioned, on the basis of the philosophical focus of the dialogues, whether Augustine had fully converted to Christianity at the time of Cassiciacum or whether he had in fact converted to a form of Neoplatonism.¹⁵ Or, to put it more broadly, a large body of scholarship considers the Cassiciacum dialogues to be concerned with

¹² Conybeare 2006.

¹³ Clark (2008: 117-134).

¹⁴ For a detailed summary of this debate and the way it sprung out of the historicity debate, see Kenyon (2018: 4-5).

¹⁵ Alfaric 1918. Detailed summaries of the debate are to be found in Kevane (1964: 347-60); Madec (1994: 51-69).

philosophical questions which have little bearing on Augustine's later writings.¹⁶ While scholarly consensus today is that Augustine's Christianity and Platonism are not fundamentally at odds, some readers still see Augustine's effusive embrace of Platonism as a sign of the immaturity of his Christian commitment. More importantly for the purposes of this project, attempts to defend Augustine's orthodoxy against accusations that he was "Neoplatonist" as opposed to Christian have likely detracted attention from the ways Augustine positions himself as a Platonist Christian.

The "Pauline question," also called the Developmentalist vs. Unitarian debate, is premised upon Peter Brown's thesis that Augustine's reading of Paul in the 390s caused a seismic shift in his thought on grace, free will, and the potential of humans to attain happiness in this life.¹⁷ As a result, Brown and those on the Developmentalist side of the spectrum see a clean ideological break between Augustine's thought in the Cassiciacum period and that which came afterwards. The Pauline controversy can be seen as an extension of the Platonist one: both interrogate the dialogues on the basis of Augustine's dogma and argumentation. Ultimately, these debates are a corollary of the historicity debate insofar as they are all *developmentalist* questions--concerned with the transformation of Augustine's thought over time. Both Madec and Carol Harrison have convincingly argued that Augustine's theology at Cassiciacum is consistent with the more expansive versions of these views which he works out in his later works.¹⁸ Yet in the process of defending the maturity of Augustine's thought in the Cassiciacum dialogues, Harrison also reinforces the notion of the dialogues as *juvenilia* and, perhaps, vivacious records of his early thought. In a curious move, she takes the *Confessions* to be an intellectual biography that should not be read literally,¹⁹ but does not extend the same

¹⁶ Examples include Ferrari 1980, 1982, 1984; Fredriksen 1986.

¹⁷ Brown (1967: 147-8; new ed. 2000).

¹⁸ Madec (1994: 85-9, 1996: 137-46), Harrison 2006.

¹⁹ Courcelle (1968: 188-202) famously made this point about literarity; Ferrari (1982: 154), Fredriksen (1988:102-3), O'Donnell (1992: iii. 59-69); Delaroche (1996:89-90).

skepticism to questions of literarity and historicity at Cassiciacum:²⁰ part of her argument for the value of the Cassiciacum dialogues lies in their potential as a source of more direct evidence for Augustine's early thought. Harrison's argument is a good example of the kind of tension one often finds in readings of the dialogues in which scholars work towards developing a richer appreciation for Augustine's work at Cassiciacum.

The historicity, Platonist, and Pauline debates have set a stage which posits a need to rehabilitate the dialogues; and yet, attempts at rehabilitation still very often depend on the early date--and biographical phase--at which Augustine wrote them to justify their value. The Platonist and Pauline debates have resolved with an outcome that heralds the dialogues as "orthodox" by the standards of the later Augustine, but such readings unavoidably begin from a place of inferiority and can at best only hope to show that the dialogues "measure up" in some way to Augustine's more famous works. Unless we develop a lens for reading these early works which appreciates them not only for their historical interest but also as sophisticated texts in their own right, they will capture a wide readership only insofar as they represent a "phase" of Augustine's thought.

In the past decade and a half, just such an attempt has gained significant momentum. What can be described as a collective defense of the dialogues has been launched by scholars who have focused on Augustine's pedagogy as a means of appreciating the texts on their own terms--as dialogues, the quintessentially pedagogical form.²¹ It is here that scholarship on Augustine and on ancient education have most clearly intersected. Scholars focused on pedagogy have offered a picture of the dialogues in which much of the discussion is directed not by Augustine's intellectual agenda, but that of his students' needs and questions.²²

²⁰ Harrison (2006: 4ff.)

²¹ Holt 1999 made an earlier attempt at reading the dialogues primarily from the lens of pedagogy; since this dissertation is unpublished, it is not cited as much as it deserves to be.

²² Kenyon 2018.

Conybeare and Topping have emphasized that the group's common lifestyle, drawing on ancient and Christian ethics as well as the ideals of Roman *otium* (neither of which should be thought of as entirely separate from the other) is an integral part of the learning process.²³ Here, Augustine contrasts the pursuit of virtue characterized by "our school" with "that school," i.e., the vice-riddled halls of rhetoric he had left in Milan.²⁴ At the same time, as Pucci has carefully expounded, this school is one in which Augustine reads classical authors with keen attention, teaching his students to "recuperate" them in service of a Christian paradigm.²⁵

Pucci's detailed study of Augustine's engagement with classical authors--i.e., the subjects of "grammatical" education in the Roman world, is a notable exception to lack of studies which focus on Augustine's self-positioning within the curricula of ancient education, a lack to be found even within the purview of studies of his pedagogy. Studies on the dialogues often mention that Augustine is "holding school" in a manner similar to what he would have been accustomed to in his career as a rhetor, but the extent of contact between the two types of schools has not been explored.²⁶ In *Augustine and the Dialogue*, Kenyon makes a compelling argument for the hypothesis that Augustine follows a Platonic model within the dialogue genre, in which each text begins in aporetic debate, continues with reflection, and ends with a plausible conclusion.²⁷ However, this is a study of how Augustine adopts a broad method which Kenyon himself has developed in his readings of Plato and Augustine; is not itself part of any Platonic curriculum than we are aware of. Kenyon is more interested in the arc of Augustine's arguments than he is in the question of whether he adopts specific Platonic content

²³ Conybeare 2006; Topping 2012.

²⁴ Conybeare (2006: 25), building on Holt 1999.

²⁵ Pucci 2014.

²⁶ A phrase used in Muller (2015: 364), who sees the dialogues as a continuation of Augustine's work as rhetor.

²⁷ Kenyon (2018: 13).

or mechanics as they may have been taught in ancient curriculum. In *Happiness and Wisdom: Augustine's Early Theology of Education*, Ryan Topping frames the dialogues within the context of ancient education, dedicating an entire chapter to the history of the liberal arts before embarking on his reading of the dialogues themselves.²⁸ His thesis is that Augustine is the first to endow the liberal arts with a moral theology. In practice, this means that the bulk of his reading looks forward to implications of Augustine's use of the liberal arts in a Christian educational theory; he does not consider the question of whether--or to what extent--non-Christian philosophers evince a moral theology in their work on the liberal arts or how Augustine may have engaged with this.

From the perspective of studies in education, there are several good reasons why the "systematic" component of Augustine's educational program at Cassiciacum has received so little attention. One of the most systematic treatments of the dialogues is that of Henri Marrou, who devoted significant space to Augustine's speech on the liberal arts at the end of *De ordine*.²⁹ This treatment fits well within the narrative of Marrou's monumental history of education, which has itself been read as an attempt to account for one unified narrative of education spanning from ancient Greece through late antiquity. In this account, Augustine served as the gatekeeper who ushered the classical liberal arts into the Middle Ages by presenting a palatable version of the arts to a new, Christian culture.³⁰

Marrou's history has arguably been the most influential narrative of ancient education since its publication,³¹ and therefore has colored much of how the Cassiciacum dialogues have been read in this context. Two aspects of Marrou's account have likely influenced subsequent

²⁸Topping (2012: esp. Ch 1).

²⁹ Marrou (1948, new ed. 1982; 1958).

³⁰ For an overview of the liberal arts in the Middle Ages, see Wagner 1983 and Hicks (2012: 307-334).

³¹ As opposed to Jaeger (1947; new ed. 1986), whose narrative was shaped by his hope that Greek culture might serve as a moral antidote to what he perceived as the excesses of Western culture. A more recent history is Clarke 1971 and Morgan 1998; on Roman education in particular, see Bonner 1977 and Bloomer 2011.

readers of the dialogues. In the first place, his focus on the liberal arts narrative as the dominant mode of education which Augustine passed to the Middle Ages has infused subsequent scholarship with the notion that it is this speech--and the treatment of the liberal arts--which is the most important aspect of education in the texts. This may account for some of the reason that Augustine's recourse to the mechanics of philosophical and rhetoric education in the rest of the dialogues has received relatively little attention. In the second place, Marrou's emphasis on the forward-facing, Christian version of the arts dovetails well with the key lines of scholarship on the dialogues which I discussed above. The idea of a new, Christian liberal arts program is consistent with arguments that focus on Augustine's desire to transform and reinterpret his classical training. Moreover, as Marrou himself understood, the lasting impact of Augustine's particular program of the arts on subsequent iterations of the liberal arts schema is far from clear. The *opinio communis* is that Augustine ultimately abandoned his attempt to create a systematic program of the liberal arts, and if one asks nearly any reader today of his greatest contribution in terms of passing along a "Christianized" version of classical learning, one is likely to hear the title *De doctrina Christiana*.³² This work, finished near the end of his life, offers a method of reading and interpreting scriptures that is informed by classical, and especially Ciceronian rhetoric. It alone of Augustine's corpus appears in histories of rhetoric; thus, the Cassiciacum dialogues are read here too in the vein of the "historicity" argument: they are a liminal part of Augustine's metamorphosis from classical rhetor to Christian teacher.

Further reasons for dearth of attention to Augustine's interest in ancient *curricula* have less to do with readings of the dialogues *per se*, but rather reflect trends in the study of education more broadly. One such trend is a focus on less systematic aspects of the educational landscape, including the social impact and theories of education.³³ This trend may be, at least in

³² The authoritative edition, with notes, is Green 1995. On rhetoric in *De doctrina*, see for ex. Eden 1990; Camargo 1998; Young 2006; and esp. Leo and Thompson 2008.

³³ Cf. Kaster 1988 on the person of the grammarian; Too and Livingston 1998; Too (2000; 2001); Bloomer 2011 discusses a wide array of educational theory and social function in his history.

part, a reaction to Marrou's profoundly influential narrative, which at times emphasizes a unified narrative of development over the diverse and less-systematic ways students were educated across the Roman empire.³⁴ Perhaps a more pressing reason why Augustine's engagement with his classical predecessors has received less attention than one might expect is the fact that the *Cassiciacum* dialogues sit at the intersection of rhetoric, philosophy, and the liberal arts. As much as Marrou attempted to offer a singular narrative of ancient education, the question of the precise relationship between these three categories of education remains slippery and, to some extent, shrouded in mystery. Histories of education subsequent to Marrou have not attempted to cover the scope which would be required to put all the puzzle pieces that would be required to do so; the task would be gargantuan.

Thus, there is no clear narrative into which readers of the *Cassiciacum* dialogues might situate the mix of philosophical, rhetorical, and liberal arts references they find in them. The place of liberal arts in ancient education prior to Augustine is contested; though there is no doubt that Augustine drew on classical predecessors, too little is known about the extent and systematization of this material to contextualize Augustine's adaptation of it at *Cassiciacum*. This is a topic I treat further in Chapter Two. More work has been done on the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy in ancient education, but the picture is complicated. In the standard *cursus* of ancient and late antique education, philosophy is often treated as an optional--but ideal--appendage to the standard course of elementary work, grammar, and rhetoric. Thus, it is nearly a given that any student of philosophy had first been trained in rhetoric. As such, rhetoric is often understood not just as a rival but also a prerequisite for philosophy, which is consistent with rhetoric's lower place on the ladder of the liberal arts. That philosophical education is often seen as an appendage to the normative *cursus* of rhetorical education is reflected in histories of education, where philosophy is treated in short asides from the main narrative, if at all. The most thorough studies of philosophical education tend to be

³⁴ Cf. Bloomer 2011.

published independently of large-scale narratives of education, or as discrete chapters in handbooks. Part of this is no doubt a function of the disciplinary divides within modern academia, where philosophy itself is a distinct field. One implication of this divide is that--ironically--dialogues have not received sustained treatment within large-scale narratives of education, despite a general consensus that they are the quintessential genre of pedagogy. With respect to the Cassiciacum dialogues, this means that even if one recognizes Augustine's use of grammatical and rhetorical exercises within the texts,³⁵ it is not clear how much Augustine's synthesis of these exercises with philosophical subject matter is a direct continuation of what he taught in schools, how much is an "innovation," or whether his use of these exercises is even "intentional." Furthermore, as far as I am aware, no one has asked how or whether his choice of philosophical subject matter--the topics he covers and the way he does so--is dictated in any way by the philosophical curricula in late antiquity. The relationship between rhetoric and philosophy in the ancient world is one of antagonistic symbiosis. As often as rhetorical discourse--both ancient and modern--frames them as antithetical, rival disciplines, other evidence calls into question the idea of a hard separation between the two.³⁶ Philosophers, and teachers sympathetic to philosophy, chronically desecrated the self-serving practice of "sophists." And yet one would be hard pressed to find a philosopher responsible for a small corpus who is not credited with some work on rhetoric, be it original or a commentary. The opposite is also true: most renowned orators and rhetors from Isocrates onwards all claim to prioritize philosophy, at least sporadically. One of the most well-known passages of Cicero's *De inventione*, the elementary rhetorical handbook for the finding of arguments, famously begins with a preface that declares "wisdom without eloquence does not profit states enough, but eloquence without wisdom is, for the most part, a huge obstacle, and certainly never

³⁵ On rhetorical exercises and progymnasmata, see Cribiore (1996; 2001).

³⁶ Cf. Wardy (2009: 43-58); Bloomer, on this phenomenon in Quintilian in particular (2015: 347-357).

profitable.”³⁷ A significant body of evidence suggests that at least some rhetorical education was developed inside schools of philosophy, particularly that of the Academics and Peripatetics.³⁸ This point of contact is perhaps most evident in certain handbooks of rhetoric and dialectic like the *Topics* of Aristotle and Cicero, in which the practice of “finding arguments” is put to both philosophical and rhetorical ends. In at least some philosophical schools, handbooks such as these served as prerequisites for the reading of philosophical texts.³⁹ Though it is often assumed that the texts were used primarily for the practice of dialectic as opposed to writing speeches, the very term used for “speech” in these texts is ambiguous: Greek *logos* and Latin *oratio* can refer both to speech in general or the production of an actual speech. The many instances in which students in so-called philosophical schools describe the fact that they were called upon to study or give elaborate rhetorical speeches calls into question how much they were practicing speech production in tandem with debating ethics.⁴⁰

The tensions provoked by the intersection of philosophy, rhetoric, and liberal arts in Augustine mirror the tensions between these disciplines writ large. Though Augustine states that the primary purpose of the dialogues is to pursue philosophy, there are several aspects of the work he does with students which are analogous to the practices of rhetorical schools he left behind. In addition to relating that the group reads Virgil in the morning, at one point, Augustine encourages his student Licentius to write poetry.⁴¹ Not only do the disputants quote Virgil, Terence, Sallust, and Cicero--the four central “school authors” of late antiquity--throughout the dialogues; these quotes are used in ways integral to the discussions. Augustine

³⁷ Cicero, *De inv.* 1.1 *sapientiam sine eloquentia parum prodesse civitatibus, eloquentiam vero sine sapientia nimium obesse plerumque, prodesse nunquam.*

³⁸ Reinhardt (2000: 531-547); Brittain 2001; Fortenbaugh and Mirhady 1994; Fortenbaugh 1998.

³⁹ Tarrant (2014; 2018).

⁴⁰ Cf. Gregory the Wonderworker’s *Encomium on Origen*.

⁴¹ DO 1.8.24.

also concludes each of the three scenic dialogues with a finely wrought speech. Some readers have seen these aspects of the dialogues as a direct continuation of Augustine's work as a rhetor,⁴² but there has been as yet no deeper investigation into Augustine's debt to the rhetorical schools, much less to how Augustine's extended treatment of philosophical questions maps onto any rhetorical exercises evident in the texts. Marrou has noted that it was commonplace for higher level subjects in the educational system to filter down into the lower⁴³--thus, one finds a mingling of grammar and rhetoric at all levels. Might the same be said of philosophical subject matter?

Sources

The boundaries of this project are defined by the three scenic Cassiciacum dialogues--*Contra Academicos*, *De beata vita*, and *De ordine*. In many ways, these comprise a self-contained narrative. The fourth Cassiciacum dialogue, the *Soliloquies*, pertains to a question which is more philosophically advanced than the scope of Augustine's project in the scenic dialogues, and so I refer to it only insofar as it helps shed light on the boundaries of the narrative outlined in the scenic dialogues. In addition to these four dialogues, Augustine wrote a series of dialogues soon after the Cassiciacum retreat which are closely connected to the earlier dialogues both in genre and subject matter. These are *De immortalitate animae*, *De quantitate animae*, *De musica*, and *De libero arbitrio*. I refer to these at points where their content is particularly illuminating as a comparison. Augustine also tells us that subsequent to the Cassiciacum dialogues he set out to write a series of treatises on the liberal arts. Of these, only *De musica* is extant and of uncontested authenticity. We also have a *De dialectica* and *De rhetorica*, the authenticity of which is disputed. I have not engaged extensively with these texts, in part because of the authenticity question and in part because, as will become apparent in Chapter Two, at best they are ancillary to Augustine's central educational project. I also refer to passages of Augustine's later works

⁴² Topping 2012 and Muller 2015.

⁴³ Marrou (1948: 172).

where comparison with themes of the dialogues is fruitful: these include the *Confessions*, *De doctrina christiana*, and the *Retractations*.

The question of how Augustine modeled himself on the philosophical and rhetorical tradition of Cicero and Plato has, however, led me consult a wide range of texts beyond the Cassiciacum dialogues themselves. The texts which are most immediately relevant to Augustine at Cassiciacum are the philosophical dialogues of Cicero. Augustine models the Cassiciacum dialogues overtly on the dialogues of Cicero which treat the same topics--namely, the lost *Hortensius*, *Academica*, *Tusculan Disputations*, *De natura deorum*, and to a lesser extent, *De divinatione* and *De fato*. At the same time, Augustine appears to engage with the philosophical rhetoric of Cicero much more closely than has been previously supposed, particularly the *De oratore* and the *Orator*.

In pursuit of Augustine's use of rhetoric, I have also worked with handbooks in the Roman rhetorical tradition. This material represents what is, in some sense, such a standardized set of subjects in late antiquity that it is difficult to identify Augustine's reliance on specific sources with total certainty. However, Cicero's *De inventione* had achieved such canonical status by late antiquity that one can trace its influence on Augustine, whether direct or mediated through commentaries such as the popular one by Marius Victorinus. The same holds true for handbooks on definitions and the art of memory. Where I use these, I have noted which Augustine is likely to have known, but ultimately the fact that the material in these handbooks was fairly uniform and popular means that it is perhaps more important to know where Augustine was working within a broad tradition than it is to pinpoint exact sources.

In addition to Augustine's engagement with Cicero, his commitment to the Platonic tradition at Cassiciacum has been well studied. When speaking of ways Augustine engages with this tradition, I have elected to speak broadly of the Platonic tradition rather than to wade into the thicket of questions surrounding Augustine's knowledge of Greek sources and of Plotinus in particular. The current consensus is that he knew at least some portions of the *Enneads*, probably through Marius Victorinus' translation. Where allusions to Plotinus have

been identified in relevant passages of the Cassiciacum dialogue, I note them. However, one must also keep in mind that there are so many possible sources which may have contributed to Augustine's own Christian Platonist thought that, once again, to identify specific borrowings may not only be futile, but the wrong question entirely.

Finally, my quest to identify the educational context of the Cassiciacum dialogues has led me to philosophical texts beyond Cicero's and Plotinus's direct influence. The majority of these texts belong to the tradition of natural philosophy, and I bring them to bear upon the Cassiciacum dialogues precisely in order to show that Augustine is working within a tradition which is broader and in a sense represents a more standardized set of questions than would be evident if we limited our consideration only to sources which Augustine cites or offers verbal allusions. With that said, where possible I have drawn examples in this tradition from texts which we know Augustine had read or of which he was aware.

Method

In my exploration of the three subjects of "rejection" at Cassiciacum-- rhetoric, philosophy, and the texts *qua* juvenilia, my approach is based on a certain understanding of what each of these categories meant in the late antique context and to Augustine as an individual. Of these, rhetoric is arguably the broadest category: in its narrowest definition, it can refer to a discrete set of practices for the craft of speech that were codified in ancient handbooks; at its broadest, one can argue that all speech is rhetorical insofar as it is "crafted" in the speakers mind. In the abstract of *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric*, Erik Gunderson offers a succinct description of the problem with defining rhetoric with the premise that "rhetoric is less a discrete object to be grasped and mastered than a hotly contested set of practices that include disputes over the very definition of rhetoric itself."⁴⁴ For the purposes of this project, however, it is precisely the "discrete objects" of rhetoric as found in rhetorical

⁴⁴ Gunderson (2015: first page, unnumbered).

handbooks that I am first and foremost concerned with. Thus my use of the term “rhetoric” will primarily refer to the mechanics which Augustine used and taught, with the caveat that the use of these practices could not be divorced from the more fluid understandings of rhetoric, and particularly its association with persuasion and all forms of verbal artifice.

Philosophy is likewise a difficult term to define: it operates on the spectrum from the more abstract concept of the “love of wisdom” all the way to specific traditions as taught and passed down by individuals and schools, along with the accompanying literature, doctrines, and social networks. The question of how Augustine uses the term is further complicated by the question of the distinction between philosophy as practiced by non-Christians as opposed to “Christian” philosophy. Many Christians of late antiquity were happy to share in the heritage of philosophers like Plato and to claim, in competition with others, that Christianity represented the fulfillment of this tradition.⁴⁵ At the same time, Augustine himself sometimes emphasizes the difference between Christianity and classical philosophy, which tends to reinforce modern perceptions about the incompatibility of the two. The key, I think, is that both moves to identify with classical philosophy and to differentiate from it serve rhetorical purposes, and the two are not mutually exclusive. In this dissertation, when I refer to Augustine’s Platonism, I do so both to acknowledge his adoption of specific doctrines of the Platonic tradition, and to acknowledge his adoption of a set of expectations cultivated in late antiquity around philosophers as successors of Plato.⁴⁶ In most cases, I have elected to use the term “Platonism” in lieu of “Neoplatonism” in acknowledgment of the fact that the Platonic tradition was both broader and more diffuse than “Neoplatonism,” with its connotation of a very specific philosophical lineage,

⁴⁵ Cf. Urbano (2013: esp. 1-31).

⁴⁶ Ayres (2010: 16-18) is a helpful discussion of the different ways in which one might consider Augustine a “Platonist.”

implies.⁴⁷ When I do use the term “Neoplatonism,” I do so to capture the specific connotation associated with the output and legacy of specific individuals such as Plotinus and Porphyry.

In reading the dialogues as *juvenilia*, my first approach has been to “presume competence.”⁴⁸ My understanding of what such “competence” entails for an author like Augustine comes largely from my training as a philologist and is based on a set of interrelated expectations with respect to the way classical and late antique authors wrote and published. *In toto*, these expectations can be characterized by the notions of integrity and interconnectedness. Ancient authors placed a high value on both the internal unity of a work in and of itself, and the unity of tradition, often expressed through the rich and abundant tradition of literary allusion. To approach a text with the presumption of competence is, for me, to assume the author has carefully participated in this model until proven otherwise.

The notion of a text’s “integrity” encompasses a wide range of features. Perhaps the most fundamental aspect is that discussed by Malcolm Heath, namely that the unity of a classical text is based on its teleological function as opposed to a “theme” in the modern sense of the word.⁴⁹ This concept of Heath’s is a starting point for Kenyon’s reading of the dialogues. For Kenyon, Augustine’s *telos* is primarily pedagogical, namely, to lead his students through a certain process of debate, towards a plausible conclusion--though Kenyon also makes the case that Augustine very much values the epistemology implied by the plausible conclusion of each respective dialogue. Thus, much of Kenyon’s contribution to our understanding of the dialogues involves not Augustine’s argument, per se, but rather a defense of the coherence of texts which have, in his words, often been studied by way of “philosophical cherry picking”⁵⁰--

⁴⁷ I doing so, I am largely following Gerson 2010. Remes and Slaveva-Griffin (2014: 2-5) offer an overview of the ways the term “Neoplatonism” has been problematized, and, against Gerson 2010, defends its use.

⁴⁸ A term I have adopted from contemporary pedagogy and disability studies. Cf. Biklen and Burke 2006.

⁴⁹ Heath 1989.

⁵⁰ Kenyon (2018: 10).

an effect which is not surprising given dialogues' reputation for being records of spontaneous conversation.

I would like to build upon Kenyon's argument by re-emphasizing, however, ancient principles of structural, as well as teleological, unity. In ancient texts, apparent disorganization is often a *topos* concealing hidden connections between apparently disparate sections of a text. In recent years, this aspect of ancient style has been thrown into relief by individual studies of works and genres which one would expect to be the *least* unified, such as collections of letters and miscellaneous texts.⁵¹ Many such texts begin with claims to have been written off the cuff or in fits and starts, and yet close structural readings are more intricate and sophisticated than the author claims. This dichotomy between what an author says and what he does is precedent for my suspicion that Augustine's claims of "rejection" need to be read carefully, and need to be read in a rhetorical context in which statements of what an author does or does not do might well be meant to signal that he in fact wishes the reader to pay special attention to that aspect of the text.

It is a principle which can be applied to a wide range of aspects of an ancient text. This is the perspective Pucci takes, for instance, on Augustine's famous lament for the copious amount of time he spent reading Virgil as a youth. Pucci writes of Augustine's allusion to the *Aeneid* in the same passage, "it seems fatuous to think that Augustine imbedded Virgil's words in an anti-Virgilian screed with no interpretive expectations in mind; that he places before us an authorized text of the *Aeneid*, but does not mean for us to ponder it..."⁵² Similar rhetorical caveats are often made when an author claims to be unqualified to write in a certain genre or style, or when he disparages his work as a whole for any reason.⁵³ It seems to me that self-effacing language with respect to *juvenilia* might be classed in this category--thus, I extend my

⁵¹ Cf. Henderson 2004 on Seneca's letters; DiGiulio 2015 on Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*.

⁵² Pucci (2014: 7).

⁵³ On *recusatio*, see Nauta (2006: 21-40).

presumption of Augustine's competence to this area as well. Such claims must be weighted against the balance of what it means to publish a text, and especially a text within a corpus, as Augustine does for the Cassiciacum dialogues in the *Retractations* and the several letters published after the dialogues which can be seen as advertisements of the work. The notion that the texts are "exploratory" runs counter to the systematic dissemination of them that he offers--as opposed to say *De pulchro et apto*, an earlier work which is now lost.

A final aspect of the "integrity" of the late ancient text is the near imperative in Roman literature to couch one's work within a particular genre both by adopting the formal structure of that genre and by alluding to its great masters.⁵⁴ While this phenomenon has been most studied with respect to poetic genres, the principles hold true of other genres, including dialogue. In writing dialogues of the Platonic style in which he engages throughout with the dialogues of Cicero, Augustine does precisely this. The *mores* of this type of imitation were such that I find Augustine's mere use of the dialogue genre should be taken seriously rather than as a cursory experiment. This is especially true when one factors in the points of contact between Roman rules of allusion and the philosophical *diadoche*, or tradition, by which students handed down the teaching of their masters with an aim or rhetoric of preserving the purity of their teaching.⁵⁵ This tradition, like the practice of literary allusion, did not preclude innovation, but the concept of authorial "originality" in this context was markedly different from modern connotations of the same. Students were at pains to show their consistency with the core of their masters' teaching, and insisted that they preserved it even when they deviated. Claims to originality took the shape of novel combinations of practices instantiated by their predecessors, such as Cicero's use of the Aristotelian dialogue *in utramque partem* in lieu of Plato's dialogic format, or his insistence on the novelty of introducing Latin terms for technical Greek philosophical vocabulary. In this context, the idea that Augustine would adopt the dialogue

⁵⁴ Cf. Hinds 1998; Pucci 1998.

⁵⁵ See Fowden (1982: 33-38).

form, praise great philosophers, and yet not break from the content of that tradition or use it only loosely in his search for a new Christian education is unlikely, bordering on bizarre. In this context, “assuming competence” means we begin with the expectation that if Augustine signals that he is writing in the tradition of Plato and Cicero, he is doing so in a profound way.

Thesis

The picture of the Cassiciacum dialogues which emerges from the approach detailed above is one in which Augustine portrays himself as an authoritative teacher entrenched in the Platonic tradition much more deeply than has been appreciated in either the literature on Augustine or on education in late antiquity. In this dissertation, I argue that in the dialogues, Augustine styles himself a *Platonis aemulus*, an emulator of Plato, in the model of his philosophical predecessors, and particularly Cicero and Plotinus. For Augustine, the role of *Platonis aemulus* encompassed both an informal dimension--that of personal virtue and experience in philosophy--and a formal dimension: a program of systematic education. Augustine exemplifies both of these in the dialogues. On the informal level, I argue that Augustine positions himself as an authoritative teacher and philosopher to a much greater extent than his protestations to the contrary to suggest. On the formal level, I argue that the Cassiciacum dialogues as a whole are part of an educational program of philosophical rhetoric which follows the paradigm set forth by Platonic corpus arrangements of metaphysical ascent from the sensible to the intelligible. Thus, the subject matter and narrative arc of each dialogue can be read as Augustine’s version of a recognizably Platonic curriculum which his predecessors, Plotinus and Cicero, also followed to some extent.

In the case of the Platonic curriculum he followed, the narrative of metaphysical ascent and the specifics of this paradigm are not well understood; to my knowledge, there has been no serious study of this curricular paradigm outside of Neoplatonic arrangements of the *corpus* of Plato himself. Thus, I hope this study will shed light on the possibility that the influence of Platonic curricular structures may be much wider than is often thought. This curriculum can be

described as “philosophical rhetoric” insofar as Augustine interweaves treatment of his philosophical subject with exercises in one of the canons of rhetoric as taught in rhetorical handbooks of late antiquity. He does so in a way which suggests that he views this philosophical rhetoric as integral to the Platonic paradigm he is following; thus, I hope this study of Augustine’s philosophical rhetoric will be a contribution to ongoing attempts to parse the complicated relationship between rhetoric and philosophy in late ancient education.

That the Cassiciacum dialogues occupy a particular place within this Platonic corpus arrangement--namely, the first stages of metaphysical ascent--implies that their role in *Augustine’s* corpus is more integral and clearly defined than readings which privilege their liminality and exploratory nature would suggest. The dialogues are *juvenilia*, but not only insofar as they are Augustine’s earliest extant texts: they also represent the lowest stages of a curriculum and are aimed at young students. This complements readings which emphasize Augustine’s own transitional state at the time of writing by emphasizing the idea that for Augustine, as for other ancient authors, exploration of the development of his personal intellectual thought is inextricably linked with and shaped by the generic, and in this case curricular--paradigm in which he processed and expounded this thought. Furthermore, Augustine’s adoption of a paradigm used by his philosophical models--and his authoritative positioning as a philosopher himself--suggests that readings see the dialogues a tentative exploration of whether Christianity could be reconciled with classical philosophy must be balanced with the very real possibility that the dialogues represent Augustine’s advertisement for the possibility of a Christian version of this philosophy--and his own ability to teach it.

Outline

The first two chapters of this dissertation are concerned with establishing Augustine’s emulation of a Platonic “model” of education and delineating what this model is and how it can be understood. In Chapter One, I make the case that at Cassiciacum, Augustine positions himself an authoritative philosopher in the tradition of a *Platonis aemulus*, an emulator of Plato--

and that he does so within the tradition of Porphyry's Plotinus and of Cicero, the two principle philosophical influences on his work. This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first, I consider what it means to be a *Platonis aemulus* and argue that Augustine presents himself this way in the Cassiciacum dialogues, especially in competition with Cicero and Plotinus. In the second part of the chapter, I confront the common view that Augustine's protestations of philosophical infancy and liminal status as a Christian catechumen preclude the possibility that he could be seen as "authoritative" within these texts, arguing that such protestations on Augustine's part can be read within the *topos* of philosophical humility--a *topos* which itself has plenty of precedent within the Platonic tradition. The paradigmatic exemplar of such humility, of course, the person of Socrates. In the third part of this chapter, I argue that the production of a comprehensive corpus of works was itself understood to be integral to the identity of a *Platonis aemulus* as attributed to Augustine's predecessors, Cicero and Plotinus.

This paves the way for Chapter Two, where I argue that the structure and content of the Cassiciacum dialogues is consistent with a standard "curriculum" of philosophical questions which developed in the Hellenistic period as part of the standardization of a specific pedagogical arrangement of the Platonic corpus. I first show that this curricular model is characterized by a narrative of ascent through the cosmos, from sense perception to knowledge of intelligible reality, that is, philosophy. This ascent model is evident in the orderings which both Cicero and Porphyry give of their corpuses, and is integrated with the Stoic divisions of philosophy, such that we can also understand ascent as a progression through logic, ethics, physics, and metaphysics, respectively. The Cassiciacum Dialogues, as a "catalogue" of texts, follow this curriculum in a pedagogical order that begins with the *Contra Academicos* (logic), *De beata vita* (ethics), *De ordine* (physics), and finally the *Soliloquia* (metaphysics). Furthermore, Augustine's subsequent works as he organizes them in the *Retractationes* continue to follow this pattern in iterative steps which parallel iterations of this progression through the branches of philosophy as they are used in other Platonic corpuses. Thus, we can read Cassiciacum not as a self-contained program representing a snapshot in time for Augustine, but as part of a much

larger project which he pursues well after writing these texts. After locating Augustine's corpus within this ascent narrative, I show that *De ordine*, as the representative of "physics," holds a dominant position with respect to its weight in the conceptualization both of the ascent narrative as a whole of the role of education and curriculum within that narrative. Thus the subject matter of physics, expressed by Augustine in *De ordine*, holds the final key for understanding the integration of rhetoric, philosophy, and the educational program of the liberal arts in which Augustine engages at Cassiciacum. Knowledge of how the subject matter of physics serves as the foundation for this educational program becomes in turn a platform for recognizing how intimately all the Cassiciacum dialogues work together as a holistic educational program.

While Chapters One and Two establish the boundaries of Augustine's philosophical program, in the remaining chapters I turn to consider how rhetoric is integrated within this program. In Chapters Three through Five, I offer close readings of each of the three scenic Cassiciacum dialogues: *Contra Academicos*, *De beata vita*, and *De ordine*. For each of these dialogues, I show that Augustine interweaves the main philosophical theme of the text--logic, ethics, and physics--with one of the five canons of rhetoric. The collective weight of evidence in these chapters suggests that rhetoric is indeed so deeply embedded in Augustine's philosophical paradigm that his rhetorical theory cannot be extricated from his philosophy, and vice versa. In Chapter Three, I argue that the *Contra Academicos* is an exploration of logic and the rhetorical canon of *invention*. It is in this dialogue that Augustine offers the basic rationale for rhetoric's inevitability--and usefulness--within his philosophical program. This exploration is born out of a conundrum Augustine identifies between authority and reason as a two-fold path to education. Augustine plays on the central question of the dialogue--whether it is possible to find (*invenire*) the truth--and *invention* as a set of rhetorical (authoritative) and dialectic (rational) methods for the finding of arguments. In the first part of the chapter, I show that the ostensibly dialectic argument of this dialogue is structured according to the five parts of speech which, in rhetorical handbooks, were used to teach the rhetorical art of invention. In the second

part of the chapter, I argue that this structure is a reflection of the rhetorical theory Augustine subtly embeds in the dialogue: namely, that within his cosmological paradigm, it is impossible for a human teacher purvey rational truths--i.e., pure dialectic. This argument serves as the foundational logic for rhetoric's place within Augustine's philosophical paradigm: rhetoric is not only a useful, but also an inevitable, means of learning for students who have not yet attained some level of intelligible knowledge. The flip-side of this rhetorical theory is that, for Augustine, only Christ as God can convey true knowledge. By using Platonic language--and particularly that of Plotinus--to make this point, Augustine tacitly argues that Christ takes the place of the Neoplatonic *Intellect* by which human beings can progress from sensible to divine knowledge by means of what in Neoplatonic language is termed emanation or participation. In this way, Augustine competes directly with Platonic predecessors, offering a Christian alternative to one of the most fundamental problems in the Platonic cosmological paradigm.

In Chapter Four, I argue that *De beata vita* is an exploration of ethics and the rhetorical canon of style. In this dialogue, Augustine lays the ontological (Platonic) foundation of his whole program; one function of this foundation is to explain *why* rhetoric is so integral to his philosophical practice. Augustine effects this integration through the lens of moderation, to so-called "fourth virtue" which is also the virtue most associated in antiquity with living the happy life. Here, I give two readings of the dialogue: in the first, I contend that Augustine makes a series of three major attempts to define the happy life by using different types of definitions which correspond with the methods expounded in Marius Victorinus' late antique treatise *De definitionibus*. These attempts at definition center around Augustine (and perhaps Victorinus') Platonic idea of God as both being itself and undefinable, a Being best described by what He is not. At the same time, Augustine interweaves Stoic virtue theory--which concludes that all virtues are one and culminate in moderation--and thus presents a picture of God as Being Itself and all virtue. This exercise culminates not in a proper definition (since God is undefinable) but in Augustine's exuberant Trinitarian statement in which he names God the Father the *Summus Modus*, or highest measure--thus identifying the source of all moderation in God's nature. In the

second reading, I argue that *De beata vita* is also a study of the three types of style (plain, middle, and high) which Cicero popularized in his dialogue the *Orator*. Drawing upon Cicero's own affirmation in that dialogue that true eloquence is tantamount to a Platonic form of wisdom, which is best expressed in the appropriate *moderation* of those three styles, Augustine's own moderation of the three styles in the dialogue serves as a *de facto* argument for the notion that the speaker's ability to moderation styles is a reflection of his connection with God as the Highest Measure. In weaving together these arguments of definition, style, and ontology, Augustine thus competes with Stoic virtue theory, Platonic paradigm which sees the One as the unifying source of all existence, and Cicero's idea that the orator's moderation of styles is a reflection of this higher moderation: in short, Augustine offers a unified, Christian version of ancient ethics which begins with ontology and ends in style.

In Chapter Five, I argue that *De ordine* integrates its study of physics with a theory of the rhetorical art of memory. In Part One of this chapter, I argue that the discrete scenes of the dialogic portion of *De ordine* are in fact representations of each of the liberal arts through which reason (*ratio*) moves in its ascent towards philosophy in the speech at the end of *De ordine*. Throughout the dialogue, Augustine uses technical language which corresponds with the language used to describe the rhetorical art of memory in the Roman rhetorical handbook tradition. If indeed the dialogue is to be read as an instance of the art of memory, this renders it the earliest known instance of the application (as opposed to description of) the art of memory. Based on the way Augustine elides the distinction between oral speeches and the written "speech" of the dialogue, his usage of the art of memory invites us to reconsider the assumption that classical usage of the art of memory was reserved for oral speeches. In Part Two of this chapter, I argue that Augustine's use of the rhetorical art of memory is interwoven with a theory of the memory which he presents throughout the dialogue and which is entrenched in the Platonic tradition, namely memory as lower part of the soul which mediates between sense perception and the ascent to intelligible reality. One implication of memory's function is that, for Augustine, memory is the means by which all education takes place: even the wise man,

fixed on God (and therefore intelligible reality), must use memory to communicate his knowledge to those who are still thinking in sensible terms. Thus the fact that Augustine incorporates memory into the dialogue on physics is fitting: physics is, within the ascent narrative, that branch of philosophy which mediates between ethics as a study of human life and metaphysics as the study of the soul and God, and memory is fundamental to this enterprise. The degree to which Augustine's use of memory here is based upon Platonic precedent and at the same time *interwoven* with the rhetorical art of memory begs the question of whether there ever was a stark divide between the rhetorical art of memory and moral memory in the Platonic tradition. Studies on this topic tend to speak of moral memory as *borrowing* from the language of the rhetorical art and vice versa, but Augustine's practice suggests an integration which goes much deeper. In this last of the scenic Cassiciacum dialogues, then, Augustine's competition with other philosophical schools culminates in his programmatic speech on *his* ideal course of education for students. This is the ultimate expression of Augustine's synthesis between philosophy and rhetoric. As memory is the storehouse of knowledge, so this dialogue encapsulates and crystallizes for his readers the quintessence of the lessons he has been teaching throughout the Cassiciacum narrative. Here Augustine, like the wise man he describes, renders his own text into the art of memory in order to offer his students from his storehouse of knowledge--a storehouse which is strengthened and more effective precisely because it draws upon the fact that Augustine has honed memory as a rhetorical art.

In the conclusion, I summarize and reiterate the central points of each of the following chapters in order to emphasize how reading the Cassiciacum dialogues as part of an integrated program of rhetoric and philosophy "in the cosmos" invites us to reconsider Augustine's status as a philosopher, the centrality of the ascent narrative and curriculum to his corpus as a whole, and the integration of rhetorical and philosophical curriculum in the educational context of late antiquity as it developed from traditions stemming from the Hellenistic period.

CHAPTER ONE

AUGUSTINE, *PLATONIS AEMULUS*

In this chapter, I make the case that despite all protestations to the contrary, Augustine is representing himself as an authoritative philosopher in the mold of Plato and Cicero. In what follows, I will first show how Augustine constructs an image of himself as an emulator of Plato in order to build upon and compete with the traditions exemplified by Cicero and Plotinus--in other words, with the two streams of philosophical tradition which he references most overtly in the dialogues. I will next argue that his claims of humility and inexperience do not preclude reading him as authoritative in this way. In the final section of this chapter, I argue that the development of a comprehensive educational program is itself an essential component of a philosopher's claim to be a *Platonis aemulus*, and that Augustine's discussion of a systematic program at the end of the third Cassiciacum dialogue, *De ordine*, shows hints of Augustine's interest in laying out such a program. This paves the way for Chapter Two, in which I make the case for the specific components of this Platonic curriculum, and argue that much more of this curriculum is already evident in the Cassiciacum dialogues than readings of the end of *De ordine* by themselves suggest.

My first task is to delineate the meaning of the phrase *Platonis aemulus*.⁵⁶ One generally finds the concept of "Platonic emulation" used (1) to express the idea that Plato represents a locus of all philosophical authority, (2) to claim direct Platonic succession, or (3) to express the imitation or adoption of Platonic form, method, or specific dogma. There is evidence for all three of these in the Cassiciacum dialogues. The first sense of *Platonis aemulus* is arguably the most important, i.e., that in which the emulator makes a claim to possess the truth which Plato's authority was seen to embody. The notion that Plato represented a standard of authority, that

⁵⁶ For an excellent overview of "Platonism" in Augustine's thought particularly, see Ayres (2010: 13-20).

he was the “fountainhead” of all philosophy, is a commonplace of philosophical texts from the Hellenistic period onwards.⁵⁷ Plato was seen as the locus of all philosophical authority to such an extent that authors retrospectively or preemptively credit the ideas of others to him. In this vein, “Plato not only brings to perfection ideas anticipated by Socrates and Pythagoras, he also inspires subsequent philosophical schools.”⁵⁸ Augustine hints that he is writing within this tradition by citing Socrates and Plato and “the authority of other ancients” as the standard by which the Academy ought to be judged,⁵⁹ and by suggesting that Plato studied with Pythagoras after Socrates’ death.⁶⁰ References such as these are typical when authors wish to show the Platonic unity of philosophy. In many cases, philosophers during and after the Hellenistic period were also at pains to show the unity of Plato and Aristotle’s thought; thus, for all intents and purposes the term *Platonis aemulus* might well include a synthesis of all that the combination of the two represented.⁶¹ For simplicity’s sake, I will confine myself to the term *Platonis aemulus*, with the understanding that this term can encompass the reception of Aristotle as well.

The second type of Platonic emulation is “direct succession,” that is, accounts of the history of and competition between followers of Plato who vied to be seen as legitimate heirs to Plato’s legacy and, in some cases, to his institutional authority. Philosophical schools of the Hellenistic period competed with one another to lay claim to the title of Plato’s true successors, because the majority of schools agreed that Plato’s philosophy was tantamount to truth--they

⁵⁷ Sedley (1989: 97-119, 1997: 110-29), Boyes-Stone (2001: 102-4); Baltzly 2014. Scholars disagree as to the precise nature of how Plato’s authority was understood, and over when the focus on Plato’s authority as a figure synonymous with truth was crystallized. Baltzly argues that the re-crystallization of Platonic authority after the fall of Middle Platonism is to be located in “the Platonic *telos* and its promotion to a central place in the conception of Platonism” (2014: 794).

⁵⁸ Tarrant (2018: 113).

⁵⁹ CA 2.6.14.

⁶⁰ CA 3.17.37. For the widespread influence of Neo-Pythagoreanism in late antiquity, see O’Meara 1989.

⁶¹ Long 2006 treats the synthesis of the two in Cicero’s thought.

merely disagreed about what that philosophy entailed.⁶² This form of Platonic emulation, like the others, does not necessarily refer to the wholesale adoption of Plato's arguments or dogmas, particularly given the complications in trying to agree on a standard of what these were. Over the course of the first centuries C.E., the Hellenistic concept of Plato's dogmatic authority transformed into what Dirk Baltzly calls "the moral urgency and soteriological character that we see at the end of the trajectory in Neoplatonism."⁶³ Augustine's engagement with the Platonic tradition is often seen as a response to this development; he shares in this sense of urgency, both by emphasizing the metaphysical ascent to the divine, and in the praise of Plato and Plotinus. While Augustine, citing the authority of Christ, stops short of declaring that pursuit of Platonic ascent is necessary for salvation, he nevertheless claims that Platonic ascent, when achieved through the authority of Christ, represents a higher attainment of knowledge and happiness in this life than belief alone.⁶⁴ In this way, he puts forth Christianity as the true fulfillment--or succession--of the Platonic tradition.

As far as institutional authority goes, Augustine can make no claims to Platonic succession in the direct sense. However, an aspect of his dialogues which has received far too little attention is the way Augustine assumes Cicero's Roman competition with Greek philosophy. Below, I consider the *Contra Academicos*, where Augustine casts Cicero as successor of the so-called New Academy, which itself claimed direct lineage to Plato and argued that truth could not be known. After casting Cicero as a Platonic successor, Augustine then scripts himself as Cicero's successor, thereby co-opting the paradigm of Platonic succession in a way which allows him to claim Platonic authority for Cicero and himself.

⁶² Some of this narrative is shaped by Cicero himself, who is our most significant source for philosophy of the Hellenistic period. See Erskine 2003.

⁶³ Baltzly (2014: 795).

⁶⁴ CA 3.20.43, *Mihi ergo certum est nusquam prorsus a Christi auctoritate discedere: non enim reperio valentiorum. Quod autem subtilissima ratione persequendum est; ita enim iam sum affectus, ut quid sit verum, non credendo solum, sed etiam intellegendo apprehendere impatienter desiderem; apud Platonicos me interim quod sacris nostris non repugnet reperturum esse confido.*

The final category of Platonic emulation which applies to the Cassiciacum dialogues is that of literary or pedagogical imitation. By this I mean Augustine's use of dialectic in a recognizably Platonic mode for the purposes of teaching and learning. The staging and format of the Cassiciacum dialogues, like those of Cicero's dialogues, recall scenes of *otium* which characterize the discussion of Platonic dialogues. And as Erik Kenyon has argued, even the construction of Augustine's dialectic may imitate recognizably Platonic patterns. In this sense, we can say that Augustine imitates Plato both in terms of genre and in his self-representation as a teacher.

I. *Augustine, Cicero, and the Idea of Platonic Succession*

Augustine is typically thought to have read little Greek, and the question of how much Plato he knew either in translation or via his percolation through other sources is murky.⁶⁵ In practice, Augustine's Platonic emulation is inextricably linked to his emulation of Cicero. Cicero's philosophical dialogues--particularly the *Academica*, *De finibus*, *De natura deorum*, *Tusculan Disputations*, and the lost *Hortensius*--represent Augustine's primary sources at Cassiciacum.⁶⁶ Cicero himself styled these dialogues in a Platonic vein, and Augustine's engagement with them reveals the scope of what it means for Augustine to position himself as a *Platonis aemulus*: he attempts to embrace and outdo not only Plato, but also the most authoritative philosopher of the Latin West within his program. This suggests that he is interested not only in Plato's doctrines, but in that all-important notion that Plato was the *locus* of all philosophical authority: a notion which Augustine would have understood to apply to

⁶⁵ Van Riel 2017 is a recent survey of references to Plato's work in Augustine's corpus and an excellent summary of which doctrines/passages of Plato Augustine knew well.

⁶⁶ See Testard 1958, DiLorenzo 1982, and Foley 1999 for Cicero's philosophical dialogues in the backdrop at Cassiciacum.

Cicero as well.⁶⁷ Despite Cicero's pivotal role as a purveyor of Greek philosophy into the West,⁶⁸ Cicero is not often treated in modern scholarship as a successor of Plato, thanks perhaps to the notion that Cicero is primarily a skeptic and to the modern tendency to downplay Cicero's legitimacy as a philosopher.⁶⁹ However, as Andrew Long has noted, "Cicero shifts about in his self-descriptions and self-assessments," at times claiming the title rhetor and at others, philosopher.⁷⁰ Furthermore, Cicero frequently refers to Plato with extreme reverence--an attitude which would have further entrenched Plato's elevated status in the minds of Roman readers.⁷¹ And we should take seriously the fact that Roman philosophers and rhetoricians alike were eager to depict him as a philosopher: the title of this chapter is taken from Quintilian's sentiment that Cicero himself is a *Platonis aemulus*.⁷² Plutarch relates the anecdote that Cicero preferred to be called philosopher over rhetor.⁷³ By late antiquity, Cicero had gained a reputation not only as a philosopher, but *the* philosopher par excellence. The Christian philosopher Lactantius, referred to him as the "perfect philosopher"⁷⁴ and styled himself as a

⁶⁷ Though some scholars of Augustine, following the line of thought which sees Cicero as a rhetor first, despite acknowledging the pervasive presence in Cicero's works, have eschewed the idea that Augustine relied much if at all on Cicero for serious philosophical work. Such is the perspective taken by Hochschild (2012: 2-3).

⁶⁸ Gersh 1986.

⁶⁹ Readings which see Cicero as a rhetor first and philosopher second include Douglas (1962) and Erskine (2003). Striker 2003 follows the line of thought that Cicero felt philosophy to be a primarily Greek endeavor, which has led scholars to conclude that Cicero's own philosophical project was not serious. By contrast, Altman 2016 offers a detailed argument that the "later Cicero" was indeed a *Platonis aemulus* in that he took Plato's own philosophy very seriously.

⁷⁰ Long (2006: 286).

⁷¹ For a survey of the ways Cicero's Platonic emulation played out, see Long (2006: 290ff.).

⁷² Quint. 10.1.93.

⁷³ Plutarch, *Cicero* 877C.

⁷⁴ Cf. Lactantius, *Institutes*, 1.5, 16, 17; 3.14, 7. From Pichon (1901: 247ff).

“Christian Cicero.”⁷⁵ Thus, for Augustine to consider Cicero part of the Platonic tradition--and to vie with him-- would not have been strange at all.

In the *Cassiciacum* dialogues, Augustine cultivates pride in Cicero as the fountainhead of Roman philosophy, affectionately referring to him as “our Cicero” (*Cicero noster*).⁷⁶ Not only does Augustine cite and allude to Cicero’s thought more than that of any other author, but he does so at the most fundamental points in his philosophical argument. And at times, he intimates that primacy of Cicero over Greek contenders. This itself can be seen as part of the Ciceronian tradition. Cicero emphasizes the importance of the fact that he is developing a particularly Latin expression of philosophy in the prefaces of the majority of his philosophical dialogues. This theme is particularly pronounced in the preface to the *Academica*, which is addressed to his friend Varro: Cicero says that he is, thus far, the only figure to write philosophy in Latin and begs Varro to follow suit.⁷⁷ We need not decide here whether this rhetoric is sincere or whether Cicero is posturing in a manner which advertises his own status as a generic innovator.

One telling instance of Cicero’s importance in Augustine’s estimation occurs at the beginning of the *Contra Academicos*, where Augustine’s student Licentius asks his friend Trygetius whether Carneades could be considered a wise man.⁷⁸ Trygetius dismisses the validity of the example on the grounds that he, Trygetius, is not Greek. Accordingly, Licentius suggests Cicero as the template of a wise man, and Trygetius quickly agrees that Cicero is wise. Thus, at the opening of the dialogue, Cicero is proffered as the wise man *par excellence* with which the students will engage. By citing Cicero as the authority for the most basic points of his

⁷⁵ Kendeffy 2015.

⁷⁶ CA 1.3.7.

⁷⁷ *Acad.* 1.1.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

own philosophical dialogues, Augustine conveys the unspoken message that Cicero is the standard by which philosophy is to be taught.

Importantly, Augustine also intimates Cicero's authority over and above that of Greek philosophers in the very speech at the end of the *Contra Academicos* where he gives the narrative of Platonic succession.⁷⁹ He opens this speech with a long excerpt of Cicero's *Academica* in which the various schools of the Hellenistic period vie for primacy over one another. In the quotation, Cicero concludes that the Academic skeptics would win first place in a competition between philosophical schools. His reasoning is that every other school would award themselves first place, but award second place to the New Academy on the grounds that only the skeptics would not tell the other schools that their doctrines were definitively false. Augustine's interpretation of this anecdote is that Cicero is not serious in his conclusion, but rather mocking "those Greeklings" (*Graeculos*).⁸⁰ With this analysis, Augustine accomplishes two objectives: he implies that Cicero himself was not a proponent of the skeptical position, and he exalts Cicero's authority over that of the Greek philosophers by using the slightly derogatory diminutive, "Greeklings." This is not the only place he uses derogatory terms for the Greeks: he also asks whether he should forgive Carneades or "some other Greek pest" for their skeptical views.⁸¹

Augustine's Platonic-Ciceronian emulation extends even to the succession narrative of Plato's Academy which he gives in the *Contra Academicos*. There, he offers a history of the Old and New Academies, a narrative he interweaves with direct and indirect allusion to Cicero's account of the same in the *Academica*.⁸² It is probably no coincidence that Augustine gives his account of Platonic succession in the first of the Cassiciacum dialogues: this amounts to a signal, at the outset of his project, of precisely where he is placing his own work within a particular

⁷⁹ CA 3.7.15ff.

⁸⁰ CA 3.7.16.

⁸¹ CA 2.12.27.

⁸² Cf. Cicero, *Acad.* 2.112.

and authoritative philosophical tradition. We are accustomed to speak of the *Contra Academicos* as a dialogue about skepticism: the central question Augustine treats here is whether the Academic skeptics, the members of the so-called New Academy, are correct in their claim that the truth cannot be known. But Augustine's inclusion of an extensive discussion on Platonic succession suggests that the *Contra Academicos* is just as much about the New Academy as an historical institution as it is about a doctrine. In other words, Augustine is not only interested in the challenge to epistemology which skepticism poses, but also with how this challenge works within the authoritative context of Plato's Academy as it evolves from Old, to Middle, to New.

Augustine's bid for Platonic succession may be seen in the fact that he includes a succession narrative, and also in the way he rewrites Cicero's narrative to suit his own purposes. By revising the narrative so that it fits his own views, Augustine ultimately casts himself as the final torch-bearer of Platonic tradition. Augustine's account is often considered to be quite different from the standard we find in Cicero;⁸³ as such, it has not always been taken to be a serious attempt at philosophical history.⁸⁴ Augustine begins as one would expect, establishing Plato as the figurehead of philosophy. But in Augustine's account, when the Stoic Zeno's teaching on sense perception and materiality threatened Plato's teachings on the immortality of the soul, Arcesilaus, as head of the Middle Academy, chose to conceal Plato's true teaching. In other words, for Augustine, the skeptics are not really skeptics, but rather ones who hid Plato's teachings that truth *can* be known to protect them from being corrupted by Stoic influence. Augustine goes on to say that Carneades, head of the New Academy, introduced the term "like-true" as an alternative to probability. Augustine claims he did this as a way of hinting that the Academics secretly believed truth could be known.

After offering this surprising account of the New Academy, Augustine states that the skeptical debate has continued until the time of Cicero. He then concludes his narrative by

⁸³ CA 3.7.15.

⁸⁴ Kenyon (2019: 31ff).

introducing the Neoplatonist Plotinus, praising him in the words with which I opened this dissertation: Plotinus is “so similar to [Plato] that one might have supposed they were contemporaries, or given the difference in time, that Plato lived again in him.”⁸⁵ In this way, Augustine’s narrative of succession runs all the way from Plato through Neoplatonism. And Augustine is still not finished: after concluding his speech, he argues that Cicero, too, thought the skeptics truly believed truth could be known.⁸⁶ This comment has no doubt contributed to the fact that Augustine’s speech has been seen as frivolous, for Augustine’s conclusion runs counter to today’s near-consensus that Cicero was a radical skeptic.

And yet, there are ways to read Cicero which are closer to Augustine’s assessment. I mention them to temper the idea that Augustine’s whole account is frivolous. For instance, Andrew Long has argued that, contrary to the dominant scholarly narrative which sees Cicero as an unmitigated skeptic, we should consider the possibility that Cicero was both a Philonian skeptic and Antiochean Academic simultaneously; i.e., that Cicero ultimately endorsed Antiochus’ recourse to Stoic epistemology to some extent.⁸⁷ This comes close to Augustine’s assessment of Cicero. Though there is no extant passage in the works of Cicero in which Cicero makes this point, it is also true that Cicero both claims to be an Academic skeptic, and that he agrees with the Peripatetics on the grounds that they are both followers of Socrates and Plato.⁸⁸ While Long stops short of positing that Cicero ultimately privileged certain knowledge over skepticism, he does note that both Philo and Antiochus began as skeptics and embraced Stoic epistemology later in life. Part of the consensus that Cicero was a skeptic is owed to the fact that when Cicero studied with Philo, the latter was a radical skeptic. However, if Augustine was aware of the pattern by which Philo and Antiochus both ultimately renounced radical

⁸⁵ CA 3.18.41.

⁸⁶ CA 3.20.43.

⁸⁷ Long (2006: 287-288).

⁸⁸ Cicero, *De Officiis* 1.2.

skepticism, perhaps his history of the Academy--or his sense of Cicero's place in it --are not so bizarre as they appear. The less fanciful Augustine's history of the Academy appears to be, the more credibility it might have garnered him as a *Platonis aemulus*.

For our purposes, the most important point in Augustine's narrative is that, regardless of the credibility of his claim, Augustine tacitly includes Cicero as an authoritative philosopher within the lineage of Plato. In Augustine's account, Cicero is the third skeptic (after Arcesilaus and Carneades) to secretly maintain Plato's dogmatic stance. Augustine then makes his own personal claim as to where the truth may be found: he states that he will not depart from the authority of Christ, or the reason of the Platonists. In this way, Augustine himself becomes the final link in his story of Platonic tradition. In some ways, the question of whether Augustine actually believed Cicero to be a secret anti-skeptic is irrelevant to his project. The fact that Augustine recounts a tale in which none of Plato's successors in the New Academy (including Cicero) were truly skeptics serves to graft them all into the tradition of which he, Augustine, is the culmination. He easily could have maintained a narrative of Platonic succession in which he dismissed Arcesilaus, Carneades, and Cicero as aberrant. Or, he could have implied that Platonic succession does not depend on agreeing with every facet of the accepted body Platonic doctrine. And yet, Augustine tells a narrative which is inclusive by the standard of his own view, i.e., that the truth can be known. The result is that he emphasizes the unity of philosophy, the unity of the Platonic tradition, in a way which allows him to build upon the authority and prestige of his predecessors, Plato and Cicero chief among them. This matters because if Cicero was perceived as the dominant authority in Roman philosophical rhetoric--and he was⁸⁹--then Augustine's authority is augmented by association with Cicero's authority. He gains credibility as a teacher by building on Cicero's reputation, whereas contradicting Cicero might render him suspect in the eyes of students working in the Latin tradition who were conditioned from their earliest grammatical studies to view Cicero as the philosophical exemplar. Thus, Augustine

⁸⁹ Marrou (1956: 233-236).

both competes with Cicero in the production of a specifically Roman philosophical program, and borrows the social capital which Cicero engendered. This holds true to some extent even if Augustine's readers may have interpreted Augustine's claims *viz.* Cicero's Platonism to be fanciful. Perhaps the most important facet of Augustine's emulation of Cicero is ultimately not whether or not he actually believed that he and Cicero agreed, but that in claiming to be a direct successor of Cicero's philosophy, Augustine shows due respect to a hero of Latin literature, philosophy, and education.

Augustine's particular interest in vying with the tradition of Cicero and Plato is also evident in whom he does not cite. Plenty of Christians had promoted philosophical programs before him--perhaps most famous is that of Origen in the third century.⁹⁰ In the third century, too, Minucius Felix published the dialogue *Octavius* in Augustine's native North Africa, which deals with skepticism and, much like the *Contra Academicos*, can be seen as competing with Cicero's dialogues on the same topic. In the early fourth century, Lactantius, the so-called "Christian Cicero"--also from North Africa--published his *Institutes*, which might likewise be read as a systematic attempt at Christian philosophy. And Augustine's own readings of the Platonists were mediated through the translations of his near contemporary Marius Victorinus and the homilies of his mentor Ambrose. Though we cannot be sure Augustine read all of these, he was surely aware of the centuries old tradition of Christian philosophers writing in the tradition of Cicero and Plato. Thus, his choice not to draw explicitly on these authors suggests that he had a particular reason for styling himself in the mold of Cicero and Plato. One possibility is that no system of Christian philosophy had yet been developed enough--or was successful enough--to rival Cicero's authority in late antiquity. Another is audience: that Augustine wrote the Cassiciacum dialogues particularly to appeal to those who were as-yet uncertain of Christianity's ability to hold muster against other alternatives. That one of his main interlocutors, the student Licentius, is depicted as not yet deeply committed to Christian

⁹⁰ Duncan 2013.

philosophy is consistent with this view. At any rate, if Augustine had merely been exploring the relationship between Christianity and philosophy at Cassiciacum, especially as a new convert, one might expect him to engage with the work of Christians--some of whom he had certainly read--on those same topics. That he does not do so reinforces the notion that he had a particular agenda in styling himself in the tradition of Cicero and Plato.

II. *The Topos of Humility*

I turn now to consider what is likely the biggest objection to the idea that Augustine's posturing in the Cassiciacum dialogues is authoritative in any way, let alone that he was presenting himself as a *Platonis aemulus*. This objection is based on what we know of his life at the time he wrote the dialogues: not least, that he was newly retired from teaching rhetoric and newly committed to the church. Based on these circumstances, one might not expect Augustine to lay claim to authority owed to Cicero, or to Plato, particularly when he reinforces--or even crafts--a narrative that stresses the deficiencies of his Christian and philosophic knowledge. In this section, I argue that there are two reasons we ought not take Augustine's self-fashioned humility as evidence that precludes him from assuming an authoritative posture. The first is that humility itself is a characteristic attribute of the ancient philosopher-sage and early Christian saint. The second is that Augustine's understanding of the relationship between classical philosophy and Christianity is such that it would not be inconsistent for him to lay claim to the authority of non-Christian philosophers while at the same time maintaining that he was an "infant" vis-a-vis Christian philosophy. In this sense, one can read his protestations of humility as genuine and yet consistent with the authoritative stance of the *Platonis aemulus*.

There are several aspects of Augustine's account of his conversion and subsequent decision to withdraw to Cassiciacum which contribute to the overall impression that the content of Cassiciacum dialogues would reflect philosophical thought that was not authoritative, but rather represents preliminary explorations. In the introductions to the first two Cassiciacum

dialogues, *Contra Academicos* and *De beata vita*, Augustine recounts his decision to give up his prestigious post as chair of rhetoric at Milan in favor for a turn to philosophical retreat with a cadre of friends and family at a villa in Cassiciacum, central Italy. This retreat represents the combination of two new, interrelated endeavors: that of philosophy and Christianity. Thus, Augustine makes it clear that he was embarking upon a project that was both new and untested at Cassiciacum. Furthermore, Augustine gives the impression that he does so partly under compulsion: both in the dialogues and in the *Confessions*, he emphasizes the fact that he was driven to the retreat not only out of conviction, but due to a bout of ill health.⁹¹ This reinforces the notion that his writing is somewhat the product of happenstance rather than concerted effort.

And yet, from a generic perspective, it is ironic that Augustine's claims to philosophical infancy should so often be taken at face value. Augustine is writing in the tradition of Platonic dialogue--the very tradition which begins with the figure of Socrates, whose authority was located in the claim that he knew nothing. This *topos* of humility is also evident in the tradition of Plotinus. Porphyry tells us he was assiduous in celebrating the birthdays of Socrates and Plato, but refused to permit followers to celebrate his own.⁹² Moreover, in this text Porphyry is at pains to emphasize that Plotinus did not cease to profess that he was not a true philosopher, even after he professed to have experienced ascent to the divine. Thus it is conceivable that Augustine, too, writing in the Platonic tradition, might seek to undermine his own authority. There is a sense in which one could say that Augustine's protestations of humility enhance rather than detract from his representation as an authoritative philosopher, insofar as claims to philosophical infancy were themselves understood to be indicative of wisdom.

Furthermore, Augustine's self-conscious engagement with Cicero's dialogues at Cassiciacum begs a comparison between Augustine's purported reasons for writing philosophy,

⁹¹ *Conf.* 9.2.4.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 2.

as he gives them in the preface of his text, and Cicero's descriptions of his own philosophical turn. Both men describe a shift from public, rhetorical life to retirement in a villa. In this sense, both describe their philosophical pursuits as novel. One of Cicero's most poignant accounts of his turn to philosophy occurs in the introduction of the *Academica*. For him, the core impetus of philosophical retreat was not a tectonic shift in his inner world, but rather in his outer world: civil war. But Cicero describes this war as a "blow of fortune," a turn of phrase which Augustine echoes when he describes his sickness as the final catastrophe which precipitated his retreat. By pointing to the rhetorical parallels between these two accounts, I do not mean to imply that either account--or both--must be historically inaccurate. Life seems to imitate art as much as art imitates life, and I am not sure that parsing the precise amount of historical accuracy in either narrative is the most productive endeavor. At the same time, the fact that both authors describe their turn to philosophy as the result of circumstance rather than the desire to write philosophy should give us pause. The claim to write off-handedly, without forethought or extensive preparation, is a popular trope in the Latin literary tradition. It is possible that Cicero and Augustine are giving disproportionate emphasis to the happenstance of their philosophical endeavors in the same way.

In both cases, it seems unlikely that these men would have devoted so much time and energy to writing a significant number of philosophical dialogues if their primary cause for doing so was circumstantial. Both had received training in philosophy, which was a serious and prestigious discipline. The complex and systematic nature of the philosophical and rhetorical curriculum both Cicero and Augustine incorporate into their dialogues (which I discuss further in Chapter Two) undermines the idea that the work was largely incidental. Cicero's own claims of novelty with respect to writing philosophy in Latin betray a greater ambition, namely, the establishment of a system of philosophy in the Latin tongue. His own protestations to simply be a "compiler" of Greek thought have contributed to the notion in modern scholarship that he is not a "serious" philosopher, but this is a circular argument which depends on ignoring the possibility that he was availing himself of the trope of humility. This *topos* is one which

Augustine would likely have seen to be consistent with his new Christian affiliation. As Derek Krueger has pointed out, the *topos* of humility--of one's inadequacy to write--is common in the introduction to the *vitae* of saints from the fourth century onward. Krueger argues convincingly that this practice can be seen as adoption of ascetic virtues on the part of the author: that is to say, that the act of writing becomes an instance of the ascetic humility embodied by the subjects of the text.⁹³ There is no reason that the same principle could not be applied in a case like Augustine's, where the author writes not the life of another, but his own.

The second major impediment to seeing Augustine's self-representation as authoritative, however, is the idea that as a catechumen he would not assume such a definitive authority vis-a-vis the teachings of the Christian faith. Not only is Augustine as yet unbaptized when he writes the dialogues, but his intellectual conversion to Christianity has taken place in the very recent past. Thus, some have wondered whether he would have been equipped with either the personal knowledge or social authority to produce and publish a systematic articulation of Christian philosophy. Colin Starnes has posed the hypothesis that Augustine writes in the form of a philosophical dialogue precisely because he has not yet been baptized.⁹⁴ For Starnes, Augustine does not yet possess the institutional authority to speak in the primary modes of discourse used in the Church--i.e., homilies and treatises, and so he writes in philosophical dialogue as part of a sort of *praeparatio evangelica*. We must be cautious of assuming that Augustine, who was elevated to presbyter and bishop so quickly after his baptism, would have perceived himself--or been perceived--as lacking institutional authority before his baptism. Nevertheless, the notion that Augustine self-consciously chooses the genre of philosophical dialogue owing to his as-yet undeveloped Christian identity is compelling. It runs counter to the common idea that Augustine's engagement with philosophy is due to a personal journey in which he himself is still negotiating the relationship between Christianity and Platonism. In

⁹³ Krueger (2004: esp. 94-109).

⁹⁴ Starnes (1992).

Starnes' account, Augustine is not negotiating the relationship between Christianity and philosophy, but rather sees a clearly defined boundary between the two.

One weakness of this argument, however, is the fact that Augustine continues to write philosophical dialogues for several years after his baptism--dialogues which clearly continue the themes and questions begun at Cassiciacum. Therefore, we cannot attribute Augustine's generic choice solely to his status as catechumen. Moreover, Starnes' argument does account for the extent to which Augustine saw Christianity to be philosophy; in Chapter Two and throughout this dissertation, I argue that Augustine's embrace of the philosophical tradition in these dialogues reflects his interest in demonstrating the ways in which Christianity can compete with other philosophical traditions on their own terms. Thus, if the dialogues reflect a *praeparatio evangelica* on Augustine's part, the preparation might be not so much for himself as for his audience.

Between the idea that Augustine does not depict himself as authoritative and the notion that he claims authority as a representative of Christianity there lies a third possibility: that Augustine represents himself as authoritative with respect to his philosophical predecessors, but not necessarily as a Christian *per se*. This option is consistent with the timeline Augustine gives in the *Confessions*: his retreat to Cassiciacum occurs after Augustine has experienced a Neoplatonic ascent to the divine in Book 7 but before his baptism and "Christian" ascent, which famously leads to a shared vision of the divine with his mother Monica in Book 9.⁹⁵ In the lives of philosophers, accounts of visions of or union with the divine are one of the most potent signals of holiness which prove the credibility of the subject as a purveyor of wisdom. Augustine's account of his Platonist ascent in Book 7 of the *Confessions* is often seen as an unsuccessful and insufficient experience of divinity. This is in part because he himself

⁹⁵ At present I am setting aside questions of the *historicity* of Augustine's conversion and the place of ascent narratives within it. This discussion traces its focal point back to Courcelle (1954). For an overview of the historicity of Augustine's conversion scene, see Ferrari (1989: 235-60).

emphasizes how fleeting it was, and how incomplete: he did not understand the humility of Christ's descent necessary to maintain the state of grace which he tasted.

However, if one compares Augustine's account of his "Platonic" vision of the divine with accounts of other philosophers who laid claim to the same, then Augustine's experience in Book 7 takes on a much more authoritative bent. For instance, Plotinus tells us in the *Enneads* that he achieved ascent to the divine only four times in his life. Porphyry repeats this statistic in the *Life of Plotinus*.⁹⁶ Thus, Augustine's description of his vision in Book 7 as "fleeting" does not render it less authoritative than the experiences of Plotinus--in giving the account of ascent, he is essentially laying claim to the same authority which Plotinus does. In setting forth Christianity as the fulfillment of philosophy, Augustine then makes a space in which he might "compete" with other philosophers and simultaneously profess that he himself has not reached the highest level of philosophy, i.e., ascent towards and union with God.⁹⁷

It is, perhaps, impossible to speak of how Augustine's ascents play into his self-representation as authoritative (or not) without referring to Peter Brown's famous argument that Augustine's reading of Paul in the 390s impacted the way he viewed the possibility of salvation.⁹⁸ On Brown's reading, the Augustine of Cassiciacum was far more optimistic about the potential for experiencing a constant state of enlightenment on earth, whereas the Augustine of the *Confessions* was far more pessimistic about this possibility. While I do not think that a definitive answer to this question is directly relevant to this project, it is perhaps worth asking how Augustine's self-deprecating remarks and indirect comparisons with Plotinus and Cicero fit into this picture. Brown's claims seem to be based on Augustine's protestations that he had not yet achieved the pinnacle of philosophy, which Brown calls "the rapt contemplation of the

⁹⁶ *Vita Plotini* 23.

⁹⁷ On deification in Augustine, see Meconi (2013), Keating (2004: 238), Bonner (1986). On mysticism: (Louth 1981: 137).

⁹⁸ See esp. Brown (1967: 147-156).

ideal philosopher.”⁹⁹ And yet, if Augustine’s very models did not claim to have achieved a constant state of enlightenment--and they did not--any belief Augustine had in such a potential would be a novelty indeed. It seems altogether more likely that gestures to the possibility of such a state are themselves part of the *topos* of humility--i.e., that authors like Plotinus and Augustine may have claimed not to have achieved the pinnacle of philosophy as a counterbalance to the accounts of divine ascent and enlightenment which instantiated their authority.

III. A System of Philosophy

The final aspect of Augustine’s self-positioning as a *Platonis aemuli* which I would like to discuss in this chapter is his bid to produce an entire system of philosophy. The implication of this for our reading of the Cassiciacum dialogues is that Augustine is not merely exploring philosophical questions in an *ad hoc* manner; he is expounding those ideas within a discrete framework that itself has precedent in the Platonic-Ciceronian tradition. I will present the evidence that Augustine might well have considered the production of a comprehensive body of work to be a characteristic of the true philosopher as conceived in the Hellenistic period onward. I will then argue that in the third Cassiciacum dialogue, *De ordine*, Augustine’s self-presentation as an authoritative teacher--and author of a *corpus*--is consistent with the representations of a just such a philosopher, namely, one who exhibits not only a virtuous life, but also produces a full *corpus*.

Texts within the traditions of both Plotinus and Cicero, i.e., the two *Platonis aemuli* Augustine emulates most directly, suggest the idea that a comprehensive *corpus* is a key aspect of the true philosopher’s work. In the *Life of Plotinus* 20, Porphyry emphasizes Plotinus’ authority by quoting a supposed letter of Longinus, in which Longinus evaluates the work of

⁹⁹ Brown (1967: 147). Harrison (2006: 64) also questions whether Brown’s philosophers ever believed this ideal could be achieved in a permanent state on earth.

various philosophers within the Platonic tradition. Notably, Longinus is concerned with delineating not so much what precise texts these philosophers wrote, but whether they wrote and then if so, whether they wrote systematic texts or side-pieces. At the end of this evaluation, he concludes:

The ones who shone forth in zeal for writing by treating a full set of questions, and who used their own manner of theory, were Plotinus and Gentilianus Amelius. The former restored the first principles of Pythagoras and Plato, as was fitting, to a clearer interpretation than those before him.¹⁰⁰

Three elements of this passage are worth noting with respect to the persona of an authoritative philosopher. First, Longinus notes that Plotinus covered a “full” set of questions--that he was working systematically. Second, he says that Plotinus and Gentilianus Amelius, alone of the philosophers he had mentioned, brought their own theory to this system. This is a marked contrast to examples of other philosophers whom Longinus discusses in this context, many of whom merely reproduced or commentated on doctrines of Plato without adding a personal take onto them. But third, the fact that Longinus attributes some degree of originality to Plotinus does not detract from Plotinus’ ability to act as a successor of Plato--Longinus counts him the best of these. That Porphyry includes this supposed excerpt from Longinus in the *Life of Plotinus* is telling; it supports Porphyry’s own claim that Plotinus was Plato’s successor. Finally, Longinus notes that Plotinus “restored the principles of Pythagoras and Plato.” This is an instance of the common practice of assimilating the thought of the two; but, as will become apparent in Chapter Two, the assimilation of the two is associated with discrete subjects within Platonic *corpora*. Thus, it is possible Porphyry is referencing not only the fact of a *corpus*, but a particular type of Platonic *corpus*.

While we do not know whether Augustine read the *Vita Plotini*, the fact that a philosopher’s *corpus* was important in that strand of Platonic emulation and in Cicero suggests that Augustine may have inherited this idea from both streams of influence (or more). Within

¹⁰⁰ *Vita Plotini* 20.68-73. Οἱ δὲ καὶ πλήθει προβλημάτων ἃ μετεχειρίσαντο τὴν σπουδὴν τοῦ γράφειν ἀποδειξάμενοι καὶ τρόπον θεωρίας ἰδίῳ χρησάμενοι Πλωτῖνός εἰσι καὶ Γεντιλιανὸς Ἀμέλιος· ὃς μὲν τὰς Πυθαγορείους ἀρχὰς καὶ Πλατωνικάς, ὡς ἐδόκει, πρὸς σαφεστέραν τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ καταστησάμενος ἐξηγήσιν·

his dialogues, Cicero speaks repeatedly of the value and format of a complete “system” of philosophy. In the *Academica*, the character of Varro sets the stage for inter-school competition by describing Xenocrates and Aristotle as the twin successors of Plato. He says of the two schools:

Both were filled with the abundance of Plato and formulated, as it were, a sure rule of doctrine: and this was full and replete. But they abandoned that Socratic practice of speaking with doubt about all things and blocking out any affirmative statement. Therefore there came about, although Socrates did not approve of it in the least, a certain art of philosophy, order of subjects, and description of doctrine.¹⁰¹

In this passage Cicero, like Porphyry, presents the idea that Plato’s formulation of doctrine—in this case, as transmitted first through Xenocrates and Aristotle—was considered full and complete. It is the standard against which all doctrines are judged. And then he gives a specific formulation for how this doctrine was presented: there is an art to it, a subject order, and a clear description. Given that, in the Cassiciacum dialogues, Augustine is vying with Plotinus’ work as the *Libri Platonicorum* and with Cicero’s philosophical dialogues, we might expect his self-representation as a systematic compiler of a philosophical system as part of that competition.

The most obvious references to a “systematic” program of education in the Cassiciacum dialogues are to be found in the speech at the end of *De ordine*, which is set up as a recommendation for Augustine’s ideal program of study.¹⁰² It is the second half of the speech—Augustine’s description of the liberal arts—in which most readers find evidence of a systematic program of study, not least because Augustine later describes a plan to write treatises on each of the liberal arts. However, it is the first half of the speech I would like to consider at present. Here, Augustine’s language and content are crafted in such a way as to signal to his readers that he is working within a tradition of authoritative philosophers. Within this context, Augustine hints at the relationship between each of the three scenic dialogues and this overarching

¹⁰¹ Ac. 1.17-18, trans. adapted from Rackham. *Sed utrique Platonis ubertate completi certam quandam disciplinae formulam composuerunt et eam quidem plenam ac refertam, illam autem Socraticam dubitanter de omnibus rebus et nulla adfirmatione adhibita consuetudinem disserendi reliquerunt. Ita facta est, quod minime Socrates probabat, ars quaedam philosophiae et rerum ordo et descriptio disciplinae.*

¹⁰² DO 2.8.25ff.

program. As a result, the speech can be read as a map of the Cassiciacum dialogues; this suggests that the entirety of the dialogues, and not just Augustine's speech on the liberal arts, is part of a systematic program of education. Insofar as, in this speech, Augustine presents a picture of an authoritative philosopher, we can judge his own performance as a *Platonis aemulus* by the standards he outlines here.

At the outset of the speech Augustine divides philosophy into two parts: life (*vita*) and learning (*eruditio*). Thus, in the first part of the speech he details the kind of life a student of philosophy ought to live. He proceeds to list a series of practical precepts by which students may lay the foundation for philosophy. Carol Harrison has noted that the list is reminiscent of prescriptions for students in Clement's *Stromata*, a didactic and educational text par excellence.¹⁰³ More generally, such precepts for living were considered prerequisites of catharsis for students wishing to pursue any higher philosophy.¹⁰⁴ By including this list at the opening of his philosophical program, Augustine signals his adherence to the ascetic phenomenon by which philosophers honed their students and winnowed their numbers. Readers of the Cassiciacum dialogues have noted that throughout the course of the narrative, Augustine often draws readers' attention to students' behavior and activity in ways which align with the precepts he gives in the speech--for instance, the precept that they avoid unnecessarily quarreling, or that they overlook one another's faults. Thus, Augustine's precepts stand as the first way in which the "education speech" acts as a rubric for the dialogues as a whole.

Augustine transitions relatively quickly from the "life" portion of his speech to a discussion of "learning." He subdivides "learning" into two categories, authority (*auctoritas*) and reason (*ratio*). In terms of Augustine's personal educational program, we must note that these two categories of life and learning map onto the content of *De beata vita* and *Contra Academicos*, respectively. In other words, it is here that Augustine signals that the education

¹⁰³Harrison (2006: 38).

¹⁰⁴On spiritual exercises "as a way of life," the classic is Hadot (rev. 1995).

speech maps onto the preceding Cassiciacum dialogues, not only in a general way, but in terms of concrete themes. That he is thinking of his dialogue on the happy life in the *vita* portion of the *De ordine* speech is indicated by the fact that at the end of his discussion of rules for life, he makes a reference to 1 Corinthians 13:13, saying students should guard “faith, hope, and love.” This is the same reference the character of Augustine’s mother Monica makes at the end of *De beata vita*. Likewise, his division of learning into the two categories of *ratio* and *auctoritas* harks back to the end of the *Contra Academicos*, in which Augustine gives the well-known proclamation of the same binary which we discussed above.¹⁰⁵ In Chapter Two, I argue that he does so at the end of *Contra Academicos* precisely because the central questions of the dialogue are whether the skeptics are right that truth cannot be found, and what *way* the truth may be found--i.e., through what precise balance of authority and reason.

There is another aspect of Augustine’s division of education into authority and reason (*ratio*) which speaks not to his own educational program, but rather to the ways in which he fits into the tradition of Cicero. Cicero uses the terms *auctoritas* and *ratio* together with considerable frequency. On multiple occasions, he uses them to refer to the tradition of a particular school *in toto*. In other words, for Cicero, schools of philosophy are characterized by their particular combination of authority and reason. In the narrative of Platonic succession which Cicero gives in the *Academica* and which we have discussed above, Cicero uses the terms authority and reason to refer to the totality of Plato’s teaching.¹⁰⁶ That is, these two terms represent the tradition of Platonic doctrine which was passed down to his successors. Thus, Augustine’s use of the specific terms *auctoritas* and *ratio* can be seen as yet another way in which he builds his own narrative of Platonic succession upon the shoulders of Cicero. When Cicero describes the balance between authority and reason within a given philosophical school, he depicts the relationship between the two as one of complementarity and tension. They represent two

¹⁰⁵ CA 3.20.43.

¹⁰⁶ Cicero, *Acad.* 1.34 *Speusippus autem et Xenocrates, qui primi Platonis rationem auctoritatemque susceperant.*

competing modes of teaching, and he often problematizes philosophers' use of the balance between the two. Perhaps the most well-known instance of this phenomenon occurs in the preface to *De natura deorum*, where Cicero is intent on justifying his own decision to teach philosophy by following the skeptical practice--started by Socrates--of concealing his own view. Here, he criticizes the Pythagoreans, for whom, he said, "preached the value of belief to such an extent that authority reigned without reason."¹⁰⁷ By contrast, in the second book of the *Academica*, the character of Lucullus criticizes what he views as the extreme use of reason, arguing that it is impossible to deny the encroachment of authority in teaching altogether.¹⁰⁸

The stance Augustine takes in his education speech with respect to the balance between authority and reason is closer to that advocated by Lucullus. Augustine states that reason is epistemically superior to authority, but that no one can learn how to exercise their reason without first trusting an authoritative teacher. This is another way in which Augustine holds up a mirror to his own practice. His conclusion that one requires a good teacher prompts him to describe the attributes of what teacher a student should choose. Augustine advocates for one who "shows many proofs for their arguments" and "does not live otherwise from how they teach." The Cassiciacum dialogues as a whole can be seen as a series of logical proofs for the arguments Augustine is making, and the prefaces which introduce them offer exemplary tales from Augustine's own life which relate to the subject matter he is teaching. Thus, Augustine intimates that he is attempting to live up to the ideal he professes. But the mirror Augustine holds up here is not one of his own making. The Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus makes the same prescriptions for a model teacher--that he should use a certain amount of proofs, and live according to his teachings in his own introductory philosophical texts.¹⁰⁹ It is possible that Augustine read Rufus, but more likely that both are drawing upon a common *trope* of the ideal

¹⁰⁷ Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1.10, *tantum opinio praeiudicata poterat, ut etiam sine ratione valeret auctoritas*.

¹⁰⁸ Cicero, *Luc.* 60.

¹⁰⁹ See Reydam-Schils (2015: 127-128).

teacher. Either way, it seems clear that Augustine's treatment of authority and reason does not arise *ex nihilo*: Augustine owes his particular articulation of the relationship between authority and ratio to Cicero's authority, he owes his description of what that authority entails to a broader tradition of philosophical education. In this way, his model of learning does not exist solely to advertise his advice to students, but to advertise that he has developed a sophisticated perspective on an issue central to other philosophical programs.

CHAPTER TWO

HOW TO WRITE A CORPUS

If Augustine is indeed a *Platonis aemulus* in the sense which I argued in Chapter One, and if this emulation involves the publication of a “Platonic” corpus, the question which follows is: of what does this corpus consist? The Cassiciacum dialogues have often been read as first forays in the development of a distinctly Christian model of education. In this chapter, I make the case that the Cassiciacum dialogues are also part of a “Platonic” curriculum which is both broader and more systematic than the educational aspects of the dialogues have been understood to be. In this reading, the Cassiciacum dialogues form an integral part of Augustine’s version of a “Platonic *corpus*” according to the model of metaphysical ascent—the type of ordering preferred by Platonists who. Arranged and wrote commentaries on the Platonic dialogues from the first through sixth centuries C.E.¹¹⁰ The implication of this argument is that the entirety of the dialogues are themselves evidence of a sophisticated engagement with a larger educational paradigm rooted in the philosophical tradition. Thus, one aim of this chapter is to establish the extent to which Augustine’s *corpus* is part and parcel of his Platonic emulation; another is to lay the foundation for exploring, in the chapters to come, how the nuts and bolts of each dialogue are shaped by the paradigm of that Platonic curriculum.

Relatively little scholarly work has been done on the question of the development of a “Platonic curriculum” as far as a discrete order of works is concerned.¹¹¹ What investigating has been done has been confined to a consideration of the organizers of the Platonic dialogues

¹¹⁰ Poster (1998: 282-298), Tarrant (2014: 15-29; 2018: 101-113); Tarrant (2018: 102) sees Plato as “core curriculum” starting in the second century CE, but the development of corpus arrangements dates back at least to Andronicus of Rhodes in the first century BCE.

¹¹¹ Far more work has focused on doxographies (e.g. Betegh 2000: 25-38) and the competitions between philosophers in writing commentaries on individual works (Sedley 1997, Baltussen 2007). This is perhaps a function of the fact that modern readers tend to be more interested in discrete ideas of individuals than in the containers and paradigms which hold those ideas.

themselves.¹¹² The works of authors who consider themselves Platonists--and particularly Roman authors such as Cicero and Apuleius--are most often read in terms of what doctrines or thought the author adopts from Plato. The question of whether or how *Platonis aemuli* themselves wrote or arranged their works according to organizational patterns used by Plato or arrangers of the Platonic corpus has not been explored aside from cursory references to parallels between, say, Porphyry's arrangement of Plotinus' corpus and the ordering some corpus arrangers promoted for Plato's dialogues. To my knowledge, there has been no inquiry at all into whether Roman Platonists such as Apuleius or Augustine applied aspects of these Platonic orderings to their own *corpora*. One reason for this must be the modern assumption that "philosophy" largely involves the working out of individuals' own thoughts and arguments with respect to a set of core questions; this is what scholars most often connote when they refer to Augustine and Apuleius' "Platonism." But another reason that the structure of Augustine's *corpus* has not been studied vis-à-vis the ordering of Platonic dialogues is likely the lack of consensus with respect to what a Platonic "curriculum" entails. In the imperial period, authors put forward competing models of *corpus* arrangement; their own apparent lack of consensus has, perhaps, contributed to the idea in modern scholarship that there is no "one" model of a Platonic corpus. And yet, as I hope to show below, there is indeed a common thread of subject matter within this "metaphysical ascent narrative" to identify what would, for Augustine, have been a recognizably "Platonic" body of material--and to identify the fact that he follows precisely this.

In this chapter, I make the argument for reading the Cassiciacum dialogues as a "Platonic" *corpus* in two parts. In Part One, I establish the sense in which Augustine's *corpus* arrangement can be understood as "Platonic." I argue that Augustine's own arrangement of his texts in the *Retractationes* follows the model of metaphysical ascent popularized by arrangers of the Platonic *corpus* from the Hellenistic period onwards--a project which culminated in a

¹¹² See footnote one, above.

curriculum used by Syrianus, the Head of the Athenian Academy at the same time when Augustine wrote his *Retractationes*. I then compare this model of metaphysical ascent with the *corpus* arrangements published by Porphyry and Cicero in order to demonstrate that Augustine's adoption of this model does not necessarily represent emulation of a single author or even Platonic school, but should rather be understood as part of a more widespread Platonic paradigm. Thus, Augustine's own articulation of this paradigm can be understood as his particular contribution to a model which had broad appeal as part of the contest for "Platonic" credibility in late antiquity. Because the question of *corpus* arrangement is closely linked to what has been a longstanding debate over the order of the Cassiciacum dialogues, at the end of this section I consider the implications of Augustine's metaphysical ordering of the dialogues with respect to that debate.

In Part Two of this chapter, I develop the argument that the Platonic metaphysical ascent, rather than Augustine's discussion of a programmatic study of liberal arts, should be understood as the overarching educational paradigm of the Cassiciacum dialogues. This argument is based on the case that physics as a genre forms the crux of the metaphysical ascent narratives. Though it is well known that Augustine's third Cassiciacum dialogue, *De ordine*, considers questions of metaphysics, I show here that the text is more deeply implicated in the Platonic tradition of texts on physics than has been fully appreciated. *De ordine*, as Augustine's text on "physics," should be read as a microcosm of his educational program as a whole. Understanding it as such is the key to interpreting the integrity of the Cassiciacum dialogues *in toto*; the particular questions and topics Augustine treats there as part of the core subject matter of Platonic physics ultimately dictate the questions and narrative arc of the dialogues as a group. Furthermore, it is within the context of *De ordine* as a Platonic text on physics that the relationship between Augustine's description of the seven liberal arts ought to be understood. Augustine's use of the liberal arts fits neatly within this schema and can be read, at least to some extent, as native to the genre of physics. Within this context of liberal arts as part of physics I lay the groundwork for the idea I will explore throughout the rest of the dissertation,

namely that the Cassiciacum dialogues involve a sophisticated integration of rhetorical education that was more deeply embedded in the early stages of a Platonic curriculum--broadly construed--than is often supposed.

In the conclusion of this chapter, I consider the implications of reading Augustine's dialogues as part of the metaphysical ascent narrative with respect to how we read the "early Augustine," what it means to write at the early stages of a curriculum, and the significance of this curricular investment for Augustine's self-positioning as an authoritative teacher and *Platonis aemulus*. The picture which begins to emerge is one in which the Cassiciacum dialogues engage with a common and important set of questions which align to the beginning of a Platonic educational program, which in turn supports the argument that the Cassiciacum dialogues' reputation as *juvenilia* must be re-framed to account for the fact that Augustine was directing the work specifically towards novices in philosophy.

I. The Schema of Metaphysical Ascent

My first task is to illustrate how Augustine's dialogues follow a Platonic model of metaphysical ascent. It is generally thought that the development of a consistent Platonic curriculum began in earnest in the early Roman empire, with Andronicus of Rhodes' attempt at organizing the body of Aristotle's works.¹¹³ In the first century C.E., Thrasyllus organized the Platonic corpus into tetralogies, and this is where the narrative of Platonic *corpus* arrangement generally begins, though the scholarly consensus is that Thrasyllus' work was based upon earlier models.¹¹⁴ "Metaphysical ascent" is one of several possible *corpus* arrangements that developed in the wake of Thrasyllus' ordering, and refers to the arrangement of Platonic

¹¹³ Tarrant (2014: 18-20) believes that later imperial authors rejected the possibility of a definitive corpus arrangement, but his argument is drawn from the fact that they mention flaws with the idea of a *single* type of arrangement, not so much the fact of arrangement in and of itself.

¹¹⁴ Tarrant (2014: 16).

corpora in an order which mimics the structure of the cosmos.¹¹⁵ Here, texts begin with topics pertaining to the sensible world, often encapsulated in the divisions of philosophy “logic” and “ethics,” progress to “physics,” which treats the cosmos as a combination of earth and heaven, and culminate in the study of metaphysics (sometimes referred to as theology), i.e., the knowledge of God and the soul.¹¹⁶ Other models of arrangement included chronological and historical in antiquity as today; and it is important to note that the “competition” between these models was not always exclusive, in the sense that at least some arrangers of the corpora felt that multiple models of arrangement could co-exist harmoniously. Overall, however, scholars have noted that Neoplatonists tended to favor metaphysical ascent over other modes of reading Platonic dialogues; it was considered the highest and most theological mode of reading.

For all the differences in the particulars of how various arrangers ordered the Platonic *corpus*, two core components of the model are in evidence from the earliest arrangements, and persist into late antiquity. These are the association of the soul’s ascent from sensible to intelligible with Pythagorean number theory,¹¹⁷ and the correlation between that ascent and the “Stoic” divisions of philosophy into logic, ethics, physics, and metaphysics. For instance, Thrasyllus, who was court astrologer to the Emperor Tiberius and is credited with first developing the tetralogic orderings of Platonic dialogues, favored Pythagorean number mysticism and emphasized that the soul’s ascent “reflects a progression upwards from the sublunary through the planetary, towards the sidereal sphere.”¹¹⁸ In his second century C.E.

¹¹⁵ Other types of arrangements include date of composition, dramatic date, and pedagogical order. For an excellent discussion of these types and how have been used or evaluated by ancient and modern readers of Plato, see Poster 1998. Types other than metaphysical are aired and rejected by the author of the Neoplatonic Anonymous *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, Ch. 24-25.

¹¹⁶ This is a simplification of the evidence compiled in Tarrant (2014 & 2018). The common thread of this progression is evident based on Tarrant’s synthesis of evidence for corpus arrangements from the first century B.C.E. onward, but Tarrant himself does not bring this point to the fore, perhaps because he is more interested in the nuanced differences between corpus arrangements rather than tracing the general consistency of their overall arc.

¹¹⁷ On number as central to Neoplatonist metaphysics, see Slaveva-Griffin 2014.

¹¹⁸ Poster (1998: 292).

handbook of Platonic philosophy, the *Didaskalikos*, Alcinous clearly connects this philosophical ascent with the Stoic divisions of philosophy. The early stages of Alcinous' order include the categories of *protrepsis*, *catharsis*, and *maieusis* before he progresses to ethics and finally physics and metaphysics; on the surface, this may register a significant difference from the order of logic, ethics, physics, and metaphysics which would become standard in late antiquity. However, if we look closely at the questions treated in work on the category of "logic" in these many corpora, the *protreptic* and *cathartic* elements inherent in the core subject matter of that philosophical division become apparent, effectively muting the difference in the terminology used for these early categories of ascent in different Platonic corpora.¹¹⁹ In Chapter Three, I will offer some examples of the *protrepsis* and *catharsis* inherent in the logic Augustine uses in *Contra Academicos*. From here, the corpora all trend toward the inclusion of dialogues on ethics, despite the fact the number of dialogues and specific dialogues chosen, vary. The most important commonality across *corpus* arrangements, however, is the inclusion of the *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*--the two most important dialogues on physics and metaphysics--near the top of the lists.¹²⁰

To contextualize Augustine's use of this general model, I will begin with the evidence for this model in the curriculum of his contemporary Syrianus, who became head of the Platonic Academy in Athens in 432. Insofar as the Academy had the most direct claim to the succession of Platonic authority, we may say that Syrianus' program reflects the quintessentially "Platonic" model of education in late antiquity. Our evidence for Syrianus' program comes from two sources, namely *The Life of Proclus* by Marinus, and the Anonymous *Prolegomena to the Study of Platonic Philosophy*.¹²¹ Marinus relates the program of study which Proclus undertook as a

¹¹⁹ For instance, though Thrasyllus' first tetralogy was an introduction to philosophy, the second was "epistemological," in that it considered the meaning of names, purging of false knowledge, and introduction to learning methods (Sedley 2009; Tarrant 2014: 16).

¹²⁰ Annas (1999: 5); Tarrant (2014:19-20) notes that the *Timaeus* was at the top of this ascending order in the imperial period; the *Parmenides* became important to Neoplatonists.

¹²¹ Westerink 2011.

student of Syrianus. This program began with the quote “minor mysteries”--namely, a study of Aristotle’s texts, before progressing to the “major mysteries,”--namely, the dialogues of Plato. The Anonymous *Prolegomena* supplements this picture with the specific nature of the Platonic segment of the curriculum. There, the evidence attributed to Proclus himself is that Syrianus used the twelve-text series of Platonic dialogues developed by Iamblichus in the early 4th century C.E.; this series became the standard in Platonic education for the following two centuries.

For our purposes, the specific sequence of Aristotelian and Platonic texts Syrianus followed is significant because its thematic repetitions of the divisions of philosophy illustrate the centrality of physics and metaphysics within the Platonic paradigm Augustine follows. Because Iamblichus’ 12-dialogue series was actually divided into two parts, the minor and major mysteries of Syrianus’ curriculum can in fact be understood as three stages of metaphysical ascent.

<i>Syrianus’ Platonic Curriculum</i>		
Cycle One	Aristotelian Texts	Logic
		Ethics
		Physics
		Metaphysics
Cycle Two	Iamblichus’ Sequence of Ten	Ethics (<i>Alcibiades, Gorgias, Phaedo</i>)
		Physics (<i>Cratylus, Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman</i>)
		Metaphysics (<i>Phaedrus, Symposium, Philebus</i>)
Cycle Three	Iamblichus’ Sequence of Two	Physics (<i>Timaeus</i>)
		Metaphysics (<i>Parmenides</i>)

About the first stage, Marinus tells us that students studied Aristotelian texts on logic, ethics, physics, and metaphysics. Of the second stage, the *Anonymous Prolegomena* quotes Proclus as describing Iamblichus' sequence of ten dialogues as progressing from texts on ethics, to physics, and finally to metaphysics.¹²² The third stage of Syrianus' program is comprised only of the *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*, the so-called "perfect" dialogues of Plato which represent the pinnacle of study of physics and metaphysics, respectively.

In its entirety, Syrianus' program enacts a principle I call "recursive ascent." Recursive ascent can be understood as the third core characteristic of corpora in the ascent narrative, along with the use of Pythagorean number theory and the divisions of philosophy. It refers to the fact that each stage of study repeats the topics present in the divisions of philosophy from the previous stage, except that the first topic of the previous stage is omitted. Phase one of Syrianus' program moves from logic to ethics to physics to metaphysics; phase two from ethics, to physics, to metaphysics, and phase three culminates in the study of physics and metaphysics alone. The supremacy of physics and metaphysics are thereby instantiated both in the fact that they represent the culmination of philosophical ascent, but also in the fact that study of these topics is repeated most frequently.

In 426 or 427, only five years after Syrianus assumed his role as head of Plato's Academy, Augustine published the *Retractations*. The *Retractations* serve as a catalogue of Augustine's previous works, with descriptions of each and an evaluation of their merits. The first four texts listed in the *Retractations* are the Cassiciacum dialogues. This list follows the same sequence of divisions of philosophy evident in the first (Aristotelian) stage of Syrianus' program. Augustine makes no overt mention of the correspondence between his dialogues and the divisions of philosophy, an omission which has likely contributed to the fact that the

¹²² There is some dispute in modern scholarship as to which Platonic dialogues in Iamblichus' sequence fall under which branch of philosophy. Tarrant (2014: 23), who sees the first three as ethical and the remainder as physical and metaphysical, whereas Westerink (2011: xxxviii-xl) ranks only three as physical and three as metaphysical. Tarrant's conclusion seems altogether more likely.

“Platonic” nature of his orderings has not been noted before now. And yet, the affinity of each Cassiciacum dialogue with its respective divisions of philosophy is evident in the title and/or main theme of each. Rather than directly advertise the recursive groupings of this model in the *Retractationes*, Augustine frames each “stage” of texts according to where he claims to have written them. In this way, Augustine’s straightforward organizing principle is somewhat obscured to the modern reader. The texts of the first stage were all written, he tells us, at Milan.

Cycle One - Milan	
<i>Contra Academicos</i>	Logic
<i>De beata vita</i>	Ethics
<i>De ordine</i>	Physics
<i>Soliloquies</i> <i>De immortalitate animae</i>	Metaphysics

Logic as a branch of ancient philosophy is fundamentally concerned with epistemology, and is divided into the parts of rhetoric and dialectic. Epistemology is at the heart of the first Cassiciacum dialogue, *Contra Academicos*. The central question of the dialogue is whether truth can be known, and as I argue in Chapter Three, Augustine explores this question precisely by problematizing his use of dialectic and rhetoric throughout this text. The second Cassiciacum dialogue, *De beata vita*, predictably pursues the question of what constitutes the happy life--that is to say, the central topic of ancient ethics. The title of the third dialogue, *De ordine*, alludes to the ancient idea that the physical universe serves as the paradigm of order and harmony.¹²³ Augustine confirms that model does indeed serve as the theoretical backdrop of the work in the introductory epistle, where he reminds readers that the term universe derives from *unum*, one, and that the man who understands unity attains happiness.¹²⁴ The subject of the fourth

¹²³ Though the term *cosmos* did not originally apply to this paradigm. Mace (2019: 42-61) argues that Parmenides adapted the term from Archaic poetry to cosmology.

¹²⁴ DO 1.2.1.

dialogue, *Soliloquies*, is the immortality of the soul; God and the soul are the core themes of ancient metaphysics. By Augustine's own account in the *Retractationes*, the fifth text he lists there, *De immortalitate animae*, is a continuation of the *Soliloquies*; this text is also concerned, as the title suggests, with the nature of the soul. Thus, it is these five texts which comprise the first "recursion" of Augustine's Platonic ascent model.

Cycle Two - Rome	
<i>De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de mor. Manicheorum</i>	Ethics
<i>De quantitate animae</i>	Metaphysics
<i>De libero arbitrio</i>	Physics

The second cycle was written in Rome after Augustine's baptism. As was the case for the second stage of Syrianus' curriculum--namely, Iamblichus' sequence of ten Platonic dialogues--the first division of philosophy, "logic," drops off of the recursive pattern. The first text of this cycle, *De moribus*, covers subject matter which is remarkably similar to that of *De beata vita*--that is to say, the subject matter of ethics, namely what the "good" consists in and what, therefore, comprises the happy life. The next text in Augustine's sequence is *De quantitate animae*, in which he wrote "an investigation and discussion of many things pertaining to the soul."¹²⁵ This is followed by *De libero arbitrio*, in which he treats the question of the source of evil--namely, the same question he treats in *De ordine*.¹²⁶ In the final section of this chapter I will show that the problem of evil is central to questions of physics, and so we can see *De libero arbitrio* as a text on physics in Augustine's second cycle. That physics and metaphysics are flipped in the order of this sequence is likely a function of the nature of Augustine's treatment of the soul in *De quantitate*. He is specifically concerned in this dialogue with the incorporeality of the soul as

¹²⁵*Retrac.* 1.7.1 Trans. Bogan.

¹²⁶ Kenyon (2018: 169-229) is an excellent discussion of the problem of evil in this dialogue.

opposed to the corporeality of the body. Since the corporeality of the body is closely linked to questions of ethics, I suspect Augustine placed it next to *De moribus* to throw this relationship into sharper relief.

At this point, based on Syrianus' curriculum, one would predict Augustine to include a third cycle of texts which concern only physics and metaphysics. This is indeed what happens in the ordering Augustine gives in the *Retractationes*. Augustine now lists the texts he wrote while a bishop in Africa, starting with *De genesi adversus Manicheos libri duo*.

Cycle Three - Africa	
<i>De genesi contra Manichaeos</i>	Physics
<i>De musica</i>	Metaphysics

The "physics" content of this text is suggested in the very title, for Genesis is of course the Hebrew account of the creation of the world, as the *Timaeus* is Plato's. Furthermore, Augustine's description of *De genesi* emphasizes this point: that "God is the Supreme Good and Unchangeable Creator of all changeable natures and that no nature or substance is an evil."¹²⁷ This is essentially the same subject matter--namely the problem of evil--which he covered in *De ordine* in the first sequence and *De libero arbitrio* in the second. Finally, Augustine lists *De musica*. In his description of *De immortalitate animae*, Augustine had noted that when he was in Milan he had intended to write treatises on each of the seven liberal arts. This is the only one he claims to have completed in its entirety, and the only one he includes in the *Retractationes*. While in his entry on *De immortalitate*, Augustine tells us that the text is about rhythm--that is, poetic rhythm and meter--here he gives a description which focuses on number theory and the means by which number teaches about God.¹²⁸ This is the central content of Pythagorean/Platonizing

¹²⁷ *Retrac.* 1.9.1 Trans. Bogan.

¹²⁸ *Retract.* 1.10.1 trans. Bogan. "Next, as I mentioned above....how, from corporeal and spiritual but changeable numbers, one comes to the knowledge of unchangeable numbers which are already in unchangeable truth itself and how, in a way, the 'invisible attributes' of God, 'being understood through the things that are made, are clearly seen.'"

metaphysics, and thus, perhaps surprisingly, the treatise *De musica* represents the “highest” text in Augustine’s Platonic curriculum, occupying the same space as the *Parmenides* and the Iamblichean list adopted by Syrianus.¹²⁹

At this point in the *Retractationes*, Augustine’s cycle of texts has matched that of Syrianus. Perhaps surprisingly, Augustine then begins the cycle anew with texts of a more overtly Christian tone; effectively, he has even more recursions than Syrianus. I will reserve discussion of this aspect of the texts for the conclusion the chapter; this is more relevant to Augustine’s creation of a “Christian” educational program and to the persistence of the ascent narrative in his corpus as a whole, and not essential for understanding the sense in which his early dialogues may be seen as part of a broad Platonic tradition.

Now that we have seen that Augustine organized his earliest texts according to a Platonic model of metaphysical ascent, the question which follows is how he came to do so. It is unlikely that Augustine was aware of Syrianus’ educational program; he knew little Greek and we have no reason to believe he was connected to the Academy at Athens. Rather than engage in the likely futile exercise of attempting to identify a single model for Augustine’s texts, I will now offer the curricular orderings of the two philosophers Augustine names as exemplary in the *Cassiciacum* dialogues themselves, namely Plotinus and Cicero. The differences between these orderings and the one used by Augustine are as telling as the similarities: a comparison suggests that Augustine was not working directly from either model. At the same time, the fact that the two philosophers who most directly inform the *Cassiciacum* dialogues used similar models speaks to the likelihood that Augustine was working from a broad tradition of Platonic curricula.

¹²⁹Surprising, because *De musica* is primarily concerned with poetic meter as opposed to melodic music, many scholars have assumed Augustine chose this because he knew little musical theory Cf. Muller (2015: 359-361). This has perhaps contributed to the idea that it represents a fairly elementary level of text, which is *contra* to Augustine’s placement of it within the order of metaphysical ascent.

In his edition of Plotinus' *Enneads*,¹³⁰ Porphyry tells us explicitly that in the first *Ennead* he collected treatises of an ethical nature. In the second and third, those pertaining to physics; in the fourth through sixth, those pertaining to metaphysics.¹³¹ Though Porphyry excludes logic from his ordering, we know that he promoted the teaching of Aristotle's *Categories*, and his own *Eisagoge* was widely used to teach logic;¹³² thus, it is possible that he considered such readings a prerequisite for the course of the *Enneads* which he describes here. However, as we do not even know if Augustine had access to the entirety of the *Enneads*,¹³³ we cannot be sure that he knew of Porphyry's metaphysical ordering of those texts.

Augustine certainly did know the ordering Cicero gives to his own dialogues in the introduction to book two of the *De divinatione*, for this dialogue, and those listed in the curriculum Cicero gives at *De div.* 2.1, account for those dialogues with which Augustine engages most heavily at Cassiciacum.

<i>Cicero's Curriculum</i>	
1. <i>Hortensius, Academica, De finibus, Tusculans</i>	Logic → Ethics
2. <i>De natura deorum, De divinatione, De fato</i>	Physics
3. <i>De republica, De consolatione, De senectute, Cato</i>	"Metaphysics"
4. <i>De oratore, Brutus, Orator</i>	Rhetoric

Readers of Cicero's dialogues have not noted, as far as I am aware, that Cicero's sequence of texts in *De div.* is essentially a variant of a "Platonic" ordering of his texts. Yet despite the differences between Cicero's schema and those we have seen above, the core movement from

¹³⁰ *Life of Plotinus*, Chs. 24-25.

¹³¹ For a more detailed examination of how the content of Porphyry's arrangement overlaps with Iamblichus' curriculum, see Tarrant (2014: 22).

¹³² Tarrant (2014: 21).

¹³³ On which texts of Plotinus Augustine likely had access to, see O'Donnell (1992: 2.421-424) and TeSelle (1970: 43-55).

logic, to ethics, to physics is notable in Cicero's first two stages. The *Hortensius* as a protreptic and the *Academica* as an epistemological dialogue comprise his section on logic; *De finibus* and the *Tusculan Disputations* treat ethics; Cicero tells us in *De div.* 2.1 that the former considers the distinction between good and evil, the latter argues that virtue is sufficient for happiness. *De natura deorum*, *de fato*, and *divinatione* all consider the nature of cosmology and the gods. It is only after this step on "physics" that Cicero's model diverges somewhat from the trajectory which culminated in Syrianus' program. Insofar as *De republica* includes Scipio's dream, it reflects Cicero's reworkings of the cosmological aspects of Plato's *Republic* and *Timaeus*, but the dialogue is on the whole mostly associated with political philosophy. It is grouped with three texts dealing with death and preparation for death, which one might see as a more mundane aspect of metaphysics, in line with Cicero's reputation for being civically-focused. On the whole, this structure intimates the influence of Peripatetic understandings of the divisions of philosophy, which were more likely to include *politike* as a category than the strand of Platonism adopted by the Neoplatonists.

Cicero's fourth and final category, on rhetoric, reinforces the idea of a Peripatetic influence. In his own comments regarding his inclusion of rhetorical dialogues, he claims to have done so in imitation of Aristotle and Theophrastus' reconciliation of rhetoric and philosophy.¹³⁴ It is a claim he makes throughout his philosophical *corpus*.¹³⁵ Carlos Levy has argued that the names of Aristotle and Theophrastus are substitutes for Philo of Larissa, Cicero's own teacher whose teaching of rhetoric and philosophy in the Academy is well attested.¹³⁶ If this is the case, then Cicero's emulation of Aristotle here is akin to the Platonic emulation I described in Chapter One, whereby especially Plato--but also Aristotle--were often

¹³⁴ *De div.* 2.4.

¹³⁵ Cf. *Tusc.* 2.9.

¹³⁶ Levy (1992: 87). For Philo's use of rhetoric in the New Academy, see Reinhardt (2000: 531-547) and Brittain 2001.

identified as the locus of all philosophical (or in this case, rhetorical) authority. William Altman, however, has argued that Cicero's mention of Aristotle is in fact a replacement for Plato, whom he wishes to outdo as an authority on rhetoric.¹³⁷ This idea is, in fact, in line with Levy's argument, insofar as Philo himself is a successor of Plato's Academy: if Altman is even partially correct, one can infer from Cicero's displacement of both Philo and Plato that rhetoric may not be so far from the Platonic philosophy as Cicero would often have readers believe. As Cicero was writing in the first century B.C.E., and the evidence for Platonic *corpus* arrangements largely begins in the first century C.E., we do not yet have enough of a basis to compare Cicero's ordering with orders among *Platonis aemuli*. However, as Cicero was keen to style himself a *Platonis aemulus*, we should certainly be open to the possibility that his ordering does reflect a Platonic model of some sort. More importantly, Augustine could surely have read Cicero's order this way. And yet, Augustine's ordering has more in common with that of Syrianus than that of Cicero, whom Augustine implicates so deeply in his own dialogues. Thus, we can conclude that while Augustine likely considered his "Platonic" *corpus* arrangement to be a variant of a model he saw in Cicero and elsewhere, the version he puts forward is certainly not a direct imitation of any one of the sources whom he himself references in the dialogues --it is, instead, his own iteration of a general model.

To conclude this section, I would like to consider two implications of Augustine's *corpus* arrangement for how we read the Cassiciacum dialogues. The first pertains to the longstanding debate over the correct order of the Cassiciacum dialogues. As byproduct of the "historicity debate," scholars have proposed several orderings of the dialogues meant to defend the idea that the dialogues follow a narrative sequence which reflects actual conversations which took place over a set series of days.¹³⁸ These orderings re-arrange the books according to internal

¹³⁷ Altman (2016: esp. Xiii-xiv, and Ch. 12).

¹³⁸ See Kenyon (2018: 3-4 and esp. 2011) for a detailed summary. The ordering proposed by Cary (1998: 141-163) has been particularly influential.

cross-references and Augustine's claims that the groups took "breaks": the result is that, rather than reading the books in the sequence in which Augustine lists them, readers have often read the dialogues in ways which sandwich sections of some texts between others. Kenyon has argued, both on the basis of a cross-reference of his own, and on common sense,¹³⁹ that the most intuitive order is to read the dialogues in the order in which Augustine lists them in the *Retractations*.

On the one hand, the idea that the metaphysical ascent narrative trumps other potential orderings of a *corpus* serves to reinforce Kenyon's argument. On the other hand, the parallels between Augustine's *corpus* and those of Plato and Cicero ought to give us pause. Curiously, all three corpora have been dogged by uncertainty surrounding the "correct" ordering. In the case of Plato's *corpus*, as we have already seen, these debates were already well developed a couple of centuries after publication and have persisted to the present day. In the case of Cicero's dialogues, scholars have long noted that the order Cicero gives in *De divinatione* 2.1 (and which I used above) is markedly different from the chronological order in which he wrote the dialogues, as is evident even in that same passage of *De div.*: Cicero tells us that he has not yet written some of the texts which he lists *earlier* in the sequence than *De divinatione* itself.¹⁴⁰ In the case of both Plato and Cicero's dialogues, then, there exist *corpus* arrangements which clearly do *not* follow the chronological order within the dialogues, or the date of composition. Assuming Augustine was aware of this--as he surely must have been, in order to make use of a metaphysical ordering himself--it is entirely possible that he may have written dialogues in which the internal narrative takes place in an order different from the order of metaphysical ascent which he gives in the *Retractations*. This is a compelling idea if one is not entirely convinced by Kenyon's argument, on the basis of a sole cross-reference, that the dialogues *must* be read in the order in which Augustine writes them.

¹³⁹ Kenyon 2011.

¹⁴⁰ Altman (2016: xi-xii).

Moreover, Platonic *corpus* organizers *themselves* regularly promoted the idea that there was more than one legitimate way to read Plato's dialogues.¹⁴¹ Poster in particular connects this notion to the Neoplatonic and metaphysical focus which drove the development of these orderings in the first place. She writes, "Two simultaneous orderings of Plato's dialogues with different interpretive consequences would not have been contradictory, but rather a necessary outcome of different signs having different *analogiai* corresponding to the hierarchies of being."¹⁴² This is the conclusion which John Dillon arrived at in his study of the Platonic *corpus* of the fifth century author Proclus.¹⁴³ It is intriguing to consider that part of Augustine's Platonic emulation might have included writing the dialogues with the idea of multiple orders in mind; though further exploration of this idea is beyond the scope of the study, for this reason I believe the "correct" ordering of Augustine's dialogues remains an open question.

A second implication of Augustine's ordering has to do with the ways the narrative of metaphysical ascent provides both an expectation and potential placeholder for any texts within it. For instance, readers encountering an individual text such as *De beata vita* would be more attuned to the ways it explores "ethics" as a category if they had some expectation that Augustine might be working according to this narrative. Moreover, the framework of the ascent narrative ought to make us circumspect when evaluating Augustine's claims as to when or where he wrote a text. Because the framework of metaphysical ascent was "Platonic" and therefore not one which Augustine was working through in the process of writing, it is very possible that he or any author working with a similar schema could write the works "out of order" without sacrificing the narrative integrity of that ascent. It may be the case that Augustine wrote the first five texts he lists in the *Retractationes* at Milan, the next three at Rome, etc.--but it is also possible that he is using the geographical distinctions primarily as an

¹⁴¹ Poster 1998, Tarrant 2014.

¹⁴² Poster (1998: 293).

¹⁴³ Dillon (1976: 256).

organizing principle in the literature rather than a historical record. The conclusion, I think, is that the existence of the metaphysical ascent schema allows for flexibility in how the texts are understood to be linked, or not: Augustine could have written any individual text without a full plan as to when or where he would complete the *corpus* precisely because, in some sense, the place of each text was predetermined.

A corollary of the function of the ascent narrative as a “schema” or “framework” into which individual works could be slotted is that we ought to be wary of correlating a text of Augustine’s on one particular topic--say, physics--and that of another Platonic philosopher. The pattern of recursive ascent means that, in Augustine’s case, there is an elementary text on physics, a middle text, and a higher text. If *De ordine* is the elementary text, it would be unfair to compare it with the *Timaeus* in terms of how supposedly “advanced” its philosophical arguments appear. The Cassiciacum dialogues occupy the same slot in their recursion as the texts of Aristotle occupy in Syrianus’ curriculum; thus, when I speak of the Cassiciacum dialogues as part of a program of “Platonic emulation” I do not mean to imply that Augustine was vying directly with the Platonic dialogues themselves, both because we are unsure of how much exposure he had to the dialogues proper, and because even if he did read them, his placement of the Cassiciacum dialogues as the first texts in his *corpus* suggests that he himself did not see them as philosophically advanced. The same can be said of Augustine’s engagement with Cicero’s dialogues. It is not clear, from Cicero’s ordering in *De divinatione* 2.1, if Cicero conceived of that program as part of a larger educational program of recursion. More work needs to be done on Cicero’s educational program to determine if this is the case. Augustine engaged with Cicero’s dialogues in ways consistent with the shared subject matter of logic, ethics, physics, etc.--but this does not mean he saw a correlation of his works to Cicero’s respecting the difficulty level at which he presented the material. In some ways, then, Augustine’s *corpus* arrangement invites as many questions about his engagement with his predecessors as it seems to answer.

II. Physics as a Template of the Cosmos

I turn now to consider the depth of Augustine's engagement with the Platonic curriculum of metaphysical ascent. His use of the ascent narrative in his *corpus* arrangement is not a superficial allusion to Platonic corpora; rather, the very conversational arc of his dialogues is informed by the specific content and concerns of this Platonic curriculum. Augustine's reliance on this curriculum is most evident in *De ordine*, the third Cassiciacum dialogue and the one most associated with the topic of education *per se*. This is because, as I shall argue throughout this section, as Augustine's exploration of "physics," *De ordine* stands as a microcosm of the entire ascent narrative and entire Platonic program of education which Augustine puts forth. In the first part of this section, I will simultaneously make the case for reading texts on "physics" as a miniature encapsulation of the entire Platonic program, and for the extent to which *De ordine* explores subject matter endemic to other texts on physics within this broad Platonic tradition.¹⁴⁴ This argument naturally leads to the second part of this section, in which I demonstrate that Augustine's program of study in the liberal arts in the speech at the end of *De ordine* is itself an evolved expression of the *topos* of arts and learning within texts on physics. Moreover, the way in which Augustine positions the study of the liberal arts within physics serves as a rationale for the integration of rhetorical training in philosophy; thus, this section sets the stage for the case I make over the subsequent chapters that Augustine's Platonic program involves the systematic integration of discrete elements of rhetoric and philosophy.

Throughout this section, I will use a variety of sources to illustrate Augustine's deep engagement with the "Platonic" tradition of physics which was grounded in interpretations of

¹⁴⁴ The standard introduction to physics in antiquity is Sorabji 1988. For an introduction on physics in late antiquity, see Sambursky 2014. These are both written from the perspective of the history of science and do not focus on natural philosophy as it pertains to a cosmological view of the universe. They offer, however, an overview of the central questions of physics—such as time, matter, and motion—which are evident also in *De ordine*. For an introduction on physics in Plato, see Brisson 2006.

the *Timaeus*.¹⁴⁵ My aim is to highlight the range of possible influences on Augustine in order to illustrate not only the difficulty one might have in pinpointing specific sources for some of his ideas, but also that such an attempt largely misses the point: in positioning himself as a *Platonis aemulus* in the sense of the term I have adopted, Augustine models an alternative not only to one or two individual authors, but to a paradigm that was used by a wide range of authors in the Platonic tradition. In addition to his readings of Plotinus,¹⁴⁶ perhaps through the Latin translations of Marius Victorinus,¹⁴⁷ it is likely that Augustine had read Cicero's Latin translation of the *Timaeus*; it is possible that he also knew of the Latin translation and commentary of the same by his fourth century contemporary, Calcidius.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, Augustine's reading of the Roman Platonist Apuleius,¹⁴⁹ and particularly his translation of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo*, allow for the inference that he was also aware of the Peripatetic tradition of the same. At points, I will also reference parallels between Augustine's treatment of physics and that which we find in near contemporary texts of the Greek tradition; the fact that the two share significant commonalities despite Augustine's limited knowledge of Greek serves to further substantiate the idea that Augustine is working from a broad and shared tradition. One of Augustine's chief influences, of course, were the dialogues of Cicero. These dialogues are our only evidence for some of the Greek philosophers, including the Academic skeptics. And insofar as Cicero has been shown to draw upon a variety of sources in producing the summaries which he provides of the views of various philosophical schools, Augustine's references to these dialogues can be seen as evidence that he was aware of the commonalities

¹⁴⁵ On interpretations of the *Timaeus* in the philosophical schools subsequent to Plato, see Reydam-Schils 1999.

¹⁴⁶ O'Donnell (1992: 2.421-424) and TeSelle (1970: 43-55) offer summaries of the arguments for which specific texts of Plotinus Augustine had read. See also Beatrice (1989: 248-281).

¹⁴⁷ Henry (1934: 63-103); Ayres (2010: 17, esp. footnotes 14-16).

¹⁴⁸ On whom see Reydam-Schils (2000: 498-508).

¹⁴⁹ Hagendahl (1967: I.17-28; I.29-33); O'Donnell (1980: 149-51).

and differences in the philosophical systems propounded by various schools, at least as Cicero presented them.

At risk of pedantry, I have structured this section as an overview of the main themes of texts on physics as they are found in the above sources and in *De ordine*. This structure serves the double purpose of demonstrating Augustine's use of these themes while also familiarizing the modern reader with the connection between the basic topics of ancient physics as a reader of Augustine might have recognized them. The interrelationship between the fundamental themes of physics is key to understanding not only how Augustine directs the conversation in *De ordine*, but the themes he raises throughout all the Cassiciacum dialogues.

The operative image within the genre of physics is that of the physical cosmos,¹⁵⁰ described by successors of Plato in a manner informed by the pattern laid out in the *Timaeus*. Here, the earth is fixed at the center of the universe. Earth is surrounded by seven successive spheres, to which belong the planets, moon, and the sun. Farthest away from the earth is the realm of the fixed stars, the upper ether where God dwells. In this model, movement on earth is erratic and inconstant; the further one moves away from the earth, the more "fixed" and constant movement becomes; Cicero describes the planets as "those that by name are wandering, though not really so."¹⁵¹ The planetary movements, fixed yet different from one another, are understood to operate according to the intervals of harmonic scales.¹⁵² Thus, both the erratic movement of earth and the fixed movement of the stars embody the principle of unity in diversity.

¹⁵⁰ On the history of the term "cosmos" as it pertains to the idea of an ordered universe, see Horky (1999: 22-41).

¹⁵¹ Cicero, *Tusculans* 1.62, trans. King. *astra...quae sunt infixa certis locis, tum illa non re, sed vocabulo errantia*.

¹⁵² E.g. Censorinus Ch. 13.

In Cicero's *Academica*, the character of Varro argues that the Peripatetics and the Old Academy, as true successors of Plato, had the same doctrine as each other. When describing their physics, he characterizes their view of the unity of the cosmos thus:

they think that the whole of matter also is itself in a state of complete change throughout...out of which in the concrete whole of substance, a continuum united with all its parts, has been produced one world, outside of which there is no portion of matter and no body, while all the things that are in the world are parts of it, held together by a sentient being, in which perfect reason, is immanent, and which is immutable and eternal since nothing stronger exists to cause it to perish; and this force they say is the soul of the world, and is also perfect intelligence and wisdom, which they entitle God, and is a sort of 'providence' knowing the things that fall within its province, governing especially the heavenly bodies, and then those things on earth that concern mankind; and this force they also sometimes call Necessity, because nothing can happen otherwise than has been ordained by it under a 'fated and unchangeable concatenation of everlasting order,' although they sometimes also term it Fortune, because many of its operations are unforeseen and unexpected by us on account of their obscurity and our ignorance of causes.¹⁵³

This passage encapsulates the fundamental relationship between God and the world in the Platonic cosmos--God is immanent and holds the world together as a unified entity, a "continuum united in all its parts." The statement that these govern especially the heavenly bodies is an allusion to the idea that the physical movement of stars and planets is the paradigmatic example of this unity in diversity. Varro's description points to key attributes associated with God which appear time and again in texts on physics: the soul of the world, perfect intelligence and wisdom, providence, order, necessity, and fate. Corollaries of these aspects of God's nature which show up frequently in descriptions of physics is the idea that the world is good, and beautiful--the root of the Greek world *cosmos*--on the grounds that it would be against God's nature to create a world with anything disordered or evil.¹⁵⁴

If one had to choose a primary characteristic of God or the universe, a central expression of all these qualities of goodness, order, etc. it would be oneness. The "unity in diversity" of

¹⁵³Cicero, *Academica* 1.28-29. Trans. Rackham. *et materiam ipsam totam penitus commutari putant et illa effici quae appellant qualia, e quibus in omni natura cohaerente et continuata cum omnibus suis partibus unum effectum esse mundum, extra quem nulla pars materiae sit nullumque corpus, partes autem esse mundi omnia quae insint in eo quae natura sentiente teneantur, in qua ratio perfecta insit quae sit eadem sempiterna (nihil enim valentius esse a quo intreat); quam vim animum esse dicunt mundi, eandemque esse mentem sapientiamque perfectam, quem deum appellant, omniumque rerum quae sint ei subiectae quasi prudentiam quandam, procurantem caelestia maxime, deinde in terris ea quae pertineant ad homines.*

¹⁵⁴ On the relationship between order and beauty in the cosmos, see Boys-Stones (1999: 108-121).

planetary movement, as the central image of physics, reinforces the emphasis on oneness: the goodness, order, etc. of the universe is in evidence because of the unity on display. The particular importance of number theory--of the idea of oneness as central to the workings of the universe, can be found in the *Timaeus* but is widely attributed by ancient sources to Pythagoras. This explains, in part, the frequent association between Plato and Pythagoras in ancient sources which reference the basics of a philosophical worldview in general or of physics or music in particular, since Pythagoras' discovery of the centrality of number is linked to his discovery of the harmonic intervals between the planets.¹⁵⁵

This emphasis on unity also provides a rationale for the idea that ancient physics might serve as a microcosm for the entire system of philosophy embodied in Platonic ascent narratives. In *De natura deorum*, Cicero makes the claim that "it is a striking characteristic of philosophy that its topics all hang together and form a consecutive system; one is seen to be linked to another, and all to be mutually connected and attached."¹⁵⁶ By "topics," here he refers to the branches of logic, ethics, and physics: and he is expressing the common idea that these branches are interconnected and inseparable. This claim, namely that philosophy is a unity, runs parallel to claims within texts on physics that the cosmos is a unified whole. In some cases, philosophers even use the metaphor of the cosmos as an image for philosophy in all its branches. Consider the introduction to Seneca's Epistle 89:

I only wish that philosophy might come before our eyes in all her unity, just as the whole expanse of the firmament is spread out for us to gaze upon! It would be a sight closely resembling that of the firmament.¹⁵⁷

Perhaps the image is ultimately more than a metaphor. The historical accounts ancient authors give of the development of philosophy cite natural philosophy as the original, sole category of philosophical exploration. This implies that at one time, physics and philosophy were

¹⁵⁵ Tarrant (2014: 20).

¹⁵⁶ *De natura deorum* 1.4, trans. Rackham.

¹⁵⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 89 trans. Gummere. *Utinam quidem quemadmodum universa mundi facies in conspectum venit, ita philosophia tota nobis posset occurrere, simillimum mundo spectaculum.*

completely synonymous. Whatever the origin of the close connection between the physical cosmos and the study of philosophy as a whole, there is certainly an intuitive connection between the structure of the cosmos and the metaphysical ascent narrative outlined in our Platonic corpora above. Logic and ethics stand in the position of earth, the sensible realm. Logic, concerned as it is with epistemology and signs, which share a root with the word sensible, by their nature are not true (read: intelligible) reality, but rather lead one to it through an indirect path. This branch of philosophy can be understood as the theoretical side of the sensible experience--i.e., that of abstract education. Ethics, by contrast, outlines the philosophical advantages of the good life--in other words, the ways in which virtuous living makes one receptive to the lessons logic seeks to teach through reason and discourse. Once the student has been initiated into basic principles of philosophy, study of physics enables her to see how these principles apply not only to the individual contexts of a discourse or her own life, but to the universe as a whole--in surveying the harmonious course of the stars and planets, she understands that the particular harmonies of life and language unfold according to a broader pattern. This in turn leads her to metaphysics, because she realizes that her soul works according to this same paradigm, and then in turn learns to recognize something of the nature of God in it. At every step of the way, the student progresses by understanding the workings of number. Brisson succinctly summarizes the function of number in the *Timaeus* this way: "mathematics presents two faces, as inseparable as those of a coin: one oriented towards the intelligible, which it allows us to reach; the other is oriented towards the sensible, where it presents [traces of the intelligible]." ¹⁵⁸ In other words, the student's progress from sensible to intelligible, from logic to metaphysics, is mediated through the awareness that the number, and particularly *oneness*, which she finds in the world around her ultimately exists in a fixed form, which leads to knowledge of God.

¹⁵⁸ Brisson (2006: 217-218).

If this pattern of ascent is worked out through Platonic corpora as a whole, but also encapsulated in texts on physics in the tradition of the *Timaeus*, this could account for the popularity of the *Timaeus* in texts within antiquity.¹⁵⁹ Further exploration of this phenomenon is of course necessary to come to any sure conclusion, but what we can say at present is that the popularity of these texts is consistent with the supremacy of physics and metaphysics within corpora of metaphysical ascent. The recursive pattern I showed in Syrianus' and Augustine's curriculum means that physics and metaphysics are repeated as a field of study more than logic and ethics. And though metaphysics represents the highest domain of philosophical inquiry, physics is never jettisoned, even in the highest level of ascent. Thus we may say that physics remained central and fundamental to the curriculum of Platonic organizers at every level of instruction.

It is telling that in reading the Cassiciacum dialogues, so many readers have agreed with Pacioni's claim that *De ordine* provides the theoretical framework through which the Cassiciacum dialogues ought to be read.¹⁶⁰ This conclusion is consistent with a reading of the dialogue as a text on physics as a "microcosm" of Augustine's whole philosophical program. In the preface, Augustine signals his place within that tradition of physics more forcefully than he does elsewhere in the dialogue, though the fact that he stops short of describing the physical cosmos has likely contributed to the fact that his discussion of metaphysical themes has not been closely studied in relation to this tradition. Like Varro's synopsis of physics from Cicero's *Academica* which I quoted above, Augustine's initial discussion in the preface centers on the themes of order, oneness, and providence. The first word in the text, in fact, is *order*: "To

¹⁵⁹ Examples of how ancient discussions of Plato's philosophy are dominated by the *Timaeus* include Cicero, *Ac.* 1.24-29, Alcinous, *Didascalica* 1.66.39-1.76.34, and Apuleius, *De Platone* 1.5-18; 190-218. Augustine himself exhibits a clear preference for the *Timaeus* over other Platonic texts (Van Riel 2017: 452). Tarrant (2018: 108) sees the relative predominance of the *Timaeus* as a function of the fact that it is Plato's sole dialogue on physics, but this alone does not seem a satisfactory exploration for the elevated place of the *Timaeus* within corpus arrangements.

¹⁶⁰ Pacioni 1996.

perceive and grasp the reality proper to each thing, and then to see or explain the order of the entire universe by which this world is truly held together and governed...is a very difficult and rare achievement for men.”¹⁶¹ Shortly thereafter, Augustine connects this idea of order to Providence, by setting up the central dilemma of the text: “Those who ponder these matters are forced to believe either that divine Providence does not reach the outer limits of things, or that surely all evils are committed by the will of God.”¹⁶² It immediately becomes clear that Augustine’s notion of providence is grounded in the principle of unity and diversity which Varro describes as “a continuum united in all its parts.” In section two of the first chapter, he uses the example of a flea to make the claim that “all parts are marvelously fitted and arranged,” and claims that men who believe that human life is “made restless by the inconsistency of countless disorders” are “unable to grasp the universal fittedness of things.”¹⁶³ His next move is consistent with the idea, already present in the *Timaeus*, that the soul too is an integral unity according to the same pattern as the world. Augustine offers that the solution to understanding the fittedness of things is for man to withdraw and concentrate his thought *within*. In this way, “the soul, returned to itself, understands what is the beauty of the universe; this term is evidently derived from the word *unum*, one.”¹⁶⁴ He furthermore illustrates this oneness with the image of a circle; a circle, he says, cannot be cut infinitely, and yet contains one center which “rules over all other parts with a kind of law of equality.” It is no coincidence with this example that the Platonic schema of the cosmos envisions the whole world as a self-contained circle: immediately before using this image, Augustine has alluded to the fact that the Greek word for universe--the cosmos--is derived from the word for beauty or adornment. In

¹⁶¹ DO 1.1.1 trans. Russell. *Ordinem rerum...consequi ac tenere cuique proprium, tum vero universitatis quo coercetur ac regitur hic mundus, vel videre vel pandere difficillimum hominibus atque rarissimum est.*

¹⁶² Ibid trans. Russell. *Quamobrem illud quasi necessarium iis quibus talia sunt curae, credendum dimittitur, aut divinam providentiam non usque in haec ultima et ima pertendi aut certe mala omnia Dei voluntate committi.*

¹⁶³ DO 1.1.1, trans. Russell.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, trans. Russell.

moving from the flea to the soul and the circle, he has made the same transition from sensible to intelligible which the Platonic corpora themselves embody. As physics is central to those corpora, so here his gentle allusions to the cosmos as the embodiment of unity serve as the glue which holds this ascent narrative together.

i. The Problem of Evil

Augustine's commitment to the paradigm of physics in *De ordine* goes well beyond his allusions to the concepts of unity and goodness in the introduction. The very content of his conversation in the dialogues is directed by the further workings of this principle of unity within texts on physics. The basic topics within these texts--space, matter, time, and motion---are all implicated in this principle of unity. These tend to be the first categories discussed in texts on physics, and in laying out how these categories work, the texts in turn highlight the central dilemma of this paradigm of the physical cosmos--namely, that it is far from homogeneous. This is the problem which Augustine advertises as a question of "providence" in his preface:¹⁶⁵ that it would be impious to believe that anything in the universe is outside of God's control, and yet to say God governs all things seems to attribute evil and suffering to God. In many texts on the physical cosmos, this dilemma is muted enough that it appears not to be present. And yet, the very fact of "diversity" within "unity" points to this dilemma, whether it be in the image of the planets moving at separate intervals, or in discussions of the relationships between the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water. If God is the embodiment of unity and oneness, the very concept of difference seems to threaten that oneness. The Pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo* expresses the "solution" to this difference succinctly: it is a solution of complementarity, or unity by means of opposites.

But perhaps nature actually has a liking for opposites; perhaps it is from them that she creates harmony, and not from similar things, in just the same way as she has joined the male to the female, and not each of them to another of the same sex, thus making the first harmonious community not of similar but of opposite things. It seems, too, that art does this, in imitation of nature: for painting mixes its whites and blacks, its yellows and reds, to create images that are

¹⁶⁵ See Adamson (2014: 437-452) on fate and providence in Neoplatonist thought.

concordant with their originals; music mixes high and low notes, and longs and shorts, and makes a single tune of different sounds; by making a mixture of vowels and consonants, grammar composes out of them the whole of its art. This is precisely what Heracleitus the Dark meant when he said “Junctions are wholes and not-wholes, concord and discord, consonance and dissonance. One out of All; All out of One.”¹⁶⁶

In this way, the descriptions often found in overviews of the world about lakes and rivers, contrary winds, etc., should not be understood merely as accounts of the natural world, but also as illustrations of this principle of opposites. In this model, the fundamentals of the whole system--from the harmonic movements of the planets, to the different movements of the winds, the balance between water and dry land-- paradoxically become advantageous; instead of being a threat to unity, they become the means to it. At the same time, each of these natural phenomena is an example of at least one of the principles of matter (the elements), motion (movement of the elements and winds), and space (the presence of these elements in contained areas of the cosmos). Thus, the principle of opposites serves not only as an *explanandum* for observable phenomena, but a theory by which the observer can extrapolate, from those phenomena, patterns consistent across the whole cosmos.

The role of time in this system is perhaps less obvious with respect to these examples, and yet it is arguably the most central aspect of physics with regards to the theory of unity. The very word providence, a translation of the Greek *pronoia*, means “foresight” or “foreknowledge”; as such, it is an expression of future time. Thus, the term “providence” can be understood as a temporal perspective on the workings of the universe: it is the idea that the fittedness of all things in a unity can be understood only in the future. In predictably Platonic fashion, this is a future which consists of intelligible knowledge. From Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*

¹⁶⁶Pseudo-Aristotle, 396b. Trans. Forster & Furley. ἴσως δὲ καὶ τῶν ἐναντίων ἡ φύσις γλίχεται καὶ ἐκ τούτων ἀποτελεῖ τὸ σύμφωνον, οὐκ ἐκ τῶν ὁμοίων, ὥσπερ ἀμέλει τὸ ἄρρεν συνήγαγε πρὸς τὸ θῆλυ καὶ οὐχ ἑκάτερον πρὸς τὸ ὁμόφυλον, καὶ τὴν πρώτην ὁμόνοιαν διὰ τῶν ἐναντίων σημήψεν, οὐ διὰ τῶν ὁμοίων. ἔοικε δὲ καὶ ἡ τέχνη τὴν φύσιν μιμουμένη τοῦτο ποιεῖν. ζωγραφία μὲν γὰρ λευκῶν τε καὶ μελάνων, ὠχρῶν τε καὶ ἐρυθρῶν, χρωμάτων ἐγκερασαμένη φύσει τὰς εἰκόνας τοῖς προηγουμένοις ἀπετέλεσε συμφώνους, μουσικὴ δὲ ὁξεῖς ἅμα καὶ βαρεῖς, μακροὺς τε καὶ βραχεῖς φθόγγους μίξασα ἐν διαφόροις φωναῖς μίαν ἀπετέλεσεν ἁρμονίαν, γραμματικὴ δὲ ἐκ φωνηέντων καὶ ἀφώνων γραμμάτων κράσιν ποιησαμένη τὴν ὅλην τέχνην ἀπ’ αὐτῶν συνεστήσατο. ταῦτό δὲ τοῦτο ἦν καὶ τὸ παρὰ τῷ σκοτεινῷ λεγόμενον Ἡρακλείτῳ· “συνάψεις ὅλα καὶ οὐχ ὅλα, συμφερόμενον διαφερόμενον, συνᾶδον διαῖδον· καὶ ἐκ πάντων ἐν καὶ ἐξ ἐνὸς πάντα.”

onwards, physical sight is considered the keenest of the senses:¹⁶⁷ but this is because visual acuity in the physical world is closely associated with the acuity of the soul's mental vision, which allows for the understanding of the workings of providence. And so, in the *Tusculan Disputations*, when Cicero argues for the immortality of the soul, he states that to boast of seeing the famous narrows of the Pontus is nothing when compared to what the soul can see internally. He asks,

What, pray, do we think the panorama will be like when we shall be free to embrace the whole earth in our survey, its situation, shape, and circumference, as well as both the districts that are habitable and those again that are left wholly uncultivated because of the violence of cold or heat? We do not even now distinguish with our eyes the things we see; for there is no perception in the body, but, as is taught [by natural philosophers]...there are, as it were, passages bored from the seat of the soul to eye and ear and nose.¹⁶⁸

The concept of a visual "panorama" which Cicero expounds here is the ultimate expression of the solution to the "problem of evil" or of diversity of aspects of the earth's "situation, shape, and circumference" -- it is the ability to perceive, in one fell swoop, the entire unity of the cosmos. And crucially, this solution happens in future time--Cicero asks what it "will be like to embrace the whole earth"--or more correctly, outside of time, for this is a knowledge of providence available only to the soul.

I believe that Augustine alludes to this same passage of Cicero in the middle of *De ordine*, precisely at the point where he propounds his solution to the problem of evil. In the conversation leading up to that point, he poses a series of questions to his students which are all aimed at indirectly prompting them to understand the problem. Notably, many of these questions pertain to the topics of matter, motion, and space; they can be read as Augustine's replacement for the description of physical elements and *topoi* which serve this purpose in texts on physics. Following this series of questions, Augustine's student Trygetius posits the idea of a

¹⁶⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 980a.

¹⁶⁸ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.45-46. trans. King. *quod tandem spectaculum fore putamus, cum totam terram contueri licebit eiusque cum situm, formam, circumscriptionem, tum et habitabiles regiones et rursus omni cultu propter vim frigoris aut caloris vacantes? Nos enim ne nunc quidem oculis cernimus ea, quae videmus: neque est enim ullus sensus in corpore, sed ut non physici solum docent...viae quasi quaedam sunt ad oculos, ad aures, ad nares a sede animi perforatae.*

panorama as a solution which helps one understand divine providence. In this way, Augustine arrives at much the same conclusion as Cicero has done in the *Tusculan Disputations*: but Augustine's version shifts the emphasis from the physical cosmos and heightens attention to the relationship between disorder and the problem of evil, a relationship which as I hope to have shown above is present but muted in many texts on physics.

At the outset of Book Two of *De ordine*, Augustine asks the central question of the dialogue: how God governs all things by order.¹⁶⁹ His student Licentius makes a convoluted attempt to respond to this question by answering a series of sub-questions including questions about: whether good things have substance (matter), whether things governed by God are moved (motion), and whether all things are with God (space). The questions are designed to lead Licentius to a recognition of a paradox which will in turn provoke him to find an answer to the problem of evil: for instance, the conclusion that all things are with God because God is everywhere leads to the undesirable claim that evil things must be with God. Instead of grasping this line of thought, however, Licentius argues himself into a conundrum; he asserts both that all things on earth are moved and that they are with God. This is a conundrum because he insists that things with God must be unmoved; he is apparently unaware of the distinction between constant and inconstant motion; in the Platonic cosmos, to be "fixed" does not mean immobile, but rather in constant motion. In the dialogue, his failure to progress on this point is linked to his ignorance about the difference between perception of the sense and intellect. The entire discussion comes to a head when Augustine must point out that Licentius' arguments make an uncouth division between body and soul, for Licentius does not realize that it is the soul which has perception. If he understood this, he would gain the perspective into the relationship between God and the world that would enable him to understand the paradoxes he had missed--for instance, nothing is "without God" in the sensible world because God's

¹⁶⁹ DO 2.1.2.

presence is pervasive, and yet to be truly with God is not possible in this model except on the plane of the intelligible.

At this moment of Licentius' *aporia* Augustine makes use of Cicero's passage from the *Tusculan Disputations* which I quoted above. Following Licentius' unfortunate division between soul and body, the student is absented from the conversation: although he remains physically present, he no longer speaks or hears the discussion. This should be read as an enactment of the point Cicero makes immediately after stating that there is no perception to the body proper, but rather it belongs to the soul; namely, that "Often...we are hindered by absorption in thought or by some attack of sickness, and though eyes and ears are open and uninjured, we neither see nor hear, so that it can be readily understood that it is the soul which both sees and hears."¹⁷⁰ The connection between Licentius' absence and this passage in Cicero is reinforced by the language used in Augustine's subsequent conversation with Trygetius, who takes up the task of debating with Augustine in Licentius' place. Immediately following Trygetius' absence, Augustine offers a "Platonic" solution to the problem of evil: that it has no existence of its own.¹⁷¹ He uses the relationship between light and darkness to illustrate the point: darkness is not its own substance, but rather the experience of the absence of light. One could likewise apply this illustration to issues of space, motion, etc: inconstancy has no definition or standard of its own, but is simply the experience of the absence of constancy.

Unlike Licentius, Trygetius immediately grasps the implications of this point for the workings of the cosmos. He says,

Certainly that mention of darkness has brought us a great deal of light on what had been put forward very obscurely by me...whoever narrow-mindedly considers this life by itself alone, is repelled by its enormous foulness, and turns away in sheer disgust. But if he raises the eyes of the mind and broadens his field of vision and surveys all things as a whole, then he will find nothing unarranged, unclassified, or unassigned to its own place.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.46. Trans. King. *Itaque saepe aut cogitatione aut aliqua vi morbi impediti apertis atque integris et oculis et auribus nec videmus nec audimus, ut facile intelligi possit animum et videre et audire.*

¹⁷¹ A theory he attributes to Plato at *Conf.* 7.9-17.

¹⁷² *De ordine* 2.4.11 Trans. Russell. *Non enim illa commemoratio tenebrarum ad id quod a me involutum prolatum erat, parum nobis attulit luminis...Ita fit ut angusto animo ipsam solam quisque considerans, veluti*

As Cicero had done, Trygetius refers to the necessity of using not physical sight but “the eyes of the mind” in order to survey all things as a unity. This is a perspective, outside of place and time, that presents all things arranged, classed, and assigned to their place. Augustine’s enthusiastic response to Trygetius further strengthens the allusion: Augustine quotes Virgil, saying those who doubt Providence will ask “why Italians always pray for mild winters, while our own poor Gaetulia is parched with heat?”¹⁷³ His choice of this particular pair of opposite elements is likely due to the fact that Cicero, too, when speaking of panoramic vision in *Tusculan Disputations* 1.64-65, said that mental vision would survey regions “wholly uncultivated because of the violence of cold or heat?”

Subtle references to the workings of the physical cosmos indicate that Augustine is self-consciously working with physics as a backdrop, which raises the question of why he does so in a primarily indirect or even covert manner. I would like to briefly address this question before moving to the final section of this chapter, namely that on education within the paradigm of physics, because the most likely answer is pertinent to the topic of education. There are, however, several answers which deserve consideration. One possibility is that Augustine wishes to avoid the blurry association between what we would now call astronomy and astrology. At several points throughout the *Cassiciacum* dialogues he draws attention to the dangers of divination; his avoidance of overt discussion of the physical heavens could be read as means of distancing himself from those who might consider any talk of the stars to be inherently astrological. If this were the case, I would caution against reading Augustine’s reticence as a means of revising the Platonic model in favor of a particularly Christian physics stripped of the stars: the tension between those who considered themselves true natural

magna re percussus foeditate aversetur. Si autem mentis oculos erigens atque diffundens, simul universa collustret nihil non ordinatum suisque semper veluti sedibus distinctum dispositumque reperiet.

¹⁷³ DO 2.5.15, trans. Russell.

philosophers and those accused of divination and magic is one we find in the work of plenty of non-Christian Platonists.

A second possibility is that by late antiquity texts like the *Timaeus* were so well-known that Augustine simply felt no need to reinvent the wheel; he could rely on his readers to recognize the map of the cosmos as a backdrop to his text. A third, closely related possibility is that, perhaps taking his cue from Plotinus, Augustine was simply more interested in the metaphysical and spiritualizing implications of the paradigm of the physical cosmos than in discussing that physical paradigm itself. His focus on the “problem of evil” aspect of the texts on physics can be read as a way of introducing something “new” to a well-trodden path and developing a topic which was not fully explored in those texts; insofar as his answer to that question ultimately centers upon the Incarnation as the means by which humanity is unified with God, his expansion upon the “problem of evil” question can also be seen as a means to claim space for the authority of Christianity within the Platonic paradigm.

Given that Augustine does not jettison or object to the schema of physics *per se*--rather, he embraces it--I am not inclined to conclude that any of the above reasons, while all may be true to various degrees, should be seen as the main reason for the muted presence of the paradigm of the cosmos in *De ordine*. Rather, it is much more likely that Augustine’s oblique references to the physical paradigm have more to do with the elementary position of this text within Augustine’s recursive corpus arrangement. Simply put, *De ordine* does not directly discuss the physical cosmos because it is a text about teaching the principles of the cosmos to students who are still working at the lower stages of ascent from the sensible to the intelligible. This reading is consistent with the fact that the *Timaeus*, the Platonic text which lays out the pattern of the physical universe, belongs to the highest phase of Syrianus’ Platonic sequence of metaphysical ascent; Augustine positions the Cassiciacum dialogues, by contrast, where Aristotle’s texts stand at the beginning of Syrianus’ program.

One of the standard claims of texts on natural philosophy is that true perception--perception of the intelligible--is a difficult achievement. This is the branch of philosophy most

associated with the obscurity of things: it is difficult to see the stars through a veil of clouds.¹⁷⁴ The *topos* of obscurity sets up the expectation within texts on physics themselves that students will not grasp the subject matter without considerable and consistent attempts. This expectation promotes the idea that repeated and prolonged study of the universe is necessary to unveil its secrets— an idea which is enacted, of course, in the process of recursive ascent we find in Syrianus and Augustine. Thus it is possible to read Augustine’s reticence on the physical cosmos *per se* as a literary enactment of this principle of obscurity. On this reading, *De ordine* is “physics” in the sense that it offers students a soft introduction to the principles of the field not directly, but indirectly. The emphasis is not on “seeing the stars,” as it were, but on learning how to learn.

This might account, too, for Augustine’s roundabout references to the soul, which is the seat of learning. Both in the preface and the final speech, Augustine speaks of the importance of the soul recognizing the reality of number: the goal of learning. But when he is working with his students, the topic comes up only at the point where Licentius posits a false dichotomy of soul and body--precisely the moment which precipitates this student’s “absence” from the discussion. The contrast between what Augustine says directly about the soul’s nature and what his students grasp signals the extent of the “obscurity” under which they are laboring; given their confusion, perhaps his aim at this point in the educational sequence is not to elaborate on the soul’s nature, but to plant hidden seeds of understanding. Indeed, three such hidden seeds can be found in Augustine’s treatment of the problem of evil, memory, and number. His treatment of these topics in *De ordine* follows, to some extent, the three arguments for the immortality of the soul which Plato makes in the *Phaedo*. The complementarity of opposites--their ultimate harmony--can be seen as an extension of Socrates argument, based on Heraclitus’ universal principle of flux, of the generation out of opposites: namely, that all things come to being out of their contrast. When Augustine and Licentius discuss the nature of the

¹⁷⁴ A *topos* Augustine references often, e.g. DO 2.5.16: *duplex enim est via quam sequimur, cum rerum nos obscuritas movet, aut rationem, aut certe auctoritatem.*

soul just prior to Licentius' "absence," they do so in the context of memory as a receptacle of learning within the soul--an idea which undergirds Plato's argument for the immortality of the soul from recollection. And finally, Augustine's focus on the principle of unity as the means to wisdom is inextricably linked to Plato's simplicity argument for the immortality of the soul; this argument depends upon an understanding of the soul as integral in the way that the cosmos is integral.

My point in raising these parallels between *De ordine* and the *Phaedo* is that the *Phaedo* is only the third text in Iamblichus' first Platonic sequence; as such, it treats questions of physics a full eleven dialogues before students following that sequence would study the *Timaeus*. This offers a comparandum within the Platonic *corpus* arrangement for the idea that more advanced topics in a curriculum might be broached, indirectly, much earlier on in the sequence.

In this way, *De ordine* lays the theoretical foundations for a Platonic understanding of the soul and the world--but it does so without loudly advertising this fact. What Augustine does advertise, especially at the end of the dialogue, is a clearly delineated educational program which he says will bring students to the knowledge necessary for the soul to "return to itself." This is, then, in many ways a pre-philosophical education, again consistent with the notion that the Cassiciacum dialogues stand at the beginning of an educational sequence. Augustine asks his students to perform the work of the soul in obscurity, without fully understanding the implications of what they are learning. I turn now to learning itself as the final major theme of texts on physics which we will consider in this chapter.

ii. Learning & Education

The place of learning within physics is intuitive insofar as learning is necessary for the ascent from sensible to intelligible: it is the means by which the soul extrapolates theoretical principles from the concrete experiences of earth. So far in this section, I have argued that physics in general, and *De ordine* in particular, is a microcosm of the entire Platonic philosophical system: it presents a picture of the soul's entire ascent from sensible to intelligible.

I have also suggested that Augustine particularly emphasizes the problem of evil as the central tension of this paradigm, which ought to be seen as an elaboration on the tension of unity and diversity that is fundamental to physics as a branch of philosophy. In looking at the topic of education within physics, I wish to emphasize that this principle can likewise be understood as the foundation of an entire educational program which is effectively one and the same as the ascent paradigm. Learning is the means by which the soul works out an understanding of “the problem of evil”--or unity in diversity: this can take place informally, through observation and pattern recognition in the world around her, or formally, through the practice of core educational subjects such as rhetoric, dialectic, geometry, and so forth. Thus, it is the aim of this section to show that Augustine’s final speech on the liberal arts in *De ordine* is a subsection of a much bigger educational paradigm or program--i.e., that of physics in the metaphysical ascent narrative.

One of the obstacles to recognizing the place of learning within physics is the blurry line between formal and informal learning. If one thinks of education primarily as a formal process, which crystallized into an order of disciplines such as Augustine describes at the end of *De ordine*, then the relevance of his educational program within the paradigm of physics is obscured: lists of some of the liberal arts appear in early Platonic texts on physics, but such mentions are brief and, as they appear in plenty of contexts other than physics, their particular relevance to physics as a genre has not been much interrogated. Augustine’s exposition of the seven liberal arts is more systematic and developed than the brief notices of the mathematical arts--geometry, astronomy, and arithmetic--that are often mentioned in passing in physics; this has contributed to the sense that he is developing a largely “new” educational program at Cassiciacum. When one combines this impression with the fact that *De ordine* hasn’t been recognized as a text on physics *per se*, it is not surprising that Augustine’s final speech has often been read as a thematic departure from the preceding dialogue.

The nebulous distinction between formal and informal learning is evident from the earliest texts on physics, and can be seen as a function of the fact that the tradition emphasizes

that the principle underlying all learning is one and the same. This principle is precisely that of “unity in diversity,” of recognizing the relationship between the part and the whole. In the *Physics*, Aristotle illustrates this principle as he outlines a bottom-up approach to learning. He first establishes that the goal is to access that which is more “intrinsically luminous,” that is to say, intelligible knowledge. However, he says that what is more immediately accessible to human cognition is that which is “concrete and particular” as opposed to “abstract and general” knowledge of theories and principles. He describes the means by which one can learn to recognize abstract and general principles based on concrete particulars in this way:

We must advance from the concrete whole to the several constituents which it embraces; for it is the concrete whole that is the more readily cognizable by the senses. And by calling the concrete a ‘whole’ I mean that it embraces in a single complex a diversity of constituent elements, factors, or properties. The relation of names to definitions will throw some light on this point; for the name gives an unanalysed indication of the thing (‘circle,’ for instance), but the definition analyses out some characteristic property or properties. A variant of the same thing may be noted in children, who begin by calling every man ‘father’ and every woman ‘mother,’ till they learn to sever out the special relation to which the terms properly apply.¹⁷⁵

In this passage, Aristotle describes the process by which one comes to understand what a “circle” is. First, the student learns to recognize the thing in its entirety by having concrete instances of a “circle” pointed out. However, such a method could lead to false knowledge--if one were to point to a square, a triangle, a circle and call them all “circle,” the student might well infer that “circle” was the term for “shape.” When she then learns the definition of a circle, she comes to understand it based on its properties, such as the fact that the radius of a circle will always be half its diameter. In this way, Aristotle illustrates that knowledge of the part is a prerequisite for knowledge of the whole. His example is drawn not from formal education, but from observation.

¹⁷⁵ Aristotle, *Physics* 184a-184b. Trans. Wicksteed. διὸ ἐκ τῶν καθόλου ἐπὶ τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστα δεῖ προιέναι· τὸ γὰρ ὅλον κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν γνωριμώτερον, τὸ δὲ καθόλου ὅλον τί ἐστίν· πολλὰ γὰρ περιλαμβάνει ὥσπερ μέρη τὸ καθόλου. Πέπονθε δὲ ταῦτό ττρόπον τινὰ τὰ ὀνόματα πρὸς τὸν λόγον· ὅλον γὰρ τι καὶ ἀδιορίστως σημαίνει (οἶον ὁ κύκλος), ὁ δὲ ὁρισμὸς αὐτοῦ διαιρεῖ εἰς τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστα. καὶ τὰ παῖδιά τὸ μὲν πρῶτον προσαγορεύει πάντας τοὺς ἄνδρας πατέρας καὶ μητέρας τὰς γυναῖκας, ὕστερον δὲ διορίζει τούτων ἑκάτερον.

In the beginning of *De ordine*, Augustine gives a similar account of the relationship between the part and a whole. The context for this lesson is his description of the plight of the soul as it seeks to “return to itself,” which is the ultimate aim of all philosophy.

Marvel not, therefore, that the soul experiences want so much the more as it endeavors more and more to grasp separate things. For as in a circle, whatever its size, there is one middle point, which geometers call the center, and to which all sectors converge; and though the parts of the whole circumference can be cut times without number, yet there is nothing but this one center by which the other parts are mutually measured: it rules over all, as it were, by a kind of law of equality. But if you wish to pass from the center to any part of the circle, the whole is lost sight of in proportion as many parts are traversed. In like manner, the soul spreading out from itself is battered by a kind of immensity and worn out in the quality of a beggar, because its nature forces it to seek that which is one, and the multitude permits it not to find unity.¹⁷⁶

On first reading, this passage might seem antithetical to the approach to learning Aristotle had outlined in the *Physics*. However, the circle Augustine describes is one which is much bigger than Aristotle’s. Aristotle begins with a circle that is discrete and entirely cognizable to the human mind, whereas Augustine’s circle is one which a soul seems able to traverse indefinitely--it may represent the entire cosmos, or at least the unity of the soul’s lived experience. In this case, Augustine envisions the soul grasping only parts of the whole without necessarily realizing that this is what it is doing. But in both examples, the ultimate aim is the same--to recognize the way in which all these diverse pieces comprise a single entity. It is perhaps no coincidence that both authors use the circle as their example of unity-in-diversity: this may well be an allusion to the cosmos--and the soul-- as the paradigmatic circle on which all learning, formal or informal, is modelled.

The Pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo* offers a clear explanation of how the relationship between formal and informal learning is conceived within this model:

But perhaps nature actually has a liking for opposites; perhaps it is from them that she creates harmony, and not from similar things, in just the same way as she has joined the male to the female, and not each of them to another of the same sex, thus making the first harmonious community not of similar but of opposite things. It seems, too, that art does this, in imitation of

¹⁷⁶ DO 1.2.1. Trans. Russell. *Nec mirere quod eo egestatem patitur magis, quo magis appetit plura complecti. Ut enim in circulo quantumvis amplo unum est medium quo cuncta convergunt, quod centrum geometrae vocant, et quamvis totius ambitus partes innumerabiliter secari queant, nihil tamen est praeter illud unum, quo caetera pariliter dimetiantur et quod omnibus quasi quodam aequalitatis iure dominetur; hinc vero in quamlibet partem si egredi velis, eo amittuntur omnia, quo in plurima pergatur: sic animus a seipso fusus immensitate quadam diverberatur et vera mendicitate conteritur, cum eum natura sua cogit ubique unum quaerere et multitudo invenire non sinit.*

nature: for painting mixes its whites and blacks, its yellows and reds, to create images that are concordant with their originals; music mixes high and low notes, and longs and shorts, and makes a single tune of different sounds; by making a mixture of vowels and consonants, grammar composes out of them the whole of its art. This is precisely what Heracleitus the Dark meant when he said “Junctions are wholes and not-wholes, concord and discord, consonance and dissonance. One out of All; All out of One.”¹⁷⁷

In the quotation from Heracleitus which concludes this passage, the author of *De mundo* relates that the central principle of art is harmony, or unity in diversity: one out of all, all out of one.

The author begins this passage with an example of a phenomenon he attributes to nature--namely, the joining of male and female as opposites. But then he proceeds to apply the same principle to art, which he says imitates nature by joining opposites, be that in color theory of art, vowels and consonants in grammar. Cicero makes a similar point in the *Lucullus*, when he states that the mind devised arts as a “set of second senses” (*quasi sensus alteros*) by which to reach philosophy:¹⁷⁸ the arts are a formal extrapolation of the informal processes of sight, touch, and smell which teach men to interpret the natural phenomena around them.

The place of this learning within texts on physics in particular is owed not only to the pragmatic necessity of learning to gain knowledge of the intelligible, but also to the fact that the human soul is considered to be modelled after the unified entity of the cosmos, or the Platonic world-soul.¹⁷⁹ The idea is attributed to Pythagoras, whom he said taught that the whole world

¹⁷⁷Pseudo-Aristotle, 396b. Trans. Forster & Furley. ἴσως δὲ καὶ τῶν ἐναντίων ἢ φύσις γλίσχεται καὶ ἐκ τούτων ἀποτελεῖ τὸ σύμφωνον, οὐκ ἐκ τῶν ὁμοίων, ὥσπερ ἀμέλει τὸ ἄρρεν συνήγαγε πρὸς τὸ θῆλυ καὶ οὐχ ἑκάτερον πρὸς τὸ ὁμόφυλον, καὶ τὴν πρώτην ὁμόνοιαν διὰ τῶν ἐναντίων σημήψεν, οὐ διὰ τῶν ὁμοίων. ἔοικε δὲ καὶ ἡ τέχνη τὴν φύσιν μιμουμένη τοῦτο ποιεῖν. ζωγραφία μὲν γὰρ λευκῶν τε καὶ μελάνων, ὠχρῶν τε καὶ ἐρυθρῶν, χρωμάτων ἐγκερασασμένη φύσεις τὰς εἰκόνας τοῖς προηγουμένοις ἀπετέλεσε συμφώνους, μουσικὴ δὲ ὁξεῖς ἅμα καὶ βαρεῖς, μακροὺς τε καὶ βραχεῖς φθόγγους μίξασα ἐν διαφόροις φωναῖς μίαν ἀπετέλεσεν ἁρμονίαν, γραμματικὴ δὲ ἐκ φωνηέντων καὶ ἀφώνων γραμμάτων κράσιν ποιησαμένη τὴν ὅλην τέχνην ἀπ’ αὐτῶν συνεστήσατο. ταῦτο δὲ τοῦτο ἦν καὶ τὸ παρὰ τῷ σκοτεινῷ λεγόμενον Ἡρακλείτῳ· “συνάψεις ὅλα καὶ οὐχ ὅλα, συμφερόμενον διαφερόμενον, συνᾶδον διαῖδον· καὶ ἐκ πάντων ἐν καὶ ἐξ ἐνὸς πάντα.

¹⁷⁸ Cicero, *Academica* 2.31.

¹⁷⁹ For the purposes of this project, I intentionally side-step questions which have been a source of debate within the subject of natural philosophy both in ancient and modern sources. The question of whether or not the universe was generated is one, as are the mortality of the world-soul and is the precise relationship of the human soul to the world-soul. On these, see Horky (2019: 4-6) and Reydams-Schils (1999: Chapter One). In establishing Augustine’s place within a Platonic curriculum broadly understood, my aim is not to identify his answer to these questions so much as the fact that he is engaging with them on a systematic level.

was pervaded by a soul “of which our souls are fragments.”¹⁸⁰ Augustine makes reference to the world soul at Cassiciacum, suggesting that at that time he believes in it: in the *Retractationes*, he states that he is uncertain; however, the way he describes it implies that the existence of the world soul--or not--is no impediment to understanding the fundamental integrity of the cosmos. The author of *De mundo* describes the relationship between the workings of the universe and the workings of the individual soul in this way:

It is a similar idea that we must have of the universe: by a single inclination all things are spurred to action and perform their peculiar functions—and this single agent is unseen and invisible. Its invisibility is no impediment either to its own action or to our belief in it; for the soul, whereby we live and build households and cities, though it is invisible is perceived through its deeds: for all the conduct of life is discovered, arranged and maintained by the soul—the ploughing and sowing of land, the inventions of art, the use of laws, the order of a city’s government, the activities of people in their own country, and war and peace with foreign nations.¹⁸¹

In this passage, the author gives a bottom-up explanation of the workings of the universe. His proof for the fact that the universe works in unity--i.e., “by a single inclination” is that man can perceive the invisible workings of his soul “through its deeds”: i.e., the same inventions of formal and informal learning. This account is somewhat of a standard-- Cicero speaks similarly in the *Tusculan Disputations*:

Do you think [the world] was formed out of this earthy, mortal and perishable substance? Or was the man so formed who first assigned a name to everything, an achievement which Pythagoras thought one of supreme wisdom; or the man who first united the scattered human units into a body and summoned them to the fellowship of social life; or the man who by a few written characters defined the meaning of the endless variety, as it seemed, of the sounds of the voice; or the man who marked down the paths of the wandering stars, their passings in front of one another, their stoppings? All these were great men; earlier still the men who discovered the fruits of the earth, raiment, dwellings, an ordered way of life, protection against wild creatures—men under whose civilizing and refining guidance we have gradually passed on from the indispensable handicrafts to the finer arts. For through them our ears have gained keen delight from the discovery of the due combinations of musical sounds of diverse quality, and we have looked up at the stars, both those that are fixed in certain spots and those that by name are

¹⁸⁰ Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1.27, trans. Rackham. *ex quo nostri animi carperentur*.

¹⁸¹ Pseudo-Aristotle, 399b. Trans. Forster & Farley. οὕτω χρηὶ καὶ περὶ τοῦ σύμπαντος φρονεῖν· ὑπὸ γὰρ μιᾶς ῥοπῆς ὁτρυνομένων ἀπάντων γίνεται τὰ οἰκεῖα, καὶ ταύτης ἀοράτου καὶ ἀφανοῦς. ὅπερ οὐδαμῶς ἐστὶν ἐμπόδιον οὔτε ἐκείνῃ πρὸς τὸ δρᾶν οὔτε ἡμῖν πρὸς τὸ πιστεῦσαι· καὶ γὰρ ἡ ψυχὴ, δι’ ἣν ζῶμεν τε καὶ οἴκους καὶ πόλεις ἔχομεν, ἀόρατος οὖσα τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτῆς ὁράται· πᾶς γὰρ ὁ τοῦ βίου διάκοσμος ὑπὸ ταύτης εὐθρῆται καὶ διατέτακται καὶ συνέχεται, γῆς ἀρόσεις καὶ φυτεύσεις, τέχνης ἐπίνοιαι, χρήσεις νόμων, κόσμος πολιτείας, ἔνδημοι πράξεις, ὑπερόριος πόλεμος, εἰρήνη.

wandering, though not really so, and he who has seen their revolutions and all their movements has taught that his soul resembles His whose word had fashioned them in the heavens.¹⁸²

In this passage, the author makes functionally the same point as the author of *De mundo* when he concludes that the one who has seen the revolutions of the heavens “has taught that his soul resembles His whose word had fashioned them in the heavens.” In this passage, however, the connection between learning and physics is especially clear: Cicero highlights the fact that observation of the heavenly phenomena is the ultimate illustration of the analogy between the individual soul and knowledge of the creator of the cosmos.

In this passage, too, one can see more clearly traces of the seven liberal arts which Augustine ultimately presents in *De ordine* even more systematically. Cicero lists grammar, music, and astronomy, which stand in for the three “segments” of art which Augustine gives. He has first a trivium of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. Then he proceeds to music, which he sees as a link between the lower language arts and the higher mathematical arts, which for Augustine are geometry, astronomy, and number, or philosophy. Also evident in this passage from Cicero is the idea that humans progressed from “handicrafts to finer arts.” This is an intimation of the idea, evident already in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, that there is in fact a hierarchy of arts.¹⁸³ Although in my discussion so far I have emphasized that this distinction is not clear cut, insofar as the principle undergirding all learning is the same, this idea of progression should also be seen as an early indication of the systematization which ultimately leads to Augustine’s discussion of the liberal arts in *De ordine*.

¹⁸² Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.62, trans. King. *Ex hacne tibi terrena mortalique natura et caduca concreta ea videtur, aut qui primus, quod summae sapientiae Pythagorae visum est, omnibus rebus imposuit nomina, aut qui dissipatos homines congregavit et ad societatem vitae convocavit, aut qui sonos vocis, qui infiniti videbantur, paucis litterarum notis terminavit, aut qui errantium stellarum cursus, praegressiones, institutiones notavit? Omnes magni, etiam superiores, qui fruges, qui vestitum, qui tecta, qui cultum vitae, qui praesidia contra feras invenerunt, a quibus mansuefacti et exculi a necessariis artificiis ad elegantiora defluximus. Nam et auribus oblectatio magna parta est inventa et temperata varietate et natura sonorum et astra suspeximus cum ea, quae sunt infixae certis locis, tum illa non re, sed vocabulo errantia: quorum conversiones omnesque motus qui vidit, is docuit similem animum suum eius esse, qui ea fabricatus esset in caelo.*

¹⁸³ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 981a-b.

These intimations of early expressions of the liberal arts within texts on physics are not the only category of evidence that the liberal arts “grew up” within physics as a discipline. Our nearest *comparandum* for Augustine’s discussion of the cycle of seven liberal arts is the prosimetrum, *De nuptiis philologiae et Mercurii*, by Martianus Capella, a text which narrates the wedding of Mercury and Philology on a cosmological backdrop; as each liberal art is discussed, the protagonists progress through planetary spheres.¹⁸⁴ Thus, both of our earliest attestations of the “mature” sequence of the liberal arts occur within the backdrop of natural philosophy. This association between the liberal arts and the planets was enduring enough to persist into the Middle Ages and through the Renaissance. And though the first use of the term “*artes liberales*” is famously to be found in Cicero’s *De inventione*, arguably the concept derives from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, where the author describes the pursuit of philosophy and the arts as the purview of a “free man.”¹⁸⁵

Physics as a whole, then, is the context in which we should read even the most overt educational aspects of *De ordine*. Erik Kenyon has already offered a thorough discussion of the idea that the aims of Augustine’s exposition of the liberal arts are the same as the aims of the dialogic portion of the text preceding it. As Kenyon argues, the dialogue portion of *De ordine* can be read as an argument for the value of observing intelligible truths by means of sensible phenomena; the speech, an argument for effecting this process via liberal arts. This reading--and my argument in Chapter Five will affirm how much I agree with Kenyon--renders *De ordine* as a whole an illustration of the idea in *Lucullus* that the arts were created as a “set of second senses.”¹⁸⁶ Using Heath’s theory that classical texts are united by a common *telos* rather than a

¹⁸⁴ Ramelli (2015: 268ff).

¹⁸⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 981b talking about priestly class in Egypt developed math and first in those places where men had leisure. καὶ πρῶτον ἐν τούτοις τοῖς τόποις οὐπερ ἐσχόλασαν.

¹⁸⁶ Cicero, *Academica* 2.31.

common theme,¹⁸⁷ Kenyon argues that the apparently disparate halves of *De ordine*--that is, the “order of providence” treated in the dialogue section and the “order of teaching” treated in the final speech--are united by the fact that “Augustine presents the liberal disciplines as formalized versions of the kinds of inquiry human beings engage in by virtue of their rationality.”¹⁸⁸

Kenyon’s aim is to justify the integrity of *De ordine* to readers who have often seen it as wandering and only loosely connected. And with this thesis, he effectively re-discovers within *De ordine* the very reason for which discussions of the arts are included in texts on physics in the first place. As it turns out, the place of Augustine’s liberal arts speech in the dialogue is a function of both the text’s *telos* and its theme. This has two implications for how we read Augustine’s liberal arts speech: first, its relevance to the Cassiciacum dialogues needs no defense; second, it broadens the lens by which we ought to examine the place of Augustine’s curriculum within the educational landscape of late antiquity.

Much of the debate surrounding Augustine’s description of the liberal arts has centered around identifying the classical source of his seven-fold schema.¹⁸⁹ Marrou took for granted, based on Augustine’s mention of Varro, that his primary model derived from the late Republican author’s lost *Libri Disclipinarum*.¹⁹⁰ Ilsetraut Hadot offered a counter-thesis, arguing that Augustine’s sources derived from Middle and Neoplatonism as opposed to a Roman author, and particularly the lost treatise of Porphyry, *De regressu animae*.¹⁹¹ The majority have followed Marrou; among these, Danuta Shanzer’s arguments in favor of Varro as a source are notable for their thoroughness.¹⁹² At the same time, Hadot’s thesis has received persistent

¹⁸⁷ Heath 1989.

¹⁸⁸ Kenyon (2019: 104).

¹⁸⁹ For reviews of this debate, see Vessey (2005:1-12) and Topping (2012: 10-14).

¹⁹⁰ Marrou 1958.

¹⁹¹ Hadot 1984 (rev. 2005).

¹⁹² Shanzer (1991; 2005).

support.¹⁹³ Yet, as Mark Vessey notes in his introduction to *Augustine and the Disciplines*, one need not necessarily choose a single stream of influence.¹⁹⁴ The very premise of the debate--Roman vs. Platonist--is, after all, problematic on the grounds that it assumes Roman authors like Varro or Cicero were not heirs to the Platonic traditions: itself a dangerous assumption. I hope that my discussion of texts on physics above--texts which Augustine may well have known--has shown that much of the material Augustine covers in *De ordine* was disseminated widely across authors and philosophical schools. While he surely did rely more heavily on some sources than on others, the search for a single source or sources can be misleading insofar as it lends itself to the impression that Augustine's expression of the liberal arts was necessarily exceptional. Even if it should turn out that his particular articulation of the seven arts does in fact reflect the transformation of a handful of authors' development upon the liberal arts paradigm, this fact would be far less important than the overall way in which Augustine's treatment of the arts belongs to his articulation of a more robust Platonic curriculum. For this project, the value of the debate concerning Augustine's sources for the liberal arts lies largely in the way it has thrown into relief Augustine's work as indebted to a variety of sources--be they Roman, Neoplatonic, or otherwise: for this in and of itself speaks to the potential breadth of his project.

The search for Augustine's sources has been driven in large part by the desire to situate Augustine within the history of the development of the liberal arts. On the one hand, his place in this narrative is thought to be pivotal on the grounds that he offers the first extant account of the medieval schema of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, and because, in some readers' minds, he is the first "to integrate the classical curricula within the structure of moral theology."¹⁹⁵ At the

¹⁹³ Van Fleteren (1995:18), Ramelli (2015). Cipriani (1997), by contrast, argues for a Neo-Pythagorean source.

¹⁹⁴ Vessey (2005:2).

¹⁹⁵ Topping (2012: 11).

same time, serious questions have arisen as to the durability of the model Augustine offers at Cassiciacum. Many readers, taking their cue from the fact that Augustine never completed the treatises on liberal arts which he initially suggested would follow the Cassiciacum project, took this failure as a sign that he ultimately decided that a reconciliation of the arts and Christianity was not productive.¹⁹⁶ There is not much evidence that Augustine's articulation of the liberal arts is in fact directly responsible for the popularity of the arts in the Middle Ages, an argument put forward by Marrou himself in the *retractio* included in the second edition of his work on Augustine.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, many scholars see Augustine's later work on Christian education, *De doctrina christiana*, as fundamentally incompatible with the model proffered at Cassiciacum--an idea which further restricts the perceived value of the dialogues as individual texts.¹⁹⁸ Reading *De ordine* as a text on physics offers a way out of this conundrum: it offers a model of education which is broader than the liberal arts *per se*.

Not only is this breadth evident in the way Augustine makes use of Platonic *curricula*, but the way he does so ultimately gestures to the relationship between philosophy and rhetoric as rival disciplines. Thus, Augustine's Platonic curriculum suggests that he relied on a synthesis between the fields of rhetoric, philosophy, and the liberal arts, which we so often treat as separate in modern scholarship. If we focus on what Augustine's educational program has in common with prior texts on physics as opposed to how it is different, a picture emerges in which the operative distinction between the formal aspects of his liberal arts program is not a division between each individual art, but rather those pertaining to language as opposed to those pertaining to number, or ultimately philosophy. As Kenyon has also pointed out, even within the speech itself Augustine distances himself from the idea that students must follow the sequence of arts--grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, music, geometry, astronomy, and number--which

¹⁹⁶ Conybeare (2006:173-174), Muller (2015: 371).

¹⁹⁷ Marrou 1949.

¹⁹⁸ A line of thought which follows Brown (1967: 256-66).

he initially lays out as if one is a prerequisite for the next. In a remarkable passage in which Augustine compares dialectic and number, he says that if students study only these two--or ultimately number--it will be sufficient. The reason he gives is that these embody the principles of division and synthesis, which is another way of articulating the principle of "unity in diversity" from the beginning of *De ordine* and Aristotle's *Physics*. In this way, Augustine's speech at the end of *De ordine* emphasizes the principle of unity in physics over and above the importance of students' progression through the discrete stages of the liberal arts. This divide is, I think, subtly evident in the surveys of "inventions" employed by authors of many texts on physics, such as the examples from Cicero and *De mundo* which I noted above. While these surveys mix formal and informal arts, the consistent presence of grammar or letters can be seen to represent the language arts as a group, whereas the presence of astronomy can be seen to represent the higher arts--i.e., philosophy or number.

This schema is subtly evident in Augustine's speech on the liberal arts. There, he designates a shift between those arts which pertain to hearing (namely grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic) and those which pertain to sight, i.e., geometry, astronomy, and number.¹⁹⁹ In his description, music occupies a pivotal position between the two. It is closely linked to the language arts in that it pertains to hearing, and is the fulfillment of the study of poetry: in this way, it unites all the language arts of grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, and music, into one. On the other hand, the fact that music so clearly illustrates the principle of number renders it, for Augustine, a close relative of the higher arts--geometry, arithmetic, and astronomy. In what would become the standard division of the liberal arts in the Middle Ages, music is grouped in this latter category of the *quadrivium*. In many reckonings of the liberal arts, including that of Martianus Capella, music is in fact the highest art of the *quadrivium*--a position which would seem to accord with the notion of harmony as foundational to the cosmos. We have already seen that Augustine gives music a similar pride of place when he positions *De musica* at the

¹⁹⁹ DO 2.11.30.

height of the ascent narrative of his curriculum in the *Retractationes*. This suggests that he was likely aware of various positions for music and chose at Cassiciacum to put music in the middle of the sequence. The middle position is inherently significant in a genre dominated by the principle of the circle--and its center--as the most perfect point of a most perfect form. Thus, by putting music in the middle of his liberal arts sequence, Augustine emphasizes the unity and link between the lower language--or rhetorical--arts, and the higher arts of philosophy. By linking music--the highest art in many reckonings of the lower arts schema--with the rhetorical arts, Augustine paradoxically elevates the place of rhetoric within his paradigm of philosophical ascent. In the chapters which follow, I will argue that the classical canons of rhetoric in fact serve as important organizing principle of the dialogues. If we think of Augustine's *trivium* as collectively representative of rhetoric, the fact that the canons feature so prominently should not be seen as an alternative to the sequence of liberal arts, but rather a broader category of education which encompasses them.

Augustine's particular inclusion of rhetoric within this philosophical paradigm may well be a way in which he follows Cicero's competition with Greek predecessors. Cicero opens *Tusculan Disputations*, which he famously calls a "declamation of his old age,"²⁰⁰ by listing those arts in which the Greeks excelled over the Romans and vice versa.²⁰¹ He states that the Greeks won in poetry, and that they considered music the highest form of all learning. In so doing, Cicero links poetry and music in a manner similar to what we find in Augustine's liberal arts speech. Cicero proceeds to say that the Romans have bested the Greeks in oratory, and that philosophy has been neglected by the Romans; Cicero states that it is now his aim to right that wrong. Thus, insofar as he has already stated in this preface that he is applying the principles of oratory to philosophy, one can say that the project of the *Tusculan Disputations* as Cicero states it in the preface is to offer an intertwined program of philosophy and oratory in competition with

²⁰⁰ *Tusc.* 1.7, trans. King.

²⁰¹ *Tusc.* 1.2ff.

his Greek predecessors. Augustine, by associating music so closely with not only poetry but all the language arts, including rhetoric, offers his own iteration of this competition: one in which he takes the art which Cicero attributes to the Greeks as the “highest” form of education, and allies it closely with the areas in which Cicero finds the Romans pre-eminent. It may be that the focus of *De musica* on meter and poetry is an extension of Augustine’s particularly language-based focus on music: as this dialogue represents the highest sequence in his first three cycles of a Platonic curriculum, it stands as a testimony to just how elevated a place in Augustine’s educational paradigm the language arts held.

Whether Cicero is being entirely fair to the Greeks when he implies that they had not studied oratory well is an open question. We have already seen that early Greek descriptions of the arts in the cosmos include language arts, and the Platonic curricula of Syrianus and Porphyry seem to include “logic”--which often harbors principles of rhetoric--in its earliest sequences. Nevertheless, the particular way in which Augustine integrates rhetoric and into his philosophical project and his deep debt to Cicero, allow us to say that this, too, is likely a part of his creation of both a Christian and Roman program of education.

III. Conclusion

The educational paradigm of physics is elegant in its simplicity. It turns on the hinge of unity and disunity, wholes and not-wholes, sameness and difference, oneness and multiplicity; in so doing, it offers a way to incorporate every aspect of the human experience, lived and theoretical. This gives it the schematic flexibility to encompass everything from the fundamentals of rhetoric to the rotations of the planets, all within the context of a compelling a story of ascent from obscurity to clarity, sensible to intelligible, earth to heaven. This combination of schematic flexibility and a compelling narrative may well have contributed to the Platonic curriculum’s well-deserved reputation for stability over the centuries between the

Hellenistic era and the Middle Ages.²⁰² I would like to conclude this chapter by considering the persistence of this same paradigm within Augustine's own *corpus*.

Augustine uses the framework of metaphysical ascent to shape his thought, teaching, and even his *corpus* for years after Cassiciacum. This persistence defies the notion that the dialogues as philosophical texts represent a transient phase in Augustine's thought, suggesting rather that they are the first example of a cyclical model which would inform his work well into his career as a priest and, perhaps, bishop. Even the *Confessions* appears to follow the basic narrative of the *corpus*: Augustine's opening question of whether one first knows God, or calls on Him, is a basic question of epistemology akin to those he explores in other texts on "logic" like the *Contra Academicos*. So, too, are his explorations of the alphabet, language, and basic learning throughout Book One. In Books 2-6, Augustine gives a mainly *ethical* account of his life, describing his struggle with various lusts, which prevented him from fully pursuing the inclinations to the philosophy and faith to which he was exposed. From Book 7 onward, Augustine begins to explore the question of good and evil more fully, eventually finding his answer in his conversion and baptism. The final three books are concerned directly with memory, time, and creation--the core subjects of *physics*. While the points of contact between this narrative and that of the metaphysical ascent narrative of Platonic corpora deserve to be explored more fully, the fact that Augustine uses this framework in his most influential "mature" work is a testament to the impact of this narrative as a lasting framework for Augustine's thought.

The core educational paradigm of the Cassiciacum dialogues is not one which Augustine discarded, but rather one on which he relied and which he adapted throughout his career. As an example of how Augustine tailored the model to his work as a cleric, I will conclude this chapter with a comparison between the first three recursions of ascent in the *Retractations*, which I discussed above, and the final, fourth cycle evident at the end of Book One

²⁰² Tarrant (2014: 27).

of the same text. This cycle can be read as a fresh start rather than a fourth recursion within the initial sequence, for Augustine begins again with a text on logic. The marked difference between this sequence and the one which precedes it is that the texts engage with Scripture much more directly and pervasively; Augustine appears much less interested in depicting himself as a philosopher and more interested in showing how the Christian tradition can map onto this model.

<i>Cycle Four - Africa cont.</i>	
<i>De magistro</i>	Logic
<i>De vera religione</i>	Ethics
<i>De utilitate credendi</i>	
<i>De duabus animabus</i>	
<i>Acta contra Fortunatum</i>	Physics
<i>De fide et symbolo</i>	
<i>De Genesi ad litteram</i>	
<i>Various</i>	Didactic Texts

Only the first of these texts, *De magistro*, is ever associated with the Cassiciacum dialogues in secondary literature. This is because Augustine tells us he wrote it soon after the Cassiciacum retreat, and because it takes a dialogue form. Often hailed as an early masterpiece of semiotics, the text deals with the relationship between signs and things, ultimately arguing that the only true teacher is God. As a work of epistemology and on the process of learning, it has much in common with the *Contra Academicos*, as I will show in Chapter Three; of this fourth cycle, it alone represents *logic*.

The next three texts of Augustine's sequence are *De vera religione*, *De utilitate credendi*, and *De duabus animabus*. The overlap in content between these texts and the second Cassiciacum dialogue, *De beata vita*, is remarkable: as a group, they once again represent *ethics*. The central difference is that in this cycle all the texts are focused explicitly on rebutting Manichean philosophy from an overtly Christian perspective. *De vera religione* is addressed to Augustine's patron Romanianus, who also happens to be the dedicatee of the *Contra Academicos*. It begins by invoking the way of the happy life and immediately invokes the Trinity, which man worships by delight--the precise themes Augustine evokes at the end of *De beata vita*. In *De utilitate credendi*, Augustine treats the question which consumes the first debate of *De beata vita*: whether one who is seeking truth can be happy, or whether only the one who has found it is happy. He also treats wisdom and foolishness as absolute contraries to one another, which is a central argument of *De beata vita*, as I show in Chapter Four. In *De duabus animabus*, one sees the transition from ethics to physics, for here, Augustine argues against the Manichean position that a good and evil soul war within each person. In its emphasis on the individual, it is a text on ethics; Augustine's emphasis is on the distinction between creature and creator. This paves the way for Augustine's transition to physics.

The first text which represents physics is the *Acta contra Fortunatum*, in which Augustine once again treats the problem of evil, and the concept of evil as a privative. Following this, there is the brief didactic text *De fide et symbolo*, in which Augustine emphasizes once again the absoluteness of God according to the argument that God has no opposite. But it can also be seen as an educational component of this sequence on physics; instead of the cursus of the liberal arts, Augustine gives the basic tenets of the Christian faith. Rounding out this sequence of physics is *De Genesi ad litteram*, which Augustine introduces as a text on physics by referencing that the aim is to investigate the "obscurities of natural things" created by God.

Following this, the remainder of Book One of the *Retractations* is taken up with a series of didactic texts, many of which were written for a less educated audience. These include a couple of letters against heretics, commentaries on the Psalms and some Pauline epistles, a

series of questions and answers, and a treatise on lying. At this point in Augustine's *corpus* readers have often supposed his interest turns decisively from works of a more philosophical bent to the practical concerns which were raised in his work as a priest and homilist. On the one hand, this fourth cycle of recursive ascent includes no set of texts on metaphysics, and the shift from physics to these didactic texts appears abrupt. On the other hand, there is no clear generic distinction between these final texts in the corpus and those which Augustine lists earlier in this fourth cycle of ascent. For instance, his first text on physics, *Acta contra Fortunatum*, that is, a Manichee whom he debated, takes much the same form as his later epistles against a Donatist and Manichaean.

Rather than read this transition as a decisive break from the ascent paradigm, it is possible to read the end of *Retractationes* Book I, and this fourth cycle itself, as a playful and creative shift on Augustine's part in how he directs the evolution of his *corpus*. In the first place, his choice to mute the level of "metaphysics" and move instead into public-facing, didactic texts of a practical nature has some parallel with Cicero's own *corpus*, which, after the texts on physics, moves to texts which first blend questions of metaphysics--i.e., Scipio's dream in the *Republic*, with texts of a practical nature: i.e., the rest of *De republica*, his *Consolatione*, *De senectute*, and the *Cato*. This move towards public-facing and practical texts is one some authors associate with the Peripatetic tradition of corpus arrangement, and thus can be seen as a regular variant within the Platonic corpus tradition.

Furthermore, a comparison between Augustine's first three recursions (i.e., the three cycles which run from *Contra Academicos* through *De musica*) and this fourth cycle yields a telling irony. The first three cycles are more "advanced" in that they follow Syrianus' pattern of recursions, culminating in the "highest" topic of metaphysics. The fourth cycle stops short of fully exploring metaphysics, turning instead to more elementary topics, with a series of texts which, in the *Retractationes*, Augustine repeatedly tells us are directed towards a less educated audience. And yet, lack of learning notwithstanding, the answers he gives to the same questions he treated in the Cassiciacum dialogues are more thorough and sophisticated. For example, in

De utilitate credendi he treats the same distinction about happiness which he introduces in *De beata vita*: i.e., the difference between happiness of one who is seeking and one who has found. But in the later text, he begins his answer at a more advanced point in the discussion: he does not question whether the seeker is to be praised, but affirms that he is on the path to happiness. In this sense, the fourth cycle in Augustine's *corpus* is paradoxically "more advanced" than the previous cycles, though it does not attempt the most advanced topics of the Platonic arrangement. The irony here is the same Christian authors like to use when they suggest that untrained "fisherman" can achieve a higher level of insight than those trained in classical philosophy.

Given the persistence of the ascent narrative--and particularly the recursions within this ascent--one wonders if the title *Retractationes* is meant to evoke the most basic meaning of *retractare*, i.e., to review again, more so than the meaning of revision, which is how the text is most often read. It seems possible that the text is less an assessment and warning of the errors in Augustine's early works than it is a grand exposition of an educational program Augustine developed throughout his life. In some ways, this program reinforces the *Cassiciacum* dialogues' status as *juvenilia*: they are well and truly embedded in the beginning of a long trajectory of learning. At the same time, the specificity of their role in that beginning is much more sophisticated than readings which emphasize their transitional nature imply. As Augustine's representation of the first stages of ascent--an ascent which takes place largely within a philosophical paradigm--they fulfill a distinct role shared by no other texts in the corpus. They alone reveal Augustine's concept of how the paradigm of ascent functions within the most obscure plane of learning and perception, particularly for students who are working within the paradigm of classical philosophy.

A question which I have not answered to any level of satisfaction in this chapter is how rhetoric fits within this program. What I do hope to have achieved here is a theoretical foundation by which rhetoric might be said to have a place within this larger educational program. Over the course of the next three chapters, it is my hope that the extent of Augustine's

engagement with rhetoric at Cassiciacum will come to light. It is this, as an aspect of Augustine's engagement with the philosophy of his predecessors, which may ultimately prove to be a critical part of the particular contribution of the dialogues within Augustine's entire educational program.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CRADLE OF AUTHORITY:

A LOGIC OF INVENTION IN THE *CONTRA ACADEMICOS*

Now that I have outlined Augustine's adherence to the Platonic *corpus* model of metaphysical ascent, my task with respect to each of the Cassiciacum dialogues is twofold: first, to make the case more fully that the individual dialogues do indeed correspond with the divisions of philosophy, and second, to demonstrate how Augustine integrates the canons of rhetoric with his philosophical subject matter in a way that implicates the elementary subject matter of classical rhetoric within his Platonic paradigm of the cosmos. In the case of the first Cassiciacum dialogue, *Contra Academicos*, my argument is that the dialogue is simultaneously an exploration of philosophical division of logic and of the rhetorical canon of invention, or the discovery of arguments.²⁰³ As it turns out, those two categories are already mutually implicated: the Stoic understanding of logic divides it into dialectic and rhetoric, and classical handbooks on rhetorical invention share much of their subject matter with handbooks which are often considered to be their philosophical counterparts, such as the *Topica* of Aristotle and Cicero. In the literature on the subject, however, philosophical rhetoric is often treated as distinct from the rhetorical handbooks used to train students for forensic debate; the expectation is that the rhetoric taught for the purposes of oratory shares a common root with that used for philosophical argument, but that in practice the examples used in each case are different, as are the applications.²⁰⁴ The surprise of the *Contra Academicos* is that, in this self-consciously philosophical dialogue, Augustine uses the material of rhetorical handbooks which are often assumed to be used for training in rhetoric as opposed to philosophy. As I will show below, the

²⁰³ On invention, see Leff (1983:23-44), Gaines (2007:163-180), Steel (2009:77-91), and Dugan (2013:25-40).

²⁰⁴ See for example Gaines 2007.

way in which he does so serves to bring into tension the differing aims of dialectic vs. rhetorical invention as they are described in ancient handbooks. The aim of the former is purportedly to find the truth, that of the latter, to persuade. By problematizing the distinction between the two Augustine, in imitation of Cicero, carves out a place for rhetoric within his philosophical program.

Augustine's particular interest in the rhetorical practice of *inventio* cannot be fully understood, however, without an appreciation for the way in which *Contra Academicos* fulfills the function of a text on "logic" within the Platonic *corpus* narrative in a broader sense. As I suggested in Chapter Two, within Platonic *corpus* arrangements, texts on "logic" occupy the first--or one of the earlier--positions within the ascent narrative because they are centrally concerned with epistemology, or how a student of philosophy can know anything at all. As such, they are closely allied with protreptic texts; in some arrangements, such as Thrasyllus' tetralogic arrangement of Platonic *corpora*, *protrepsis* is its own initial category within the ascent paradigm. Cicero too seems to have this model in mind when he publishes his own Platonic arrangement in *De divinatione* 2.1: his first stage of ascent includes the *Hortensius*, a protreptic text which has mostly been lost. Interestingly, Augustine tells us in the preface to the *Contra Academicos* that prior to the philosophical retreat at Cassiciacum, his students had already become interested in philosophy through reading the *Hortensius*. Not only does this render the students imitators of Augustine's philosophical journey as he tells it in the *Confessions*, but it also serves to locate the *Contra Academicos* as the "second" text in Augustine's philosophical *corpus*: he writes no protreptic of his own, but begins his sequence in reference to the second text of Cicero's sequence, which is none other than the *Academica*. At the same time, Augustine endows the *Contra Academicos* with a markedly protreptic bent. At the end of Book One, for instance, he tells the students that the purpose of their debate up to that point was to ensure they were truly invested in the study of philosophy. In a later epistle written after the *Contra Academicos*' publication, he tells his friend Hermogenianus that the point of the dialogue was to ensure that readers would not be hindered from the pursuit of philosophy by the fear that

nothing could be known.²⁰⁵ These aims suggest that he is most interested in removing impediments to knowledge in this dialogue as opposed to giving a positive argument for anything. The idea of removing impediments to progress is reminiscent of another philosophical category which appears in some early Platonic sequences--namely, *catharsis*. Like *protrepsis*, this category seems to become subsumed within "logic" in later systematizations of the Platonic corpus. There is an intuitive aspect to this assimilation, insofar as the process of dialectic was developed around the notion of expelling false beliefs.

In *De divinatione* 2.1, Cicero tells us that he wrote the *Academica* as a way of promoting the best school students ought to follow. In Chapter One, I suggested that this is one of the ways in which *Contra Academicos* follows Cicero: in the *Contra Academicos* Augustine recounts a philosophical narrative in which he represents his brand of Christian Platonism as the culmination of the teaching of all "Platonic" philosophers, including Cicero. The connection between this facet of Cicero's and Augustine's "Academic" dialogues and logic as a category is to be found, I think, in their treatment of the distinction between reason and authority as alternate, yet intertwined, means of learning. In Chapter One, I demonstrated that Augustine's division of learning into these categories--a division he makes in his programmatic speech on education at the end of *De ordine*--is likely one he adopted from Cicero, who routinely uses the terms "reason and authority" to describe the systems of various philosophical schools. For Cicero, the ideal model is one in which a philosopher possesses embodied authority, but also allows his students to exercise their own reason in the attainment of knowledge. In the *De ordine* speech, Augustine draws out the conundrum of this binary by emphasizing that students seeking an education have no choice but to entrust themselves to a teacher, that is, an authority, in order to develop the use of their reason. This means, in effect, that they trust a teacher blindly: they have no use of reason with which to discern who the best teachers are. In both the *Academica* and *Contra Academicos*, then, Cicero and Augustine are not only promoting their

²⁰⁵ Augustine, Ep. 1.3.

particular philosophical “schools”: they are promoting themselves as trustworthy authorities who can guide students through the treacherous early stages of their philosophical journeys.

The *Contra Academicos*, as Augustine’s first philosophical dialogue, is centered around precisely this tension between authority and reason. Augustine signals as much in a famous passage at the end of the dialogue where he cites this binary explicitly, stating that students learn through the two-fold path of reason and authority. This is the “broader” question of logic which Augustine treats in the *Contra Academicos*. It is his answer to the epistemological conundrum of *De ordine*, namely how a student can safely choose an authority to follow without his use of reason. Not for nothing, Augustine uses the image of the “cradle of authority” in his *De ordine* speech: at the very beginning of one’s philosophical life, recourse to authority is unavoidable. Over the course of this chapter, I will make the case that Augustine’s interplay between rhetoric and dialectic maps onto the tension between authority and reason. The place Augustine carves out for rhetoric within his philosophical schema is precisely the place of authority: it is a necessary and inevitable part of the pursuit of philosophy in the early stages.

I hope this chapter will represent a twofold contribution to scholarship on the *Contra Academicos*. My main aim is to demonstrate the fundamental importance of rhetoric within Augustine’s philosophical program. In the process of making this point, however, I have inevitably inserted myself into the longstanding debate concerning Augustine’s refutation of skepticism (or not) in the dialogue. While most scholars agree that the aim of *Contra Academicos* is to refute skepticism, readers have varied widely in their appraisals of the nature of this refutation.²⁰⁶ Augustine makes several different arguments against skepticism throughout the dialogue, and thus one class of readers has devoted its energy to identifying which of these is Augustine’s most successful argument.²⁰⁷ Christopher Kirwan’s view that none of Augustine’s individual arguments against skepticism are truly convincing is, perhaps, more compelling than

²⁰⁶ Kenyon 2019: 25-30 offers an extremely thorough overview of the scholarship on this question.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Fuhrer (1993: 107-125), Dutton (2003: 7-30).

attempts to elevate any single argument against the skeptics.²⁰⁸ A second class of readers has contended that Augustine's refutation of skepticism lies not in any epistemological argument, but in what it has termed the "moral argument" at the end of the dialogue.²⁰⁹ A third class of readers has claimed that Augustine's refutation of skepticism is the authority of Christ, and particularly Christ's Incarnation.²¹⁰ More recently, Erik Kenyon has argued that these focused studies on Augustine's arguments have obscured Augustine's larger pedagogical project, in which Augustine is not so much intent upon refuting skepticism as he is in leading students through an exercise in learning how to make probable arguments. Kenyon acknowledges that Augustine ultimately endorses a combination of Platonic Intellectualism and Christian authority, but points to the ways Augustine also teaches his students about the nature and function of probability. For Kenyon, Augustine is a skeptic--teaching skepticism--who believes that Christian Platonism is probably true.

I have structured my argument on Augustine's use of logic--or reason and authority--into two parts. In the first, I look at Augustine's *praxis*. I show that Augustine problematizes the notion of a cut and dry binary between dialectic and rhetoric, reason and authority, by structuring the ostensibly dialectic conversation of the dialogue according to the parts of speech outline used to teach composition in the rhetorical handbooks of the first century BCE. In Part Two, I contend that this structural sleight of hand is part and parcel of a sophisticated rhetorical theory Augustine elucidates in the dialogue. In this theory, Augustine undermines the distinction between dialectic and rhetoric, eliding the two, even while (paradoxically) maintaining the distinction between them. The reason for this is that, for Augustine, the only true teacher is God: as a human teacher, Augustine can only purvey probable--that is, rhetorical--arguments to his students. Thus, I agree with Kenyon on the point that Augustine

²⁰⁸ Kirwan (1989: 15-34).

²⁰⁹ Heil (1972: 99-116); Mosher (1981: 89-114); Harding (2006: 247-274).

²¹⁰ O'Meara (1950: 334-343); Holte (1962); Smalbrugge (1986: 41-55).

embraces skepticism, but I take this embrace to be contingent: it is the only functional epistemology available to novice students since their reason (*ratio*)--and therefore their ability to practice true dialectic--is not developed enough to lead them to knowledge. Ultimately, Augustine's answer to conundrum of the reason/authority binary is Christ, who embodies both simultaneously, eliding the distinction between the two at the highest level on which they operate, even if that distinction is (somewhat) maintained on the practical level Augustine exemplifies in the dialogue. This theory, then, is Augustine's presentation of a Christian Platonism to compete with Cicero and other Platonic predecessors: at the outset of his philosophical program, Augustine reveals a model in which Christ is the answer to the epistemological schema which undergirds the model of metaphysical ascent.

In the conclusion of this chapter, I briefly consider the implications of Augustine's practical use of textbook material akin to that of Cicero's *De inventione* within this schema. Augustine's use of rote rhetorical material might seem, at first glance, to be at odds with Cicero's own apparent repudiation of that model in his mature dialogue, *De oratore*. However, I argue that Augustine would likely have seen *De inventione* itself to be a text that operated within this schema of metaphysical ascent; as such, his use of Cicero's elementary textbook material should not be seen as antagonistic to Cicero's theory, but an adaptation of that theory for Augustine's own ends.

I. *The Practice of Invention*

There are several indications that the tension between dialectic and rhetoric is central to *Contra Academicos*. In his first introductory epistle, Augustine tells his patron Romanianus that he has abandoned "windy" rhetoric in favor of philosophical pursuits. At the end of the dialogue, Alypius, saying that he is exhausted by argumentation, requests that Augustine switch from dialectic to *oratio perpetua*. But perhaps the most telling indication that Augustine is exploring the relationship between the two arts is the way the philosophical subject matter of the dialogue intersects with the terminology associated with the practice of invention (*inventio*)

as it was taught in both dialectic and rhetorical handbooks of late antiquity. *Inventio*, or the “finding of arguments,” shares its root meaning with the central question of *Contra Academicos*: whether or not it is possible to find (*invenire*) the truth. At the outset of the dialogue, Augustine sets up a debate between two sides: those who will argue the position of the Academic skeptics, that it is impossible to find the truth, and those who will argue that it is possible to find the truth. The tone of this debate is formal, and throughout the work characters repeatedly refer to the expectation that both sides will use dialectic with integrity according to the aim of dialectic as a means of finding the truth.

Although invention was a practice used in conjunction with both dialectic and rhetoric, in handbooks of the latter we find the definition which resonates most closely with the *Contra Academicos*. “Invention is the finding of true, or like-true (*veri similis*) arguments, which render a cause probable (*probabilis*).”²¹¹ This definition was such a commonplace in rhetorical education of Augustine’s time that it is likely the question of whether the Academics were right that truth cannot be found (*invenire*) served as a *double entendre* for his readers, who would have been primed to recognize the coincidence between *invenire* and *inventio*. They would also have been ready to identify the overlap between the skeptics’ claims that one must rely on impressions that are like-true (*veri similis*) and probable (*probabilis*) with the rhetorical definition of invention as the finding of arguments that are (*veri similis*) and make a cause seem *probable*. Thus, the very topic of *Contra Academicos* calls into the question the nature of the search--the *inventio*--that the group is undertaking. Is this a “dialectic” search aimed at finding the truth, or a “rhetorical” search aimed at making probable arguments? What is the distinction between the two?

In late antiquity, the most prominent handbooks associated with these definitions were those of Cicero. *De inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* were both attributed to him, though the latter is now considered to be spurious.²¹² It is my belief, based on a variety of

²¹¹ *De inv.* 1.7: *Inventio est excogitatio rerum verarum aut veri similium quae causam probabilem reddant.*

²¹² See Hadot (1971: 73-77) for the use of *De inventione* as a textbook in the Latin west.

correspondences, that Augustine's use of invention in the *Contra Academicos* aligns more closely with the *De inventione*.²¹³ Augustine may also have been working from Marius Victorinus' commentary on the *De inventione*, which is a possibility we ought to entertain all the more seriously given the correlations between Augustine's use of definition and Marius Victorinus' handbook on that subject.²¹⁴ However, it is not the purpose of this chapter to come to a definitive conclusion with respect to Augustine's use of sources. My aim is to consider how Augustine represents himself as a teacher in the tradition of Cicero, and for that it is sufficient to know that he is using material associated with Cicero's authority. Moreover, training in invention was so fundamental and, in a sense, generic within rhetorical education that it might well be futile to attempt to identify specific borrowings in every case. The far more interesting questions are how and why Augustine adapts, for use in a philosophical dialogue, "parts of speech" which are presented in those handbooks to be used for forensic speeches.

In what follows, I will offer a reading of the dialogue which suggests that *Contra Academicos*' narrative is structured, in a manner both subtle and methodical, according to the five parts of speech which represented the basic template for an oration as taught in the rhetorical handbooks of the first century B.C.E.: *exordium*, *narratio*, *partitio*, *confirmatio*, *refutatio*, and *peroratio*.²¹⁵ While these parts of speech had been treated under "arrangement" in older handbook traditions, by the first century B.C.E. Roman handbooks were consistent in treating them as a subset of invention, likely on the grounds that, in order to find the best arguments for one's speech, one had to know how the speech was structured.²¹⁶ In fashioning his dialogue on whether the truth can be found around the structure used for invention in rhetorical

²¹³ The most obvious point of contact is the difference between the five-part proofs in the two Ciceronian handbooks and the fact that Augustine here follows the model laid out in the *De inventione*. I discuss this in the *confirmatio* section below.

²¹⁴ See Chapter Four of this project.

²¹⁵ On *invention*, see Leff (1983: 23-44), Gaines (2007: 163-180), Steel (2009: 77-91), and Dugan (2013: 25-40).

²¹⁶ Steel (2005: 83).

handbooks, Augustine once again undermines the expectation which he sets up in the introduction to this dialogue that he has turned from rhetoric to philosophy. Or rather, he demonstrates a way in which rhetoric is deeply embedded in his philosophical program. Over the course of the outline given below, I will show how in each “part of speech”--i.e., each section of the dialogue, Augustine inverts the expectation that his students will arrive at truth through dialectical inquiry, instead demonstrating that rhetorical methods are a preferred heuristic when students are not ready for more advanced dialectic.

There are three reasons why I believe that this scheme reflects a self-conscious literary structure and is not simply the result of organic thought patterns shaped by Augustine’s own (thorough) rhetorical education and training. The first reason is the play on words evoked by the overlap between the question of *Contra Academicos*--whether one can find the truth, and the process of invention as a means of finding arguments. The second reason is the sheer level of detail with which the sections of the dialogue correspond not only to the general parts of speech outlined in the handbook, but also to second and third tier instructions those handbooks give for what to include in each respective section. Finally, the other Cassiciacum dialogues, which correspond with different canons of rhetoric, do not follow the same five parts of speech outline as the *Contra Academicos*. It is true that all three dialogues have introductions (*exordia*) of sorts, and all three end in speeches which serve as conclusions (*perorationes*), but neither *De beata vita* nor *De ordine* has a *narratio*, *divisio*, or *confirmatio* of the kind we see in the *Contra Academicos*. Moreover, the *exordia* and *perorationes* of these latter dialogues do not correspond with the handbook prescriptions for each part of speech with the textbook regularity we find in the *Contra Academicos*.

i. Exordium

In rhetorical handbooks, *exordium* refers to the introduction of a speech.²¹⁷ According to the *De inventione*, the main goal of this introduction is to “bring the hearers into a suitable state to receive the rest of the speech.” Cicero lists three formulaic criteria for doing so: that the speaker render the hearers “well-disposed, attentive, and teachable.”²¹⁸ He then recommends that the speaker focus on eliciting one or another of these characteristics based on the type of case he is treating. He lists five types: admirable, marvelous, humble, doubtful, and obscure. He then gives programmatic instructions for how, with respect to each type of cause, one may elicit desired combination of good disposition, attentiveness, and teachability from the audience.

I suggest that the first book of *Contra Academicos* represents an *exordium*: the goal of the book is the same as Cicero gives for *exordia*, and throughout the book Augustine self-consciously effects the same states in the reader as Cicero recommends. At the end of Book One, Augustine consoles his students over the fact that they have not made any philosophical progress during the book. Throughout Book One, his two students, Licentius and Trygetius had each been taking sides in support of and against the Academic position that the truth cannot be found. When they reach a stalemate, however, Augustine tells them that the argument the debate they had stretched out over the course of this book:

These matters could have been done with in a few words, if I hadn’t wished to put you through an exercise, and test your strength and zeal, which matters a great deal to me. For when I decided to exhort you powerfully towards inquiring after truth, I began to inquire of you how much energy you placed in this. You all placed so much, that I couldn’t desire more.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ *De inv.* 1.20-1.26.

²¹⁸ *De inv.* 1.20: *Exordium est oratio animum auditoris idonee comparans ad reliquam dictionem; quod eveniet si eum benivolum, attentum, docilem confecerit.*

²¹⁹ CA 1.9.25: *quae post pauca omnino posset verba finiri, nisi exercere vos vellem, nervosque vestros et studia, quae mihi magna est cura, explorare: nam cum instituissem vos ad quaerendam veritatem magnopere hortari, coeperam ex vobis quaerere quantum in ea momenti poneretis: omnes autem posuistis tantum, ut plus non desiderem.*

In other words, for Augustine the central aim of Book One was to test how invested Licentius and Trygetius were in the topic at hand--in Cicero's language, to achieve the goal of the *exordium*, which is to prepare them for the rest of the "speech."

The subject matter the group is treating--whether or not the truth can be found--aligns with Cicero's description of the obscure case, which is one "in which the hearers are slow or the case is enshrouded in business that is more difficult to comprehend."²²⁰ Indeed, Licentius' and Trygetius' debate in Book One, which seems to make no progress with respect to the question at hand, is itself proof that these young students are "slow." Moreover, the subject matter of the dialogue is nothing if not "difficult to comprehend." This is borne out by the fact that even Alypius, Augustine's co-teacher, struggles to grasp the material they are discussing. Even more importantly, Augustine ends up arguing that the Academics themselves did not really believe the view they taught--i.e., this is an obscure case because they obscured their teaching. Alypius even uses the term "obscure" at the end of the dialogue when describing the subject matter they have been treating.²²¹

For obscure cases, Cicero emphasizes that the most important state to elicit in the audience is that they be teachable.²²² Furthermore, he argues that this can be achieved by laying out all the facts of a case.²²³ In other words, this type of *exordium* encapsulates the argument of a speech. And in fact, if we make an outline of the topics covered by Licentius and Trygetius in Book One, we find that they raise simple versions of all the arguments, *pro* and *contra* the

²²⁰ *De inv.* 1.20, *obscurum in quo aut tardi auditores sunt aut difficilioribus ad cognoscendum negotiis causa est implicata*. These and the following quotations from *De inv.* are adapted from Hubbell's translation.

²²¹ At the very end of the dialogue, Alypius emphasizes that Augustine has illumined an *obscure* topic: CA 3.20.44: *Prorsus nequaquam digne admirari possum, quod tam facete aspera, tam fortiter desperata, tam moderate convicta, tam dilucide obscura tractata sunt*.

²²² *De inv.* 21, *In obscuro causae genere per principium dociles auditores efficere oportebit*.

²²³ *Ibid*, *Dociles auditores faciemus, si aperte et breviter summam causae exponemus, hoc est, in quo consistat controversia*.

Academic stance, that are debated in more depth through the remainder of the dialogue. For this reason, no doubt, scholars have often read Book One as a failed attempt at a debate by two students, which then prompts Augustine and Alypius to “start over” in Book Two. Seeing Book One as an enacted *exordium* does not in any way negate this reading, but rather enhances our understanding of why Augustine would, in a polished and published version of the text, devote so much space to his students’ stunted attempts at debate. Their nascent attempts at argument are an enactment of a speaker’s simplistic introduction to his topic.

A second way in which Augustine fulfills, in Book One, Cicero’s programmatic criteria for his *exordium* is that he also makes his students “attentive.” It is evident from the handbooks that the three criteria of being “well-disposed, attentive, and teachable” must be fossilized expressions of effects with significant overlap. Cicero’s own instructions for making the audience teachable reveal this: “For if you want to make the audience teachable, you must simultaneously render it attentive.”²²⁴ Cicero’s instructions for promoting attentiveness are “to discuss great, new, and incredible topics.”²²⁵ This Augustine does at the beginning of the dialogue, as he goads Licentius and Trygetius to debate the Academic question. He first tells them it is of the utmost importance. Licentius objects that he is not a “great man” capable of such a task. And so Augustine more strongly lauds the greatness of their topic: “Don’t hope to find, especially in this villa, what is difficult to find anywhere in the world...For even the most important subjects, when insignificant men explore them, have the habit of making those men great.”²²⁶

Augustine also uses, though in a different sense, the third criterion for an *exordium*: namely, making his hearers well-disposed. Cicero says goodwill can be achieved by appealing

²²⁴ Ibid., *Nam et, cum docilem velis facere, simul attentum facias oportet.*

²²⁵ *De inv.* 1.23: *Attentos autem faciemus si demonstrabimus ea quae dicturi erimus magna, nova, incredibilia esse.*

²²⁶ CA 1.2.6: *Si res magna est, ait Licentius, magnos viros desiderat. Noli quaerere, inquam, praesertim in hac villa, quod ubivis gentium reperire difficile est. Sed...et maximae res, cum a parvis quaeruntur, magnos eos solent efficere.*

to four things: the speaker's person, the person of the adversaries, the judge, or the case itself.²²⁷ An interesting aspect of *Contra Academicos* when compared to the other scenic dialogue is that it contains an extra epistolary preface--i.e., two epistolary prefaces instead of one. Both are addressed to Romanianus, the father of one of the primary interlocutors in this dialogue, Licentius. A preface is, of course, a kind of *exordium*. Furthermore, as we shall see, the speech at the end of *Contra Academicos* contains a fourth *exordium*. It so happens that each of these *exordia* focuses on one of the four sources of goodwill listed by Cicero. The first epistolary preface seeks to rouse Romanianus' sympathy to the project of the dialogue by recounting the story of how Augustine himself has benefitted from philosophy. The second preface appeals to Romanianus' own virtues--i.e., Cicero's "persona of the audience." Book One, as we have seen, appeals to "the case itself." Finally, the speech at the end of *Contra Academicos* opens with an invective against historical proponents of Academic philosophy--i.e., it seeks to evoke goodwill by discussing "the persona of one's enemies."

The inclusion of multiple introductions is a common practice within rhetorical handbooks. Erik Gunderson has argued that Quintilian uses the several introductions of his *Institutio Oratoria* to illustrate the use of different techniques for writing *exordia* listed in that textbook.²²⁸ The fact that Augustine appears to adopt a similar technique here further strengthens the link between the Cassiciacum dialogues and the practices of technical handbooks. Although at this point in the dialogue, Augustine's play on the tension between dialectic and rhetorical *inventio* is not yet fully developed, nevertheless we see even here the tension that will permeate the dialogue. Licentius and Trygetius' failed dialectic argument nevertheless serves a rhetorical purpose--it renders them well-disposed, attentive, and teachable.

²²⁷ *De inv.* 1.22 *Benivolentia quattuor ex locis comparatur: ab nostra, ab adversariorum, ab iudicum persona, a causa.*

²²⁸ Gunderson (2009: 101-125).

ii. Narratio

Following his second epistolary introduction to Romanianus, Augustine recounts that the group took a hiatus of several days from their discussion. When they reconvene, Licentius asks Augustine to “briefly review the whole Academic account by setting it out, so that nothing escapes me which favors my side.”²²⁹ Augustine obliges with a short exposition which serves as the dialogue’s *narratio*, or statement of facts. The handbooks define *narratio* as “an explanation of acts that have been done, or acts as if they had been done.”²³⁰ Augustine tells of the Academy’s origin, their views, the objections raised against them, and their response to those objections.

The idea that this account is a representation of *narratio* is strengthened by the emphasis interlocutors give to two qualities: its brevity (*brevitas*), and its lack of bias.²³¹ Brevity is the main quality that handbooks prescribe for narrations: one must present the facts without exhausting the audience’s goodwill. At the same time, brevity is advantageous because it involves cutting out any material that is unfavorable to one’s case. In other words, the handbooks emphasize that brevity--for court cases-- is about streamlining the narration to one’s advantage.

Augustine draws attention to the importance of brevity to his narration before, during, and after he gives it.²³² First, Licentius asks him to briefly (*breviter*) give the account. Then, at the main point of his very short narration, where he gives Zeno’s certainty criterion, Augustine gives the full definition and then corrects himself, re-stating it in a way that he says is “briefer

²²⁹ CA 2.4.10: *Quaeso, inquit...mihi breviter totam Academicorum sententiam exponendo repetere ne graveris, ne quid in ea me fugiat, quod pro partibus meis sit.*

²³⁰ *De inv.* 1.27 *Narratio est rerum gestarum aut ut gestarum expositio.* The *narratio* section of the hand book extends through 1.30.

²³¹ *Ibid* 1.28: *et si non modo id quod obest verum etiam id quod nec obest nec adiuvat praeteribitur.*

²³² CA 2.4.10-13.

and clearer" (*brevius planiusque*). Finally, after he has given the account, Augustine says that he believes he has briefly (*breviter*) explained the matter as Licentius requested. And just as the handbooks associate bias with brevity in a *narratio*, Augustine does so here. When Licentius asks him to give the narration, Alypius says the group will have to rely on Augustine's good faith (*bona fide*) that he won't hide any information from them. In other words, Alypius is asking him not to use bias, but to give an alternative *narratio* to those discussed in the handbooks as tailored for judicial use. After his narration, Augustine emphasizes that he has fulfilled Alypius' wishes by repeating that he had spoken with *bona fide*.

In addition to brevity, the handbooks prescribe two other qualities for a *narratio*: clarity, and plausibility. However, the handbooks do not give distinctive instructions for how these criteria are to be carried out.²³³ Augustine appears to reference this prescription for clarity after his account when he tells Alypius that if he failed to describe anything correctly, or left something out, this was unintentional. As for plausibility, Augustine evokes this criterion through extensive wordplay throughout the passage. The subject matter he recounts, after all, involves the Academic use of the *probabile* as a substitute for knowing the truth.

Following Augustine's *narratio*, his co-teacher Alypius offers an alternative *narratio*, which recounts the historical relationship between the Old and New Academies. This *variatio* may reflect a textbook reference of its own: Cicero lists different types of *narrationes*, including one which lays out the facts of the case; i.e., what Augustine does in his *narratio*. Another type recounts historical events or fables; i.e., Alypius' *narratio*.

At this point in the text, the "rhetorical" aspect of Augustine's debate becomes even clearer. The ostensible purpose of the *narratio* was to supply Licentius with more information with which to argue dialectically. Ironically, despite the ado Augustine and Alypius make about excising bias from their narrative, at the end of it Licentius stops debating Augustine because he no longer knows what he thinks—this is why Alypius assumes his role defending

²³³ Ibid 1.29: *et omnino quae praecepta de brevitare sunt hoc quoque in genere sunt conservanda.*

the Academics. Thus, Augustine's narration has actually functioned as rhetorical handbooks say a narration should: it planted doubt in his audience's mind.

iii. *Partitio*

Augustine next moves to the *partitio* section of the dialogue, which begins at *Contra Academicos* 2.7.16 and ends at the conclusion of Book Two. In the handbooks, *partitio* is characterized by two elements: stating what aspects of a case are actually contested, and listing the points one intends to make.²³⁴ The section of *Contra Academicos* between 2.7.16 and the conclusion of Book Two can be broadly characterized as Augustine's attempt to clarify between himself and his disputants exactly which points are contested--i.e., the first element of *partitio*. In this section of the debate, Augustine first seeks to clarify whether Licentius is ready to argue in favor of the Academics (he is not) and then engages in an extensive back-and-forth with Alypius in order to gauge Alypius' readiness to debate whether the Academics really believed what they taught. As Kenyon has argued, this is the question Augustine himself would like to consider. However, he finds Alypius and the students incapable of grasping this question. They are still so concerned with whether or not the Academic arguments that the truth cannot be found are true that they do not fully register that Augustine is suggesting an alternative way of circumventing the problem posed by skepticism--i.e., that the Academics themselves were not even skeptics. When he sees that he is making this suggestion in vain, he regroups by making a statement to Alypius which is a textbook example of *partitio*, in that it contains both criteria given by the handbooks, i.e., it both states what is contested in the case and enumerates the points he plans to make. He says to Alypius:

I was afraid that, if your perspective was the same as mine, our debate would continue to be infirm... If this had been the case, I was planning to ask you to take up a defense of the Academics on the grounds that to your mind they not only taught that truth could not be found, but also actually believed it. But our question is whether or not it is probable, on the basis of their arguments, that nothing can be perceived or assented to. If you prevail, I'll gladly yield; but if I

²³⁴ *De inv.* 1.31.

am able to prove that it is much more probable that the wise man is able to attain truth, and that assent should not always be withheld, you will have no grounds not to agree with me.²³⁵

In this passage, Augustine first makes clear that the purpose of the preceding conversation was to hash out areas in which he and Alypius agreed. He concludes with a statement of the issue of debate: The point at issue between us is whether or not their arguments make it probable that nothing can be perceived and one should not assent to anything.” Then, he outlines the material he and Alypius will cover in the ensuing debate. And almost immediately, he proceeds to do just that.

The clarity with which Augustine makes his statement of *partitio* is not the only “rhetorical” aspect of this section of the dialogue, however. By deferring to Alypius’ choice to debate the question of whether or not the truth can be known, Augustine opts for a more rhetorical debate as opposed to the inquiry as to whether or not the Academics truly believed what they taught, which is what Augustine suggests that he himself would prefer to debate. That Augustine is seriously interested in the latter question and does not merely float it as a thought-exercise is evident from the fact that he provides a long excursus on the topic during his final speech in the dialogue, and in the fact that he dredges up the question in *Ep. 1*, a letter to his friend Hermogenianus which can be read as an advertisement for the *Contra Academicos* after its publication. At the end of the letter, Augustine asks Hermogenianus to:

consider more thoroughly, and write to me whether you approve of what I thought should be believed at the end of the third book. Although I was more dubious than certain, nevertheless, I think it is more useful than incredible. Whatever the state of that text, however, I for my part do not so much find delight in the fact that, as you write, I “conquered” the Academics (for you wrote this perhaps more out of love than truth), as I do in the fact that I broke myself from the

²³⁵ CA 2.13.30: *Nam verebar, ne cum tibi quoque id videretur quod mihi; disputatio nostra manca remaneret... Itaque si id evenisset, paratus eram te rogare, ut Academicorum partes ita susciperes, quasi tibi non solum disputasse, sed etiam sensisse viderentur, verum non posse comprehendere. Quaeritur ergo inter nos, utrum illorum argumentis probabile sit nihil percipi posse, ac nulli rei esse assentiendum. Quod si obtinueris, cedam libenter: si autem demonstrare potuero multo esse probabilius, et posse ad veritatem pervenire sapientem, et assensionem non semper esse cohibendam: nihil habebis... cur non te in meam sententiam transire patiaris.*

hateful chains which, through despair of the truth, restrained me from the breast of philosophy, which is the sustenance of the soul.²³⁶

Catherine Conybeare has argued that Augustine is speaking here of the particular blend of Platonism and Christianity for which he famously advocates at the end of *Contra Academicos*.²³⁷ However, in this passage from *Ep. 1*, Augustine states that he is asking Hermogenianus' opinion on a matter about which he expressed uncertainty. His statement about the relationship between Christianity and Platonism is not uncertain, but equivocal. He states that it is "certain" (*certum est*) that he should not depart from the authority of Christ, and that he is sure (*confido*) that Platonic *ratio* is not incompatible with that authority.²³⁸ Rather, the topic about which Augustine expresses uncertainty at the end of Book Three is this question he raises in the *partitio* section, and to which he returns near the end of his final speech: whether the Academics really believed what they taught. The fact that Augustine draws his audience's attention to this debate in *Ep. 1* indicates that the question of what the Academics really believed is important to the dialogue even as it occupies a peripheral place within it.

I suggest that, for Augustine, the importance of whether or not he and Alypius debate whether the truth can be found, or whether the Academics really believed what they taught, lies in the distinction between whether they are going to argue a topic which is "rhetorical" or "dialectic." Augustine's claim that he is certain about the authority of Christ amounts to a

²³⁶Ep. 1.3: *Illud magis peto diligentius consideres, mihi que rescribas utrum approbes quod in extremo tertii libri suspiciosius fortasse quam certius, utilius tamen, ut arbitror, quam incredibilius putavi credendum. Equidem quoquo modo se habeant illae litterae, non tam me delectat quod, ut scribis, Academicos vicerim (scribis enim hoc amantius forte quam verius), quam quod mihi abruperim odiosissimum retinaculum, quo a philosophiae ubere desperatione veri, quod est animi pabulum, refrenabar.*

²³⁷ Conybeare (2006: 20ff.)

²³⁸ C. Acad. 3.20.43 *Nulli autem dubium est gemino pondere nos impelli ad discendum, auctoritatis atque rationis. Mihi ergo certum est nusquam prorsus a Christi auctoritate discedere: non enim reperio valentiorum. Quod autem subtilissima ratione persequendum est; ita enim iam sum affectus, ut quid sit verum, non credendo solum, sed etiam intellegendum apprehendere impatienter desiderem; apud Platonicos me interim quod sacris nostris non repugnet reperturum esse confido.*

declaration that he is certain that truth can be found. Thus, for Augustine, a debate about this point is superfluous, a mere rhetorical exercise. He chooses to engage in this exercise for the benefit of his students. As we shall see in the section immediately below, he only makes this argument according to probability--i.e., relying on the immediate aim of rhetoric--even though for him it is not a probability, but a fact. This is still, of course, in service of the ultimate aim of both rhetoric and dialectic--i.e., leading his students to the truth. He himself is more interested in the dialectic exercise of whether the Academics really believed what they taught: this is the point on which Augustine the author is not certain of the truth. Thus, in this *partitio* section, Alypius and Augustine decide which point to debate, and Augustine also decides once and for all whether the debate will proceed with rhetorical or dialectic aims.

iv. Confirmatio and Refutatio

Now that a proverbial line has been drawn in the sand, Augustine begins to debate Alypius in earnest. Despite the fact that Alypius' dialectic capacity is limited, this segment of the debate, which begins in Book Three and continues up until Augustine's final speech, contains the most productive dialectic in the *Contra Academicos*. That is because this section reflects Augustine's reworking of what the handbooks call proof (*confirmatio*), i.e., the main argument of a speech. Proof is characterized by its use of logical argumentation and has the aim of securing the audience's belief.²³⁹

The handbooks' treatments of *confirmatio* include instructions for finding the most useful arguments for a given speech, and lengthy descriptions of the types of syllogistic proofs one might use to prove one's point. If we distill the arguments which Augustine makes against Alypius throughout their conversation, the outline that emerges is one of a five-part deductive

²³⁹ *De inv.* 1.51-1.77; *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 2.28-30.

proof analogous to the example Cicero gives in the *De inventione*,²⁴⁰ in which Cicero argues that the universe is governed by design. This five-part proof differs from the four-part proof described in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*.²⁴¹ In what follows, I offer a reading of Augustine's and Alypius' debate which follows the outline in the right column below. I present the argument which Cicero gives in the *De inventione* as a *comparandum*:

	<i>De inventione</i>	<i>Contra Academicos</i>
Major Premise	Things done by design are better than those done without design.	The wise man knows something.
Proof of Major Premise	Houses are better when organized than messy.	The wise man knows wisdom.
Minor Premise	Nothing is governed better than the universe.	The wise man can assent to truth.
Proof of Minor Premise	Risings and settings keep a fixed order.	A divinity can confirm truth to a man.
Conclusion	Therefore if those things are administered better by design than those without, and nothing is governed better than the universe, the universe is governed by design.	Therefore if the wise man can know something and the wise man can assent to truth, it is possible to know truth.

Augustine begins this phase of debate by asking Alypius about the difference between a wise man and one who is learned (*studiosus*).²⁴² Alypius replies that the wise man possesses what the latter wishes to possess. Instantly, Augustine declares victory; possession, he says, is

²⁴⁰ *De inv.* 1.57-1.77, based on Hubbell's translation.

²⁴¹ The fact that Augustine follows a five-part proof (rather than the alternative three-part proof) is yet another indication that he seems to follow the *De inventione* more closely than the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. For the difference between *De inventione* and *Rhetorica ad Herennium* in the presentation of a deductive proof, see Gaines (2007:176).

²⁴² This section outlines the arguments Augustine makes at CA 3.3.5ff.

the same as knowledge, and the thing a wise man possesses is wisdom. If the wise man knows wisdom then, he knows something. That the wise man knows something, therefore, is Augustine's major premise--the first step in Cicero's five-part deductive proof--and that he knows wisdom is the specific example which serves as Augustine's proof of major premise. Here, Alypius attempts to backtrack, arguing that a wise man only believes he knows wisdom. Augustine then secures Alypius' admission that he has only said that because he, as one who is not wise, would never assent to truth, but that it is absurd to say a man is wise without knowing the truth. Alypius therefore concedes that a theoretical wise man must know wisdom, but need not assent to it, on the grounds that he could never *know* that he knew wisdom unless some divinity revealed it to him. In exasperation, Alypius suggests that knowledge of truth is so impossible that attaining truth is tantamount to laying hold of Proteus, so unrecognizable to man that one cannot identify him unless a divinity reveals his nature. Augustine seizes on this analogy and agrees with Alypius: according to Augustine, the truth *is* a shapeshifter like Proteus, and can be known to man only by divine revelation. But crucially, for Augustine, it can be known. That one can assent to truth, then, is Augustine's minor premise, and that the divinity can provide a basis for assent is his proof of minor premise.

This argument bears a several marks of rhetoricity. Not for nothing, scholars have suggested that the five-part proof Cicero gives in the *De inventione* (the middle column of the chart above) is not logically sound, and that the deduction relies on the audience's common sense in making logical leaps which are only acceptable in a rhetorical context.²⁴³ Augustine's argument, too, appears to lack some of the rigor we might expect from a robust dialectic argument. For instance, when Alypius expresses repeated doubt about whether the wise man knows wisdom, Augustine more or less bullies him into agreeing that this is probable, and then builds on this argument as if Alypius had comprehended the rational basis for agreement.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ Schweinfurth-Walla (1986: 158), Fortenbaugh (1998).

²⁴⁴ CA 3.5.11-12.

However, there is another way in which Augustine's display of *confirmatio* in this section aligns with Cicero's rhetoric: Cicero states that in addition to providing proof and corroboration to one's case, one should add belief and authority. Over the course of this argument, Augustine has done so in two ways: first, by presenting arguments to which Alypius ultimately assents. In other words, Alypius believes him. In securing belief, Augustine has modeled his own authority in argumentation. But perhaps more importantly, the crux of Augustine's argument relies upon the intervention of divine authority: Alypius' idea that a divinity must reveal truth to man. In this way, Augustine's dialectic quite literally argues for the limit of dialectic. We will consider the significance of this in the final section of this chapter.

Following the victory of his *confirmatio*, Augustine invites Alypius to put forward counter-arguments from his pro-skeptical position. Alypius demurs thanks to Augustine's successful proof. This exchange can be seen as an invitation to refutation, which some rhetorical handbooks treat in the same section as *proof* because the type of argumentation is used for both: they are simply looking at an argument from opposite sides. Indeed, we have seen in the *confirmatio* section how Alypius tried--and failed--to offer refutation to Augustine's points. Alypius asks Augustine to cement his victory by completing his argument by means of an *oratio perpetua*. This, as we shall see, represents the *peroratio*, or *conclusio* of the dialogue as a "speech."

v. Peroratio

One of the cardinal features rhetorical handbooks ascribe to a speech's *peroratio* is that it should review all the points which precede it. Not for nothing, *peroratio* is an alternative term for a speech's conclusion: one literally "goes through the whole speech." When Augustine accepts Alypius' invitation to give an *oratio perpetua*, this is precisely what he does. In fact, he says that in starting the speech he "began, as it were, another exordium."²⁴⁵ One way of reading Augustine's final speech is to see it as a microcosm of the dialogue as a whole--a speech in a

²⁴⁵ CA 3.7.15: *quasi aliud ingressus exordium*.

speech. It contains its own *exordium*, *narratio*, *partitio*, *confirmatio*, *refutatio*, and *peroratio*, each of which covers the same basic arguments that Augustine has treated in the dialogue itself.

That is not to say that this speech simply serves as a summary of what has come before. To the contrary, in his final speech Augustine makes highly rhetorical arguments in favor of his position against the Academics, i.e., that the truth can be known. The bias he openly embraces in this speech is a marked contrast to the lip service he gives throughout the preceding debate to hearing both sides of the argument. Thus, Augustine's final speech also doubles as a rhetorical counterpoint to the dialectic argument which precedes it. Even when we account for the rhetorical framework of the dialogue itself, relatively speaking Augustine's final speech still serves to juxtapose a rhetorical presentation against the more dialectic one. Thus, Augustine's final speech functions in two key ways: as both the *peroratio* of his parts of speech structure, and as comparative display of how one might reframe a dialectic argument in a rhetorical format.

In heightening the rhetorical aspects of his argument, Augustine also exhibits two further ingredients handbooks prescribe for the *peroratio*: he embellishes content which he has presented earlier in the "speech," and he introduces new material to further engage his audience. We see this especially in the *exordium* of Augustine's final *oratio*, where Augustine reworks the same arguments Licentius and Trygetius had debated in Book One of *Contra Academicos*. Only this time, Augustine makes these arguments by quoting and interpreting a passage from Cicero's *Academica* in which the Academics and proponents of the other major Hellenistic philosophical schools, argue with each other over which school is the best.²⁴⁶ The humor, vitriol, and sheer stylistic novelty of this passage all serve to draw his readers into a familiar topic in a fresh way.

The *narratio* of Augustine's final *oratio*, like the *narratio* section of the dialogue, begins with a discussion of Zeno's definition of knowledge (i.e., Zeno's certainty criterion).²⁴⁷ However,

²⁴⁶ CA 3.7.15-3.8.17.

²⁴⁷ The *narratio* takes place between CA 3.9.18-3.9.12.

this *narratio* is the opposite of the former in terms of its one-sidedness. Rather than present an ostensibly unbiased outline of the Academic position as he had done previously, Augustine here disparages the Academics, and leaves out the question of assent and the Academic recourse to the *probable* entirely. We may imagine that this is because the idea of the *probable* can be interpreted as strengthening the Academic position, and here Augustine is demonstrating a *narratio* meant to bolster the opposite position. Thus, Augustine has offered his readers two totally different styles of *narratio* on the same topic--one suited to philosophical non-partisanship, and one replete with rhetorical bias. The speech's *partitio* takes the form of a simple formulation of the two Academic points against which Augustine will advance: "There are two points put forward by the Academics against which, so far as we can, we have decided to advance: 'Nothing can be perceived,' and 'one must not assent to anything.'"²⁴⁸ This is a stark contrast to the *partitio* in the debate, in which Augustine carefully discerned exactly where each interlocutor stood vis-a-vis the points he was considering taking up. Thus readers are treated to a comparison between *partitio* as it is worked out in a lengthy conversation, and the precise means to present the product of such a conversation in a speech.

In the *confirmatio* section of the final speech, Augustine presents the same arguments he had earlier put forth for the validity of sense perception and the possibility of assent; however, he here uses *ad hominem* attacks on particular Academic philosophers, and repeats and embellishes the arguments by illustrating how they hold true with respect to each of the three Stoic divisions of philosophy: physics, dialectics, and ethics.²⁴⁹ This embellishment signals, as it were, Augustine's broader Cassiciacum project: to couch his philosophy within the Platonic curricular schema.

Next, Augustine moves to his *refutatio*. Because there was no *refutatio* in the dialogue

²⁴⁸ CA 3.10.22, trans. O'Meara. *Duo sunt quae ab Academicis dicuntur, contra quae, ut valemus, venire instituimus: Nihil posse percipi; et: Nulli rei debere assentiri.*

²⁴⁹ CA 3.10.22-3.14.32.

proper, this *refutatio* simply serves to illustrate what Augustine would have argued against if Alypius had continued to debate: namely, that the Academic idea of the *probable* is absurd.²⁵⁰ Augustine has said this much point blank earlier in the dialogue, but has not had the chance to fully flesh out his arguments as to why. He does so here with an extended folktale that affords him the opportunity to introduce a rhetorical *chreia* that is more vivid and extended than any metaphor in the dialogue, thus illustrating the use of a fundamental rhetorical technique and tacitly approving of its use in a speech.

From here, Augustine includes his excursus on the question of whether the Academics actually believed what they taught.²⁵¹ That is to say, he uses his platform as sole speaker to return to the question which, in the *partitio* section of the dialogue proper, his interlocutors had been ill-prepared to consider. Excurses or digressions are themselves parts of speech treated in the handbooks, so we can read Augustine's digression as yet another embellishment that he adds to his *peroratio*. And finally, he proceeds to the *peroratio* of his speech within a speech.²⁵² Whereas the speech as a whole can be read as a *peroratio* of the dialogue, reviewing the points made throughout the conversation, the *peroratio* within this *peroratio* is mostly taken up with a review of the arguments in favor of pursuing a life of philosophy. Augustine gives the highlights of his own philosophical journey: that he has not attained wisdom, but has not given up hope, that he has renounced all things others consider good in favor of pursuing philosophy, and that the objections of the Academics had hindered him in this quest, but the disputation itself has protected him against them. One of the handbook suggestions for a *peroratio* is to make final appeals to one's own situation; the fact that Augustine does so here can be read as an alternative type of *peroratio* to the "review of the facts of the case" version that the speech as a whole represents. In this way, as in Augustine's use of the *excursus* in his final speech, he

²⁵⁰ CA 3.15.33-3.16.36.

²⁵¹ CA 3.17.37-3.19.42.

²⁵² CA 3.20.43

renders his final speech “rhetorical” in the sense that he uses it to give his own opinion. For, as we have already seen in our analysis of his *Ep. 1* to Hermogenianus, Augustine’s overt aim in writing the *Contra Academicos* is not so much to conquer the Academics as to show that skepticism is not an obstacle in the pursuit of philosophy.²⁵³ That he emphasizes this argument in the conclusion of his speech--rather than emphasizing how wrong the Academics are--reminds his readers that despite the rhetorical *ad homines* he has just displayed, this dialogue is not about empty rhetoric--i.e., defeating enemies for glory--but rather about *inventio* in pursuit of truth.

Throughout this reading, we have seen how Augustine embeds the dialectic conversation of the *Contra Academicos* within a “rhetorical framework.” Moreover, we have seen that his use of these rhetorical boundaries, as it were, serves a functional purpose: he appears to use rhetoric if and when his students are not ready for more in-depth dialectic inquiry. That this phenomenon takes place in a dialogue which takes its topic from a play on words between dialectic and rhetorical invention suggests to me that the tension evident between rhetoric and dialectic is not merely circumstantial, but central to the text. In Part Two of this chapter, I will argue that in the *Contra Academicos*, Augustine works out a rhetorical theory that is integral to the whole Cassiciacum project.

II. A Theory of Invention

A way to summarize the fact that Augustine frames ostensibly dialectic conversations within a rhetorical paradigm is to say simply that he makes his dialectic *rhetorical*. The question which follows from this, of course, is why. The idea that he does so in response to students’ readiness for learning is only a partial answer, because it does not explain why Augustine

²⁵³ We must contextualize this overt aim, however, within Augustine’s larger philosophical project, which is very much to compete with the philosophical systems of other *Platonis aemuli*.

found it worthwhile to depict this process in the first place. In what follows, I will suggest that the *Contra Academicos* should also be read as a display of a rhetorical theory which is deeply embedded in the metaphysical paradigm of Platonic ascent which he lays out in the *Cassiciacum* dialogues. I make this argument according to the following steps: in Augustine's metaphysical paradigm, the only true teacher is God. Thus, Augustine embraces skepticism conditionally--that is, under the conditions where students have not yet experienced the true knowledge which comes only from divine revelation. Functionally, this means that any dialectic or rhetoric which he performs can only be leveraged for probable arguments--his dialectic of necessity is rhetorical, then, in the sense that rhetoric purveys probable, instead of absolute truth. This sets rhetoric and dialectic in a paradoxical tension: they are simultaneously united and opposed. For Augustine, this tension is ultimately a reflection of Christ's paradoxical unification of the sensible and intelligible worlds. Thus, it is here we see a Christian model for the Platonic ascent paradigm.

The great irony of the *Contra Academicos* is that Augustine simultaneously argues that the truth can be known and that it is impossible for him--or any human being--to present a definitive argument to this effect. As we shall see, his rhetorical theory depends upon this one crucial paradox. Augustine makes this argument in what I have designated above as the *confirmatio* section of the dialogue. This very fact reinforces the centrality of Augustine's paradoxical epistemology (i.e., that truth can be known, but he cannot prove it can be known), because the *confirmatio* is precisely where the speaker elaborates upon most significant arguments of his case. As we saw in the *confirmatio* passage, Augustine's argument can be summarized in this way: the wise man can know truth because divinity can reveal it to him.

In the abundance of scholarship which seeks to answer the question of where in the *Contra Academicos* Augustine provides his definitive refutation of skepticism, this argument is not universally accepted as the most robust. Scholars who pass over this argument have likely taken their cue from the text itself. When Augustine states that a divinity can reveal truth to man, Alypius objects that he could never be certain that this is a case. Then, Augustine nearly

scoffs, replying that he would never claim to be certain of this point. Given that the *deus ex machina* appeal to sure knowledge is not particularly convincing from the perspective of rational argumentation, and given Augustine himself appears to dismiss his own argument, it is perhaps unsurprising that readers have looked elsewhere in the text for Augustine's definitive refutation of skepticism. More recently, Erik Kenyon has marshaled this and other passages in the dialogue in favor of the opposite argument--namely, that Augustine does not seek to refute skepticism at all. However, both these approaches fall short of appreciating the implications of the claim that only a divinity can reveal truth. If Augustine believes this is true, then it follows that he cannot make a definitive argument that the truth can be found, either here or anywhere else in the dialogue, precisely because he is not a divinity. Moreover, if he claimed to be sure that divinity reveals truth to man, this would be tantamount to claiming that he is wise. For, according to Augustine's own argument, only a wise man knows truth. We should, therefore, read his protestation that he cannot be certain that the wise man knows wisdom as consistent with the stance we saw in Chapter One--a stance in which Augustine does not wish to profess himself wise. Instead, he offers here the most robust probable argument that he can muster in favor of truth's knowability--and at the same time, he offers a plausible rationale for why he cannot offer more than a probable argument.²⁵⁴

If Augustine as a teacher can only make probable arguments, it follows that even his use of dialectic would have to be rhetorical in the sense of its aims. And in fact, Augustine leverages the character of Alypius in the dialogue to problematize the notion that dialectic is associated only with knowledge of truth. At the beginning of Book Two, Alypius argues precisely that the excessive use of dialectic can be negative in a rhetorical sense. Here, Alypius and Augustine take up the arguments *pro* and *contra* the skeptical position, respectively. Augustine begins their debate by suggesting that the Academics would not have used the term "like-truth" (*veri similis*)

²⁵⁴ For a review of ways Augustine continues to use skeptical arguments in later works, and particularly the *Confessions*, see O'Daly (2001: 159-160).

as a synonym for “probable” (*probabilis*) unless by doing so they were hinting that they really *did* know what the truth was. Augustine promotes this point as part of his theory that the Academics did not truly believe that the truth could not be known, but merely put forth arguments to this end in order to hide the truth from undiscerning audiences. Alypius, however, does not appreciate Augustine’s point. Instead of taking Augustine’s argument seriously, he suggests that in articulating a difference between the *veri-similis* and the *probabilis*, Augustine is “nit-picking about a word.”

This accusation is more serious than it appears at first glance, for Alypius has borrowed the phrase “nit-picking about a word” (*verbi controversia*) from Cicero’s *De oratore*.²⁵⁵ There, Cicero has Crassus use the phrase to describe philosophers like Plato who, he says, were prone to engaging in excessive disputation. He contends that they would get carried away to the point of being “more desirous of contention than truth.” In other words, by accusing philosophers like Plato of using dialectic for the sake of argument rather than truth, Crassus implies that arguing *ad infinitum* for the sake of proving a point can be rhetorical in a negative sense.²⁵⁶ In quoting Crassus, Alypius suggests that Augustine’s own use of dialectic has gone too far. That Alypius misunderstands Augustine’s intent in this passage--Augustine is not quibbling over a word, but trying to raise a serious point about the Academics’ beliefs--is beside the point.²⁵⁷ Alypius’ confusion does negate the idea that dialectic can be used to score “points”--that it

²⁵⁵ *De oratore* 1.47: *Sed ego neque illis assentiebar, neque harum disputationum inventori et principi longe omnium in dicendo gravissimo et eloquentissimo, Platoni...quod mihi in oratoribus irridendis ipse esse orator summus videbatur. Verbi enim controversia iamdiu torquet Graeculos homines, contentionis cupidiores quam veritatis.*

²⁵⁶ This is a charge Cicero was also fond of levying against Stoic dialectic, which he found to be so dry and pedantic that listeners lost touch with the argument out of boredom. Cf. Aubert (2008: 61-91).

²⁵⁷ Glucker (1995: 115–44) has made a careful reading of Cicero’s use of the two terms, *veri similis* and *probabilis*, in order to suggest that for Cicero, these are not entirely synonymous. If Glucker is correct, that raises the interesting possibility that Augustine’s distinction between the two terms may be based on Cicero’s own work, and would lend credence to the legitimacy of Augustine’s claim that Cicero used the distinction between these words to secretly intimate that the Academics did not really believe what they taught. That is not to say that Cicero’s use of the two alternate terms was meant to intimate this point, but that Augustine’s suggestion that it did may have roots in Cicero’s nuanced use of the two terms.

becomes rhetorical when it is no longer serving to lead students to truth.

Crassus distinguishes in this passage between the immediate and the final aims of rhetoric and dialectic. His implication is that the ultimate aim of *both* ought to be to find the truth. The immediate aim of dialectic is to do so via proof and argumentation, the immediate aim of rhetoric is persuasion. Any dialectic which becomes combative is reduced to the *immediate* aim of rhetoric--persuasion--in lieu of the ultimate aim of truth. The implication is that the reverse might also be true: that rhetoric or dialectic which persuades *appropriately* in the short term can serve the (correct) ultimate aim of both, namely finding the truth.

In the speech at the end of *De ordine*, Augustine makes essentially the same distinction between the immediate and ultimate aims of dialectic, thus implying a close connection between the two. His description of both arts is worth presenting in full:

Ratio was prompted to seek and turn towards that very force with which it produced art: for by definition, division, and synthesis, it not only arranged and ordered art, but defended it against every incursion of untruth. For how should it transition to fashioning other things, unless it first itself could distinguish, inscribe, and organize certain (as it were) siege engines and instruments of its own, and produce that very discipline of disciplines, which they call dialectic? This art teaches how to teach and teaches how to learn. In it *ratio* reveals itself and makes clear what it is, what it wants, what power it has. It knows how to know; it alone not only desires to impart knowledge, but is able to do so.

For the most part, however, men are foolish with respect to the things which are recommended rightly, usefully, and nobly. None but the rarest soul sees the most pure truth; most pursue their own senses and empirical knowledge. Therefore it was necessary for them not only to be taught to the extent they were able, but to be stirred up often and mightily. The part of itself that did this, more full of necessity than purity, [dwelling] in the crowded lap of delights, which it scatters to the people that they might have a mind to be lead on towards their own good, it called rhetoric.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ DO 2.13.38 *Illa igitur ratio perfecta dispositaque grammatica, admonita est quaerere atque attendere hanc ipsam vim, qua peperit artem: nam eam definiendo, distribuendo, colligendo, non solum digesserat atque ordinaverat, verum ab omni etiam falsitatis irreptione defenderat. Quando ergo transiret ad alia fabricanda, nisi ipsa sua prius quasi quaedam machinamenta et instrumenta distingueret, notaret, digereret proderetque ipsam disciplinam disciplinarum, quam dialecticam vocant? Haec docet docere haec docet discere; in hac se ipsa ratio demonstrat atque aperit quae sit, quid velit, quid valeat. Scit scire; sola scientes facere non solum vult sed etiam potest. Verum quoniam plerumque stulti homines ad ea quae suadentur recte, utiliter et honeste, non ipsam sincerissimam quam rarus animus videt veritatem, sed proprios sensus consuetudinemque sectantur, oportebat eos non doceri solum quantum queunt, sed saepe et maxime commoveri. Hanc suam partem quae id ageret, necessitatis plenior quam puritatis, refertissimo gremio deliciarum, quas populo spargat ut ad utilitatem suam dignetur adduci, vocavit rhetoricam. Hactenus pars illa quae in significando rationabilis dicitur, studiis liberalibus disciplinisque promota est.*

On one reading, this passage pits rhetoric and dialectic against each other by associating dialectic with the intelligible and rhetoric with the sensible. Augustine's close association between dialectic and *ratio* serves to attribute to dialectic the power of teaching and learning. Since within his Christian Platonist paradigm, sure knowledge is necessarily knowledge of the intelligible, Augustine implies dialectic has the power to attain to intelligible truth. By contrast, his characterization of rhetoric is replete with language of the sensible. Augustine says that men need rhetoric because they follow their senses (*sensus*), and not only their senses, but their *consuetudinem*, which has often been translated as "habits." The Latin word, however, also carries the connotation of empirical knowledge, and we should be sensitive to that valence here—Augustine is speaking of knowledge obtained from the experience of the sensible world. Moreover, Augustine's claim that men need to be "stirred up often and mightily" evokes the idea of movement (the verb Augustine uses is *commoveri*), which, as we saw in Chapter One, is a characteristic of the sensible / material realm within Platonist metaphysics. God or the one is motionless, whereas material objects are always in motion. His description of the rhetoric as *necessitatis plenior*, directly invokes the term fullness, which is another significant attribute of the One, and contrasts it with the lack (*necessitas*) of the sensible world.

And yet, despite this contrast, Augustine simultaneously creates a close association between dialectic and rhetoric. One way we see this is in the treatment of their respective aims. At first glance, it might seem that he pits dialectic and rhetoric at odds with respect to these aims. He associates dialectic and reason with truth, on the one hand, and rhetoric with persuasion on the other. This is in line with the twin definitions of *inventio* which we discussed at the beginning of the chapter: dialectic *inventio* seeks the truth, whereas rhetorical invention seeks probable arguments. But in the passage quoted above, it is also clear that Augustine conceives of rhetoric as leading men to truth. The rationale he gives for persuasion is that "men are foolish with respect to the things which are recommended rightly, usefully, and nobly. None but the rarest soul sees the most pure truth." Thus, Augustine suggests a distinction between the immediate aims of dialectic and rhetoric (i.e., truth and persuasion), and their

ultimate aims (truth); their immediate aims diverge, but their ultimate aims converge. In this situation, both dialectic and rhetoric are tools for leading students to truth within the sensible realm. By way of summarizing the relationship between dialectic and rhetoric, then, we might say that for Augustine dialectic as a category is, in its fullness, most properly associated with the intelligible, whereas rhetoric as a category is more properly associated with the sensible. However, both exist on a spectrum between the sensible and the intelligible which depends on their correct use.

It is this binary--that of sensible and intelligible--that is ultimately more significant for Augustine's rhetorical theory than that between dialectic and rhetoric. For Augustine, it is Christ who unites the sensible and the intelligible. Near the end of *Contra Academicos*, he expresses this in Platonic language, even going so far as to refer to Christ as the "Divine Intellect," which suggests that he--like other Christian authors--conceives of Christ as fulfilling, at least to some extent, the role occupied by the Intellect in Plotinus' metaphysics.

The discipline of truest philosophy...is not that philosophy of this world, which our sacred mysteries most rightly reject, but a higher, intelligible [philosophy]. From it, the most subtle *ratio* would never be able to call back the souls blinded by the shadows of manifold errors and forgetful thanks to the most profound stains of the body, if the highest God had not bent down in mercy for the people and submitted the authority of his divine Intellect to the extent of taking on even a human body.²⁵⁹

In this passage, Christ's Incarnation--the fact that he takes on a human body-- allows for what Augustine calls "the most *subtle ratio*" to help souls in their ascent to the highest God. The language makes it seem as if, for Augustine, *ratio* and Christ are two distinct entities. However, careful reading on the part of several scholars has shown that, for Augustine, Christ is identified with reason--precisely this "most subtle reason."²⁶⁰ Thus, what Augustine is actually saying in

²⁵⁹ *C. Acad.* 2.19.42. *Non enim est ista huius mundi philosophia, quam sacra nostra meritissime detestantur, sed alterius intelligibilis; cui animas multiformibus erroris tenebris caecatas, et altissimis a corpore sordibus oblitae, nunquam ista ratio subtilissima revocaret, nisi summus Deus populari quadam clementia divini intellectus auctoritatem usque ad ipsum corpus humanum declinaret, atque submitteret.*

²⁶⁰ Cary (2000: 77-104); Ayres (2010); Gerber (2012: 85 - 102). The argument for Christ as *ratio* is against the earlier thought of Du Roy (1966: 127-43) and O'Connell (1968: 121-31) who saw *ratio* as the Holy Spirit.

this passage is that Christ, whose authority was descended to a sensible body, was then as reason able to facilitate soul's ascent. That Augustine makes this point so obliquely can be attributed partly to the fact that he is interested in fitting his metaphysics within the structure and language of his models, particularly Cicero, who associates the division between reason and authority with the twin methods of teaching used by Hellenistic schools. But it also may well be the case that Augustine does not explicitly state that Christ is reason in the *Cassiciacum* dialogues because of the epistemological paradigm he has laid out: students cannot understand reason, intelligible knowledge, until it is revealed to them by a divinity. And so he speaks overtly of Christ as authority because they can only understand Christ as authority until such time as they begin to have a sense of true reason, not merely the lower levels of rational thought which they exercise through forays into dialectic.

The union in Christ's person of both authority and reason serves, then, as the foundation of Augustine's rhetorical theory. As extensions of reason and authority, respectively, dialectic and rhetoric are united by more than a shared aim of finding the truth: they are fundamentally part of the same organ. We might say that this is Augustine's version of Zeno's famous proclamation that rhetoric is an open palm, dialectic a closed fist--the discrepancy in the hand's posture is much less significant than the fact that both arts are literally comprised of the same hand. Thus, already in his first *Cassiciacum* dialogue Augustine presents a rhetorical theory--a theory of invention--which is sophisticated, mature, and precise. At its core, it is consistent with the theory of invention other readers have found in Augustine's later works: namely, that, after the fall, Augustine found rhetoric to be necessary because knowledge could only be obtained through signs.²⁶¹ It is a theory which clarifies the nature of the ambiguity evident in slights such as the criticism that rhetoric is "windy": the ambiguity relates not whether to one *should* use rhetoric at all, for in fact according to Augustine's theory one both should and must do so.

²⁶¹ Cf. Brown (1969:261); Bates (2001) specifically calls this a "theory of invention" in his doctoral thesis, without however relating this theory specifically to the tension between invention as practiced in dialectic vs. rhetoric.

Rather, the ambiguity in Augustine's treatment of rhetoric lies in his ambiguous attitude towards the sensible world writ large, of which rhetoric *qua* persuasion is an extension.

I began this chapter by suggesting that the *Contra Academicos* is about the conundrum of how a student can, without the use of reason, recognize what authority is trustworthy to lead that student to reason. It is a problem which lies at the heart of the central question of this dialogue, namely, "Can the truth be found?" Interestingly, the conundrum of authority and reason focuses more on the methodological--as opposed to the ontological--dimension of that question. If truth is a waterfall, Augustine's focus is more on whether would-be tourists have a way of getting to said waterfall (can we find the waterfall?) than on whether the waterfall exists *per se* (is there a waterfall to find?). That the *Contra Academicos* turns out to be a sustained study of the use of dialectic and rhetoric as a means of inquiry is consistent with the methodological bent of the authority / reason conundrum. Based on the reading I have given of the dialogue, we can distill Augustine's answer to three related parts. His main answer is that only divinity can reveal truth to man. In other words, it is an argument as to why he cannot answer the question of whether truth can be found: it is a validation of the authority / reason conundrum rather than a solution to it. His second answer is that, given this conundrum, rhetoric is a useful path to the waterfall of truth, albeit an incomplete one. In this way, Augustine instantiates rhetoric--both in the sense of persuasion and in terms of specific rhetorical techniques--as an integral component of the search for truth. The way Augustine answers the question of whether or not truth can be found is by rendering himself rhetorical in this way. His careful structuring of the dialogue according to the parts of speech serves as an illustration of the paradigmatic potential for rhetoric to aid students' inquiries--and that he has harnessed this potential. His subtle lessons in the tempering of rhetoric and dialectic show him to be an attentive and skilled practitioner of this model. And finally, he instantiates this picture of mastery by interweaving this practical demonstration with an integrated theory as to why rhetoric is effective within the text.

To this we must add the vivid picture Augustine paints of the lifestyle he and his students are living at Cassiciacum. The fact that he emphasizes the virtuous lifestyle the group

is leading, and they signature behaviors of Roman philosophical *otium*, have both been well documented and do not need repeating here.²⁶² However, it is important to note this because by joining a description of the group's life and illustrating his own methods as a teacher, Augustine represents himself as a model consistent with the ideal teacher he outlines in his speech at the end of *De ordine*. After citing the authority / reason conundrum in that speech, Augustine goes on to acknowledge that one implication of this conundrum is that students are incapable of recognizing a good teacher to whom they ought to entrust themselves. He says that, though they cannot know for certain that someone is trustworthy, they should make a commitment based on the fact that a teacher teaches well and lives in a manner consistent with his teaching. Thus the combination of staging and content of the discussion at Cassiciacum is not merely a stylistic choice or a way to enliven the dialogues: it is part and parcel of a holistic model which Augustine lays out.

In this respect, I think it can be easy to overlook the fact that Augustine here introduces Christ as the mediator between the sensible and intelligible words, as both authority and reason. The Cassiciacum dialogues are often read as if they consist of discrete halves--openings which focus on philosophy, and final speeches in which Christianity is introduced as a sort of *deus ex machina* to problems students struggled to solve in their reasoning. But in reality, Christ has been present in the dialogue all along through Augustine's subtle association of Christ with reason and authority. Because these are the two paths of learning which Cicero, citing Greek precedent, identifies as integral to the method of philosophical schools, the effect is an argument on Augustine's part to illustrate how this whole method actually depends upon a Christian solution. It is a solution which Aristotle had identified already in the *Metaphysics* as a problem with Platonic metaphysics: namely, that the Platonists relied upon the idea of participation or emanation as an explanation for how the soul could ascend from sensible to intelligible, but did not produce a satisfactory explanation as to how this connection took place.

²⁶²Cf. Conybeare 2006; Topping 2012.

Of course, Augustine is not original in producing such a solution--much of the Plotinian metaphysical scheme involves a systematic attempt to account for such perceived *lacunae* in Plato's model. Thus, we can see Augustine's focus on Christ as the bridge between sensible and intelligible worlds as a direct competition with Neoplatonic solutions to what is one of the central points of contention in the whole Platonic model.²⁶³

It would be difficult to overstate the centrality of this single concept--of Christ's Incarnation--to the argument of *Contra Academicos*, or how much this concept serves to locate *Contra Academicos* within Augustine's Christian Platonist metaphysics, despite the fact that Augustine does not mention either of these concepts openly until the end of the dialogue. In the section above, I suggested that one reason that Augustine leaves the idea that Christ is both reason and authority covert is because his students, still mired in sensible reality, are unable to recognize the intelligible truth which is Christ's reason. While this is true, it is not the complete picture: we should also read the "hiddenness" of Christ as part and parcel of the metaphysical trope that truth in the sensible world is always obscure. In other words, Augustine's failure to mention Christ earlier in the dialogues is yet one more way he embeds the concept of Incarnation within a re-enactment of the Platonic metaphysics: a re-enactment structured to be understood *in comparison* with other Platonic narratives, as opposed to Christian ones.

A final sense in which Augustine competes with his philosophical predecessors is that he deftly incorporates their competing models within one unified scheme. By embracing skepticism on a provisional (i.e., pre-intellectual) level, Augustine incorporates Cicero's Academic skepticism as a functional aspect of his model. By competing with Plotinus with respect to how reality is mediated to humans in the sensible world--i.e., by arguing for Christ as authority and reason--he likewise incorporates Platonism into his scheme. In so doing, I think, Augustine seeks to show that his philosophy--Christian philosophy--has the capacity to

²⁶³ Somewhat different from the argument Clavier makes, which posits a severe divide between Augustine's model and that of his classical precedents. Clavier argues that God's descent totally negates the need for ascent through the liberal arts (2014: 89ff.).

embrace all other philosophy into a unified whole. This is, as we saw in Chapter One, one of the fundamental requirements of a Platonist philosophical schema. It is in this context which we should read Augustine's famous remarks at the very end of the Cassiciacum dialogue, which have often been seen to put Christian authority and Platonic reason in tension with one another:

No one doubts that we are driven to learn by the double weight of authority and reason. I am certain I will never depart from the authority of Christ, for I find none stronger. But as to that which is pursued by the most delicate reason--since I am now moved by the impatient desire to apprehend what is true not only by belief, but also understanding--I trust that I will find it among the Platonists, and that it will not be incompatible with our sacred teachings.²⁶⁴

His point here is not that *ratio* is a helpful addition to faith. Nor is it that Christianity and Platonism are compatible, because such an argument would presume that the two can be separated for Augustine when they cannot. This passage is, I think, yet another advertisement for the project of the dialogues themselves: namely, to show that Christ is Platonic reason, because both authority and reason are united in the person of Christ. That Augustine makes this argument in a dialogue which is, in so many ways, dependent upon a theory in which rhetoric is integral suggests that, much as he is not defending Platonism against Christianity but launching an attack to render Christianity the best Platonism, we should be alert to the possibility that he is not defending rhetoric--not finding a place for it within his philosophical model--but promoting his own vision of how rhetoric fits into a model which is already well-established. Rhetoric, as a form of authority, is not totally distinct from the philosophical ideal of reason: it is, rather, an elementary aspect of it.

III. Conclusion: The Authority of Cicero

²⁶⁴ CA 3.20.43. *Nulli autem dubium est gemino pondere nos impelli ad discendum, auctoritatis atque rationis. Mihi ergo certum est nusquam prorsus a Christi auctoritate discedere: non enim reperio valentiorum. Quod autem subtilissima ratione persequendum est; ita enim iam sum affectus, ut quid sit verum, non credendo solum, sed etiam intellegendo apprehendere impatienter desiderem; apud Platonicos me interim quod sacris nostris non repugnet reperturum esse confido.*

The sophisticated display of Augustine's use of rhetorical practice and theory in this philosophical dialogue can be seen as an advertisement on Augustine's part that he is indeed an ideal orator of the type Cicero describes in the *De oratore*. Augustine has righted the wrong Cicero identifies when he famously excoriates Plato for the "absurd and unprofitable and reprehensible severance between the tongue and the brain."²⁶⁵ Cicero describes the overlap between his ideal philosopher and ideal orator in the following passage:

At this stage I give full leave to anybody who wishes, to apply the title of orator to a philosopher who imparts to us an abundant command of facts and of language, or alternatively I shall raise no obstacle if he prefers to designate as a philosopher the orator whom I on my side am now describing as possessing wisdom combined with eloquence: only provided it be agreed that neither the tongue-tied silence of the man who knows the facts but cannot explain them in language, nor the ignorance of the person who is deficient in facts but has no lack of words, is deserving of praise. And if one had to choose between them, for my own part I should prefer wisdom lacking power of expression to talkative folly; but if on the contrary we are trying to find the one thing that stands top of the whole list, the prize must go to the orator who possesses learning. And if they allow him also to be a philosopher, that is the end of the dispute; but if they keep the two separate, they will come off second best in this, that the consummate orator possesses all the knowledge of the philosophers, but the range of philosophers does not necessarily include eloquence; and although they look down on it, it cannot but be deemed to add a crowning embellishment to their sciences.²⁶⁶

Here, Cicero first suggests that the distinction between the ideal philosopher and the ideal orator is semantic, for each will have the other's skills. However, he ultimately gives pride of place to the *orator* inasmuch as he says that the "range" of an orator includes wisdom, but that oratory is not necessarily within the philosophers' purview. In a sense, one could say that Augustine's performance in the *Contra Academicos* amounts to a tacit agreement with this evaluation: Augustine includes rhetorical training throughout his philosophical dialogue,

²⁶⁵ Cicero, *De Oratore* 3.61 trans. Rackham.

²⁶⁶ Ibid. trans. Rackham. *Nunc sive qui volet, eum philosophum qui copiam nobis rerum orationisque tradat per me appellet oratorem licet, sive hunc oratorem quem ego dico sapientiam iunctam habere eloquentiae philosophum appellare malit, non impediam: dummodo hoc constet, neque infantiam eius qui rem norit sed eam explicare dicendo non queat, neque inscientiam illius cui res non suppetat, verba non desint, esse laudandam. Quorum si alterum sit optandum, malim equidem indisertam prudentiam quam stultitiam loquacem; sin quaerimus quid unum excellat ex omnibus, docto oratori palma danda est. Quem si patiuntur eundem esse philosophum, sublata controversia est; sin eos diiungent, hoc erunt inferiores quod in oratore perfecto inest illorum omnis scientia, in philosophorum autem cognitione non continuo inest eloquentia; quae quamvis contemnatur ab eis, necesse est tamen aliquem cumulum illorum artibus afferre videatur.*

concludes with a finely wrought speech, and presents a rhetorical theory in which rhetoric is a *necessary* step in the attainment of knowledge. In this way, one could go so far as to say that in this dialogue he is an orator first, and a philosopher second.

The question provoked by Augustine's performance and Cicero's outline of the ideal orator in *De oratore* is how, or even whether, Augustine's use of rhetorical handbooks to effect this synthesis of philosophy and oratory reflects a departure from Cicero's own theory. Cicero is often considered to have repudiated the handbook style rhetoric he published in *De inventione* by the time he wrote the *De oratore* near the end of his career. The idea is that Cicero's reconciliation of oratory depends upon a philosophical underpinning, largely the Platonically infused rhetorical theory of the *Orator*, which is not seen present in *De inventione*.²⁶⁷ As James May puts it, Cicero "forge[s] a new reconciliation not so much between philosophy and rhetoric, but rather between philosophy and oratory, that is, between wisdom and eloquence."²⁶⁸ The issue comes down to Cicero's self-deprecating statements about *De inventione* in the introduction to *De oratore*, as well as to the thesis of the latter dialogue, which is that the ideal orator will learn by absorbing the experience excellent models. This tension between a philosophically infused oratory and what Mary Carruthers calls the "cookbook recipes" purveyed in handbooks can be traced back to Plato's *Phaedrus*;²⁶⁹ it is a question to which I return in the conclusion of this project.

Surely Augustine was aware of Cicero's comments about *De inventione* in *De oratore*; this much can be inferred from the fact that he alludes to the dialogue itself in the *Contra Academicos*. But I am not at all convinced that he would have taken Cicero's apparent repudiation of *De inventione* as seriously as modern readers. Rather, Augustine may have understood his use the

²⁶⁷ E.g., May 2007, May and Wisse 2001. Much the same arguments have been made about Augustine's mature thought in *De doctrina christiana*. See Clavier (2014, esp. 70-85).

²⁶⁸ May (2007: 255).

²⁶⁹ Carruthers (2008: 35).

elementary handbook material within a dialogue on skepticism to be itself part of the curricular expectations of the Platonic ascent paradigm which he followed. In the first place, “invention” is the term used in texts on physics when authors list how the various arts--formal and informal--were first developed. Cicero gives an account similar to these in the first preface to *De inventione*:²⁷⁰ he does not list a series of arts, but his description of how men were scattered about in the woods without political organization or leadership echoes the account he gives in the *Tusculan Disputations*, for example, when he states that the organization of individuals into a community was an act of genius.²⁷¹ In the case of *De inventione*, Cicero understandably focuses his account in the development of a single art--namely, oratory. This passage comes after Cicero had already declared what was the most copied line in the Middle Ages, namely that “wisdom without eloquence does too little for the good of states, but that eloquence without wisdom is generally highly disadvantageous and is never helpful.”²⁷² The sentiment here is so similar to the thesis of *De oratore* that if one read only the preface of *De inventione*, he would have no way to predict that many readers have understood the preface to be largely divorced from the subject matter which follows. It often thought that while the preface shows that the young Cicero was aware of the tensions between rhetoric and philosophy--and perhaps interested in reconciling the two--he did not follow through with this intent in the writing of his textbook, perhaps through lack of maturity. Credit for developing the full Platonic potential of Cicero’s gesture to the idea that rhetorical handbooks could perhaps be incorporated into a Platonic reconciliation of philosophy and rhetoric is often given to Augustine’s earlier contemporary Marius Victorinus, whose in-depth commentary on the *De inventione* reads the text throughout in light of Victorinus’ Neoplatonism.²⁷³

²⁷⁰ *De inv.* 1.2.

²⁷¹ Cf. *Tusc.* 1.62 and *De mundo*, 399b.

²⁷² *De inv.* 1.1, trans. Hubbell.

²⁷³ Clavier 2014, Carruthers 2006.

However, Cicero includes more intimations of a Platonic influence in the original handbook than he is given credit for doing. Several detailed studies of his argumentation within the text have focused on his debts to philosophical rhetoric.²⁷⁴ The five-part proof I discussed within the *confirmatio* section of this chapter ought to be included in this number, as the example Cicero uses in *De inventione* is none other than the perfect order of the universe itself. That is to say, Cicero's sample proof for confirmation is drawn not from the material of a judicial speech, but from the most fundamental argument of the entire philosophical paradigm expressed in the ascent narrative which both Cicero and Augustine use to organize their philosophical *corpora*. As I will show in Chapter Five, the discussion of memory in both *De inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* likewise implicates the discussion of rhetorical memory within the Platonic paradigm of physics.

A particularly telling point of contact between Augustine's interweaving of rhetoric in the *Contra Academicos* and the *De inventione* is to be found in the second preface to the textbook,²⁷⁵ where Cicero writes:

Therefore without affirming anything positively, I shall proceed with an inquiring mind and make each statement with a degree of hesitation, lest in gaining the small point of having written an apparently useful book, I fall short of the chief goal, not to be rash and hasty in giving my approval to any item. This principle I shall of course pursue both now and in all my life as zealously as possible.²⁷⁶

In this passage, Cicero describes his own skeptical philosophy as the backbone of how he has constructed his handbook on rhetoric: he claims that he does not wish to be certain of any point he has made in the book, but that, much like he does in his philosophical dialogues, he wishes to give air time to both sides of an issue. Thus, the point he makes about the composition of his

²⁷⁴ E.g. Reinhardt (2000: 531-547); Brittain 2001; Fortenbaugh (1994; 1998).

²⁷⁵ For a comparison of the origins of the two prefaces of *De inv.*, see Giuffrida 1963.

²⁷⁶ De Inv. 2.10 trans. Hubbell. *Quare nos quidem sine ulla affirmatione simul quaerentes dubitanter unum quidque dicemus, ne, dum parvulum hoc consequamur, ut satis haec commode perscripsisse videamur, illud amittamus quod maximum est ut ne cui rei temere atque arroganter assenserimus. Verum hoc quidem nos et in hoc tempore et in omni vita studiose, quoad facultas feret, consequemur.*

rhetorical handbook is the same point Augustine makes about the use of the rhetorical techniques given in that same handbook: namely, that the aim of that material is not to present the truth, but what is probable. It seems entirely possible that Augustine might have seen in this passage another connection between the very content of his own dialogue--namely, whether the skeptics were correct--and the use of elementary rhetoric. In other words, Augustine could have concluded that for Cicero, the use of the basic elements of rhetoric was inherently bound up with the skeptical position which Augustine believed to be a necessary heuristic within this level of knowledge. It is also entirely possible, and even likely, that Augustine was aware of Victorinus' Platonizing interpretations of Cicero, but I do not think that Augustine would necessarily have seen Victorinus' interpretation as a watershed transformation of Cicero's rhetorical theory even as it appeared in his most elementary textbook: Augustine's emulation of Cicero could reasonably proceed as though Cicero himself held these views. Such a perspective would lend stronger force to Augustine's claim to be a Ciceronian and *Platonis aemulus*.

That is not to say, of course, that Augustine's imitation of Cicero was without innovation. To begin with, the Platonic discourse of Augustine's dialogue is a marked departure from Cicero's philosophical dialogues with their speeches *in utramque partem*. Moreover, Augustine's use of the parts of speech schema for his narrative may be original. His most obvious contribution to the genre, of course, is the argument that Christianity is the culmination of the Platonic-Ciceronian philosophical legacy. At the same time, I do not think that Augustine would have seen his use of Cicero's elementary rhetoric as a departure from Cicero's mature rhetorical theory, Cicero's comments about *De inventione* in the *De oratore* notwithstanding. Rather, Augustine incorporates the most basic components of Cicero's rhetoric into his first dialogue because for him, the subject matter is supposed to be basic: for him, the *De inventione* is itself part of the cradle of authority.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MOTHER OF ALL VIRTUES:

AN ETHICS OF STYLE IN *DE BEATA VITA*

In the second of the Cassiciacum dialogues, Augustine poses the question of what the happy life consists in. This is the central question of ancient ethics, and the aim of this chapter is to show how Augustine interweaves that theme with the rhetorical canon of style. On the practical side, Augustine signals his concerns with ethics in this dialogue by including characters who were not present in the *Contra Academicos*. In addition to his co-teacher Alypius and the students Licentius and Trygetius, *De beata vita* features Augustine's two cousins, Lastidianus and Rusticus, his son, Adeodatus, and his mother, Monica. In the introductory epistle and elsewhere, Augustine makes much of the fact that his mother is participating despite her lack of formal education; he says the same of his two cousins.²⁷⁷ The inclusion of these less educated characters reinforces the idea that a virtuous life, even without learning, can help in the pursuit of wisdom.²⁷⁸ This is especially true of Monica's role in the dialogue; not only is she a central character, but Augustine draws attention to the fact that her virtue enables her to make contributions of considerable insight.²⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the inclusion of Monica may have contributed to the fact that *De beata vita* has received less attention as a serious philosophical work than the other Cassiciacum dialogues. Erik Kenyon has pointed out that even when Augustine praises Monica, she appears to be making simple points that might have been readily available to anyone in possession a passing acquaintance with clichés pertaining to wisdom.²⁸⁰ It

²⁷⁷ DBV 1.6.

²⁷⁸ See esp. Conybeare (2006: 61-125).

²⁷⁹ DBV 1.10.

²⁸⁰ Kenyon (2018: 85)

is not entirely unsurprising, therefore, that readers have so often read the inclusion of Monica as a counterbalance to the logical discussion of the dialogue: it has been argued that she represents feminine emotion as opposed to masculine reason,²⁸¹ inspiration as opposed to logic.²⁸² It does not help that *De beata vita* is the shortest of the dialogues, and the group's attempts at discussion are beleaguered by simple mistakes and logical fallacies. Yet what is missing from these discussions is an appreciation for subtle yet rigorous philosophical arguments Augustine does make throughout *De beata vita*.

The inclusion of characters who represent the practical value of ethics, and even the subject of the happy life itself, represent only a fraction of Augustine's exploration of ethics in *De beata vita*. In this chapter, I show that Augustine's study of ethics is deeply rooted within his Platonic schema of metaphysical ascent by demonstrating that two additional dimensions of ethical study are central to the text. The first of these is a study of the use of definitions, in which Augustine shows that man's capacity for happiness is bound up with the ontological nature of God as the source of all goodness and Being. This aspect of *De beata vita* renders it a critical part of the ascent narrative in that here, Augustine lays out his Christian Platonist view of God as the foundation of the cosmos. The second overlooked dimension of ethics in this text is that Augustine offers a study of the three styles--plain, middle, and high, a commonplace of rhetorical handbooks--as an illustration of the rhetorical dimension of ethics. His own use of style in the dialogue serves as an extension of the practice of virtue--one which complements his argument in the *Contra Academicos* that rhetoric is an integral part of the ascent paradigm. If in the "logical" dialogue he showed that rhetoric is a necessary and inevitable step in navigating the sensible world, in this "ethical" dialogue he offers a theory for how to put this rhetoric into practice. The common thread between the ontological theory of God and Augustine's practice of rhetorical style is the theme of moderation, that first principle of ethics. Augustine's ontology

²⁸¹ Kenyon 2018.

²⁸² McWilliam 1990, Seelbach 2005, Conybeare 2006.

reveals God, whom he calls the “Highest Measure,” to be the source and definition of all things. His rhetorical practice advocates for moderation as the guiding principle of style, a moderation which serves as a reflection of the happy man’s connection to God, the Highest Measure.

I have divided the chapter into two sections, corresponding with Augustine’s treatment of definition and style, respectively. In Part One, I argue that the whole of *De beata vita* can be read as a series of attempts at articulating a formal definition of the happy life--attempts which use concrete definitional theory as evidence in at least one late ancient rhetorical handbook. Augustine’s use of definition to explore ontology serves as a theoretical foundation for the cosmological program he lays out in the final dialogue, *De ordine*. In Part Two, I show that the dialogue also can be divided in sections which correspond to the three rhetorical styles of plain, middle, and high. In so doing, Augustine uses Cicero’s dialogue the *Orator*, the text in which Cicero himself offers a Platonic theory of moderation, to ultimately uphold the middle style as the ideal style for the philosopher-rhetor. In the conclusion, I contextualize this reading within the tradition of ontology, style and ethics exhibited by other *Platonis aemuli* as a counterbalance to readings of Augustine’s mature rhetorical theory which see much of his focus on ethical concepts as scarcely indebted to that tradition. I hope this reading will contribute to the scholarly discourse on *De beata vita* both by showing the import of discrete elements of rhetorical and philosophical training with the text itself, and by illustrating that much of the rhetorical theory often thought to be the product of Augustine’s mature thought as a Christian thinker is already evident in his engagement with philosophers at Cassiciacum.

I. *The Ethics of Definition*

The first indication that *De beata vita* is concerned with the practice of definition lies in the central question of the text: “Who is happy?” Unlike the central question of *Contra Academicos* (“Can the truth be found?”), this question can be answered by means of a formal definition. Here, I will seek to demonstrate that *De beata vita* consists in three sustained attempts at articulating just such a formal definition. These attempts culminate in a definition of God as

the “Highest Measure” (*Summus Modus*), effectively reconciling Stoic arguments that *moderation* is the supreme virtue with a Neoplatonic understanding of God as the source of all virtue and goodness. The Platonist metaphysics which inform Augustine’s use of definition have much in common with Marius Victorinus’ *De definitionibus*,²⁸³ which is itself a reworking and expansion of Cicero’s definitional theory.²⁸⁴ Thus it seems likely that Augustine was either using Victorinus as a source or was working from a closely allied tradition. The question of Augustine’s use of the *De definitionibus* is worth further exploration with respect to the broader question of Augustine’s knowledge of Victorinus’ works. Augustine praises Victorinus in the *Confessions*.²⁸⁵ There, Victorinus serves as an *exemplar* for Augustine: he was a renowned whose conversion to Christianity in some sense foreshadows and perhaps even inspires Augustine’s own. However, scholars are largely unsure of which works of Victorinus Augustine had read, aside from limited translations of the *Enneads*.²⁸⁶ Because the question of Augustine’s debt to Victorinus is wide-ranging, I will confine myself to showing the similarities between their works. That Augustine’s use of definition has more in common with Victorinus’ work than Cicero’s *Topica* suggests that Augustine’s Platonic emulation of Cicero is of the sort to obscure intermediaries, which is likely a function of his desire to compete with the mainstream narratives of philosophical education available in late antiquity, as I discussed in Chapter One.

A final caveat I must consider before proceeding to my first reading of *De beata vita* is the fact that Augustine chooses to emphasize the study and practice of definitions in his study of ethics. Definition is often, if not usually, treated within handbooks of dialectic, and is regularly

²⁸³Pronay 1997 is the authoritative edition of the *De definitionibus*, on which very little has been published. Do to library restrictions, I have been unable to access Pronay or even a physical copy of the the older *Patrologia Latina* edition of the text. As a result, citations of the Latin *De def.* are taken from the Brepolis *Library of Latin Texts* database, in which sections are unnumbered.

²⁸⁴ Victorinus’ reliance on Cicero is evident from *De definitionibus* itself; he also published his own edition and commentary on the *Topica* which is not extant.

²⁸⁵ For a general introduction to Victorinus and what we know of him, see Cooper 2010.

²⁸⁶ See Edwards 2012, Cipriani 1998, Sciuto 1994, and Henry 1934.

cited as a component of logic rather than ethics in catalogues of the three divisions of philosophy. However, this is but another example of the permeability of logic and ethics as philosophical categories. Augustine's choice to bring definition to the fore in his dialogue on ethics rather than logic is not a departure from the broader philosophical tradition, but rather situates him within a tradition associated with Socrates, who is associated with incorporating definition into his study of ethics.²⁸⁷

i. A Substantial/Philosophical Definition

After some preliminary conversation in *De beata vita*, the first phase of definition begins when, through a series of questions, Augustine prompts the group to agree that the man who "has" God is happy.²⁸⁸ That Augustine begins the process of definition with the notion that "having" God makes man happy is a strong indication of his Platonist project at Cassiciacum; in the *Theatetus*, Plato argues that to have an intelligible object present in the intellect is tantamount to "possession," and that the awareness of this presence is "having."²⁸⁹ This is a distinction which Aristotle develops and which in turn became a key aspect of Platonist epistemology.²⁹⁰ For Augustine to claim "the man who has God is happy" is a definition in its own right. In fact, based on the fact that the group agrees to this at the outset, we can see how little the assumptions which undergird their philosophical work change throughout the dialogue: in his final speech, Augustine refers to this point and says that they have now

²⁸⁷ E.g., Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 987b.

²⁸⁸ *De beata vita* 2.11-12.

²⁸⁹ *Theatetus* 197b-d.

²⁹⁰ Gerson (2014: 267ff.) contextualizes this passage of the *Theatetus* within the framework of Neoplatonic epistemology. It is likely that Augustine received the idea from the Neoplatonists rather than directly from the *Theatetus*.

“proven” this point to be true.²⁹¹ But clearly it is not a sufficient definition for Augustine, who now asks the group to answer the question “who has God?” His students suggest three options:

- 1) The one living an upright life has God (Licentius)
- 2) The one who does God’s will has God (Trygetius)
- 3) The one who does not have an impure spirit has God (Adeodatus)

While Augustine does not directly criticize these answers, throughout the ensuing discussion, he highlights their inadequacies. I read this process as an attempt at formulating a philosophical definition, i.e., “a true and complete definition” in the tradition of Aristotle and Cicero. In the *De definitionibus*, Victorinus terms these definitions “substantial.” For the purposes of reading *De beata vita*, I will use Victorinus’ term to refer to this type of definition for one reason: *substantialis* becomes the basis for wordplay on ontology of definition at the end of the dialogue.

The standard example of a philosophical--or substantial--definition is that given by Cicero in his *Topics*: “Man is an animal, rational, mortal, land-dwelling, two-footed, able to laugh.”²⁹² Victorinus cites this in the *De definitionibus*, and helpfully expands upon the components of this type:

And in all these [descriptions of definitions] I think it is clear that *that* definition which ought to be [called] substantial should be formulated thus: that, after the genus of that thing being defined is put forward and the species are connected to it with their differentiations, we come to what is distinctive about the thing being defined, once all things that share qualities with it have been excluded.²⁹³

In Cicero’s definition, the statement “Man is an animal,” is a *genus*--the essence of the thing being defined. That man is “rational, mortal, land-dwelling, two-footed,” are all *species*, i.e.,

²⁹¹ Unlike Kenyon 2018, I take this initial question as an indication of continuity throughout the dialogue: from the outset, the group is fairly confident on what they are arguing-- they struggle in respect of how to articulate it, i.e., the definition.

²⁹² *De def. homo est animal rationale mortale terrenum bipes risus capax.*

²⁹³ *De def. Et his omnibus arbitror apertum esse, istam definitionem quae substantialis debet esse sic esse dicendam: ut, proposito eius rei de qua quaeritur genere et adiunctis speciebus cum differentia, usque ad eius proprium, disclosa omnino communione, veniamus.*

integral components of man. Each of these *species* differentiates man from other animals -- rational from the irrational, mortal from immortal, land-dwelling from sea-dwelling, two-footed from four footed, etc. But for Cicero and Victorinus, none of these qualities is completely distinctive to man: other animals (or gods) share in these qualities. Finally, however, man's "ability to laugh" --in conjunction with the other attributes listed--distinguish him from all other entities.

After Augustine elicits the three definitions from his students listed above, he proceeds to ask them a series of leading questions. Although he does not say so outright, the implication of these questions is that the group's definitions are not successful because they do not reduce the happy man to an element which renders him "distinctive." Augustine's questions, far from simplifying matters, result in a nearly comical attempt on the part of the group to add more and more differentiating factors to what is now a collective definition of the happy life. Augustine summarizes their work this way:

In sum, we have this distribution: that everyone who has found God both has a favorable God and is happy. Moreover, everyone who seeks God has a favorable God, but is not yet happy. And finally everyone who is far from God thanks to vice and sin is not only not happy, but does not even live with a favorable God.²⁹⁴

This convoluted account of the group's conclusions thus far reflects their inability in the preceding discussion to agree upon what it means to have God. Implicit in this passage is the idea that the students struggled to reduce both the concept of "having" and the concept of "God" to something distinctive. When they agree to Augustine's summary, they enforce the first line as a definition of the happy man. This happy man has two *species*--one who has found God (as differentiated from one still seeking) and whose God is favorable (as opposed to unfavorable).

²⁹⁴ DBV 3.21. *Ista igitur inquam distributio erit, ut omnis qui iam Deum invenit et propitium Deum habeat, et beatus sit: omnis autem qui Deum quaerit propitium Deum habeat, sed nondum sit beatus, iamvero quisquis vitiis atque peccatis a Deo se alienat, non modo beatus non sed, sed ne Deo quidam vivat propitio.*

However, this definition is still inadequate. Augustine cites a flaw in the argumentation which led to this definition: by agreeing that the one seeking God is not yet happy, the group has implied that the one who has a favorable God (i.e., seeks God) is miserable.²⁹⁵ This is because earlier in the dialogue they had agreed that everyone who was not happy was miserable. The group cannot brook the conclusion that one might be miserable while having a favorable God, and so their progress up to this point is null and void. The point that his students are missing, I think, is that this attempt to formulate a substantial definition was doomed from the start. Though Augustine led the students through the process of forming a substantial definition by encouraging them to tease out appropriate *species* and *differentia*--components which are not necessary for other types of definition in Victorinus' typology--the premise of the attempt was flawed. By nature, a substantial definition states what a thing is; here, the students were attempting to describe what the happy man has. That Augustine is interested in this (very Platonic) distinction between being and having is borne out by the points he raises in the group's second attempt at definition.

ii. Phase Two: Definition by Synonyms and Contraries

The second phase of definition begins on what is now the third day of debate. Augustine returns to a point his mother Monica had made on day one, viz., that the rich man is miserable because he is always needy. This is point is in fact the one upon which the group's first attempt at definition failed--they had not fully considered the relationship between "having God," happiness, and misery. Now, Augustine proposes that the group will agree that "everyone is miserable who is needy" (*omnes qui egeant miseros esse*). If they can also prove the reverse, that everyone is needy who is miserable, Augustine says the group will have answered the question

²⁹⁵ Ibid 3.22.

of “who is happy” (*qui sit beatus*). It will be “the one who is not in need” (*erit enim ille qui non eget*).²⁹⁶

In this proposal, Augustine is asking the group to make use of a combination of two types of definitions which appear in Victorinus’ *De definitionibus*--synonyms and contraries. The equation “everyone who is miserable is needy” amounts to a synonym, or a definition from likeness. Victorinus describes it thus:

The fifth species of definition...in Latin we may call synonym. This [type] designates the sense of the thing being defined by means of another utterance, lone and singular, and in a certain way declares by one other word that which was indicated by one word: for instance, “ ‘quiet’ is ‘silence.’ ”²⁹⁷

When Augustine states that proving the identification between misery and need will provide the definition of the happy man as “the one who is not in need,” he is using a definition “from contraries,” that is, from opposites. Marius Victorinus describes definitions from contraries as follows:

The eighth species of definition is...that which is defined through the removal of its contrary; for instance, “good is that which is not bad.” We ought to use this type of definition when the contrary is known. For when two things are so bound together, that one is not able to exist without the other, how will cognition of the one come about, unless the other is understood?²⁹⁸

It is worth noting that while contraries themselves are a commonplace of ancient logic, they do not appear as a formal type of definition prior to the *De definitionibus*. This seems to be an innovation that occurs in late antiquity, if not in the writings of Victorinus himself, who

²⁹⁶ Ibid 4.23.

²⁹⁷ *De def.* Haec vocem illam de cuius re quaeritur alio sermone designat, uno ac singulari, et quodammodo, quid illud sit uno verbo positum, uno verbo alio declarat, ut ‘conticescere’ est ‘tacere’, item latus apertum ‘haurit’ ‘percutit’, item cum ‘terminum’ dicimus ‘finem’ aut ‘populatas’ interpretamur esse ‘vastatas’; et omnino cum unius verbi rem verbo manifestiore alio declaramus, haec erit quinta de qua loquimur definitio.

²⁹⁸ Ibid. Octava species definitionis κατ’ ἀφάρεσιν τοῦ ἐναντίου, id est per privantiam contrarii eius quod definitur, ut ‘bonum est quod malum non est’. Hoc genere definitionis uti debemus, cum contrarium notum est. Nam haec duo cum ita inligentur, ut alterum sine altero esse non possit: alterius cognitio quomodo fiet, nisi fuerit utrumque comprehensum?

nevertheless attributes the type to Cicero's comment in the *De partitionibus*.²⁹⁹ As a type of definition, contraries are ushered into the Middle Ages by Isidore of Seville, who uses *De definitionibus* as the basis of his own treatment of definition in the *Etymologies*. Thus we may imagine it achieved fairly broad currency over the course of late antiquity.

The portion of *De beata vita* in which Augustine applies these types of definition is best known for his use of Stoic syllogisms.³⁰⁰ Here, Augustine runs through a series of arguments equating various vices and virtues with one another. We should understand these equivalencies as a means of definition by synonyms; and whenever Augustine introduces the opposite of a virtue of vice, he does so to further the process of definition by contraries. Both synonyms and contraries are at evidence in the passage where he describes the relationship between the vices need and foolishness:

Therefore the need of the soul is nothing other than foolishness. Foolishness is the contrary of wisdom, and just like death is the contrary of life, so is the happy life to the miserable one, that is, without a middle state. For every man who is not happy is miserable, and every man who is not dead is alive; in the same way, it is clear that everyone who is not foolish is wise.³⁰¹

That Augustine is not merely using the term "contrary" (*contraria*) to mean "opposite" in the generic sense, but rather as a technical mode of definition, is supported by his use--here and at several other points in the dialogue--of the technical term "middle." Ancient and medieval rhetorical handbooks repeatedly refer to the concept that contraries can be classified according to those which have middles and those that do not. Isidore of Seville gives the example that the "middle term" between the contraries "black" and "white" is "gray."³⁰² In this passage and

²⁹⁹Ibid, *Ergo recte fieri potest huiusmodi definitio, sed hoc modo quemadmodum docui; et hoc est quod Tullius in Partitionibus praecepit: saepe ex contrariis esse definiendum.*

³⁰⁰ Harwardt 1998 and Wetzel (1992: 48-55) make the case for these argument as Stoic syllogisms.

³⁰¹ DBV 4.28 *Est ergo animi egestas, inquam, nihil aliud quam stultitia. Haec est enim contraria sapientiae, et ita contraria ut mors vitae, ut beata vita miserae, hoc est, sine aliquo medio. Nam ut omnis non beatus homo miser est, omnisque homo non mortuus vivit; sic omnem non stultum manifestum est esse sapientem.*

³⁰² *Etymologiae* 54.

throughout *De beata vita*, Augustine draws attention to the fact that he is making exclusive use of opposites without a middle.

I suggest that the reason for this is bound up with Augustine's use of contraries to speak to the nature of God, and specifically, to the ultimate conclusion of the dialogue that the happy life consists of the totalizing experience of being "with God."³⁰³ This point is concealed, however, by the indirect way Augustine associates his use of contraries and synonyms with God Himself. It is possible that Augustine's early readers, and perhaps the students in his dialogues, would have been primed to recognize his use of contraries as a mode of definition that was already linked to Platonist and Christian Platonist discourse which sought to describe God by means of negative theology. Marius Victorinus makes just such a claim for contraries in the *De definitionibus*. Given the derivative nature of that work, it is likely that he was not the first to associate *contraries* in particular as a mode of definition with the *via negativa*. Victorinus writes:

Since we are unable to know what God is in any way, the foundation of all things that exist, which the Greeks call *being*, [contraries] serve as a substitute for knowledge of God for us, i.e., [definition] based on the cutting out and removal of things we can conceive of: "God is neither body nor any element nor soul nor mind nor sense nor intellect nor anything which is able to be expressed by these." With such scaffolding we may define what God is; all the better if you add, "What cannot be defined, that is God."³⁰⁴

In order to understand how Augustine, much less explicitly, suggests that "God cannot be defined" by means of contraries, we must move to the end of *De beata vita*. There, Augustine makes it clear that the string of virtues he has equated through his use of synonyms--virtues like wisdom, happiness, frugality, fullness, moderation, and yes, being--ultimately are terms for God. Here, Augustine famously calls God the *Summus Modus*, the "Highest Measure." On the

³⁰³ DBV 4.35.

³⁰⁴ *De def. Etenim cum quid sit deus nullo modo scire possimus, sublatio omnium existentium, quae Graeci ὄντα appellant, cognitionem dei nobis, circumcisa et ablata notarum rerum cognitione, supponet: 'deus est neque corpus neque ullum elementum neque anima neque mens neque sensus neque intellectus neque aliquid quod ex his capi potest'. His talibus sublati quid sit deus poterit definiri; magis si addas, quod etiam definiri non potest, id deum esse.*

one hand, scholars agree that this epithet is a signal to Augustine's reliance in Plotinus, who uses this term for God in the *Enneads*. At the same time, we should also read Augustine's use of the epithet *Modus*--or measure--as an allusion to the Stoic concept of "moderation" as the "Mother of all Virtues". This is a point which Augustine makes by means of allusion to Cicero earlier in the same dialogue. With respect to Augustine's discussion of the nature of God, this terminology is important because it speaks to the philosophical commonplace of the 'unity' of all virtues: if all virtues are united within the concept of moderation, and God Himself is the Highest Measure, then all virtues are identified with God.

Once we understand Augustine's use of synonyms as all pointing to his final description of God, we can read into Augustine's use of synonyms and contraries earlier in the text to see that there he, like Victorinus, he is making use of negative theology in an attempt to lead his students to an understanding of the nature of God. That theology is most fully, if indirectly, expressed in the following passage:

I don't know how we can say that one *has* need, or *has* foolishness. It is as if we say that some place which lacks light *has* darkness; for this is nothing other than *not-having* light. For darkness does not come and go, as it were; rather, to lack light is the same thing as to be dark. In the same way, lacking clothing is the same as being naked. For nakedness doesn't vanish like some moveable thing when clothing is added. Therefore, when we say that someone *has* need, it's as if we say he has nakedness. "Need" is a word for *not-having*. For this reason, so that I may explain what I want to the extent that I'm able, to say that "one has need" is like saying "he has *not-having*."³⁰⁵

In this passage, Augustine begins with two vices: need, and foolishness. Elsewhere in the dialogue, he gives their opposites as the virtues fullness and wisdom, which he ultimately identifies with God. Thus, there is a sense in which the terms "need" and "foolishness" stand in here for the experience of not-God. In order to illustrate the relationship between having and

³⁰⁵ DBV 4.29. *Quamquam nescio quomodo dicamus, habet egestatem, aut, habet stultitiam. Tale est enim ac si locum aliquem, qui lumine careat, dicamus habere tenebras; quod nihil est aliud quam lumen non habere. Non enim tenebrae quasi veniunt aut recedunt; sed carere lumine hoc ipsum est iam tenebrosus esse, ut carere veste hoc est esse nudum. Non enim veste accedente veluti aliqua res mobilis nuditas fugit. Sic ergo dicimus aliquem habere egestatem, quasi dicamus habere nuditatem. Egestas enim verbum est non habendi. Quamobrem, ut quod volo explicem sicut possum, ita dicitur, habet egestatem; quasi dicatur, habet non habere.*

not-having need, Augustine uses the analogies of darkness and nakedness. When he says that “darkness does not come and go, but rather to lack light is the same as to be dark” he is saying that the one does not exist without the other: darkness is simply a privative of light. By analogy, then, need is simply a privative of fullness and not-God is the privative of God. In other words, when Augustine concludes by pointing out that it is paradoxical to say that “one has need” because this is equivalent to saying that “one has not-having,” he is tacitly making the point that the experience of not-having God is nevertheless, paradoxically, a kind of experience of God in and of itself—one in which the person could have some concept of God based on that deprivation, just as one would identify the concept of fullness by experiencing need. This argument foreshadows a point Augustine will make at the end of the dialogue, namely that “it is one thing to *have* God, another to not be without God.”³⁰⁶ In making this point, Augustine is arguing against the Academic skeptical argument that one who is seeking God can be happy. Augustine’s students had assented to this idea on the grounds that surely God would be “with” one who was seeking Him. By arguing that the experience of being with God or not being with God is analogous to the relationship between darkness and light, which do not chase each other out but are merely privatives of each other, Augustine offers a counterpoint to the idea that the one seeking God could be happy, despite the fact that God is “with” him--this is not the same as Him experiencing that presence.

In this way, Augustine makes a relatively sophisticated philosophical point through the elementary practice of definitions. It matters that, despite the fact that Augustine identifies a series of positive virtues with God--fullness, measure, and the like--his first approach in exploring the nature of God is through the privatives of these virtues. This suggests that Augustine agrees with Victorinus that God is best understood by, as Victorinus says, “the cutting out and removal of things we can conceive of.”

³⁰⁶ DBV 4.21 *Aliud est...Deum habere, aliud non esse sine Deo.*

There is one final point I must draw out with respect to this phase of definition, namely, that Augustine here uses synonyms and contraries to extinguish the distinction between “having” and “being.” He effects the synthesis between the two indirectly; thus, we may say that in phase two of definition he obliquely answers the unstated problem of phase one--i.e., that the group attempted to formulate a substantial definition by defining what the happy man “has” rather than what he “is.” Augustine’s elision between “having” and “being” is evident in the same passage I have just examined with respect to negative theology. When Augustine uses the analogy of light and darkness to describe the relationship between “having” and “not-having,” he also uses the concepts of “having” and “being” interchangeably:

It is as if we say that some place which lacks light *has* darkness; for this is nothing other than *not-having* light. For darkness does not come and go, as it were; rather, to lack light is the same thing as to be dark.

This same elision can be found in his use of synonyms in the surrounding discussion to equate the virtues with one another. The equations he makes discursively in the dialogue can be simplified into the following formula:

Need = not having
Need = opposite of fullness
Fullness = being
Being = opposite of not having
Being = having

The equivalency of being and having is not, therefore, the result of idiomatic expressions of language, which one might conclude if looking only at the light/darkness passage above. By implicating being and having into his discussion of virtue, Augustine intimates that both states are, in their complete form, God Himself--as are all the virtues of goodness, moderation, etc.

In terms of the group’s initial failure to produce a substantial definition, then, the implication here is that the group failed to understand, when they agreed that “whoever has God is happy,” that God is both “having” and “being.” Because, as we have just seen, Augustine and Victorinus understand God--that is, Being--as ultimately undefinable except by contraries, this means that the group was attempting to formulate a definition of the happy man

in relation to what is undefinable. This is an impossible task: if God can only be properly defined by what he is *not*, to produce a true substantial definition of God is impossible. Likewise, if the happy man can only be defined by his relation to God, to produce a substantial definition of the happy man would be impossible. Thus, Augustine's use of contraries in the second phase of definition should be read as the most "correct" attempt at defining the happy man, one which also illustrates why the first phase of definition is successful.

iii. Phase Three: Substance and the Descriptive Definition

This reading of phase two is supported by Augustine's third and final phase of definition. When his students do not grasp the concept of God's--and hence the happy man's--indefinability, Augustine turns to *oratio perpetua*, as he does at the end of all the scenic Cassiciacum dialogues. Here, he gives a definition of the happy life which fits Marius Victorinus' characterization of a "descriptive definition," i.e., one which paints a roundabout picture of the thing being defined.

This then, is the complete satisfaction of souls, this is the happy life: to recognize with perfect piety by whom you are led to the Truth, what Truth you enjoy, and through what you are connected to the Highest Measure. These three show to those who understand the one God and one Substance, with all the vanities of changeable superstition shut out.³⁰⁷

Several aspects of this definition are notable relative to Augustine's overall project of definition and ontology in the dialogue. The first is that here Augustine very clearly associates God with Being--calling him the One Substance. Both the term he uses for God, *substantia*, and his epithet of "*Summus Modus*" are terms which signal his Platonist connections. *Summus Modus* in particular has been shown to be a direct borrowing from Plotinus. Thus, the passage clearly

³⁰⁷ DBV 4.35 *Illa est igitur plena satietas animorum, hoc est beata vita, pie perfecteque cognoscere a quo inducaris in veritatem, qua veritate perfruaris, per quid connectaris summo modo. Quae tria unum Deum intelligentibus unamque substantiam, exclusis vanitatibus variae superstitionis, ostendunt.*

affirms the subtle connections between God and being which I teased out of the second phase of the dialogue above.

A second notable aspect of this passage has to do with the Trinitarian statement Augustine makes here, which is well known for being the first such extant formulation in Augustine's *corpus*. Here, Augustine identifies the Spirit as the one who leads men to Christ, refers to Christ as the Truth, and identifies the Father as the Highest Measure. We can read this as a way of integrating Stoic virtue theory, the idea that all virtues are one, within his Trinitarian theology. The distinction between the three hypostases of God is expressed by the association of each with a different virtue (strictly speaking, Augustine's association of the Spirit with *admonitio* occurs just prior to the definition proper). In this way, Augustine suggests a parallel between God's three-in-one nature and the Stoic "synonymity" of virtues which, as we have seen, he explored in phase two of the dialogue. Thus, Augustine shows his readers how the Christian God can be seen as the fulfillment of the Stoic/Platonist virtue theory he has been expounding.

The third notable aspect of Augustine's descriptive definition is the wordplay contained both in the definition itself, and in the surrounding passage; this wordplay juxtaposes Augustine's description of the happy life with God and the language Cicero and especially Victorinus use to describe substantial definitions. As such, Augustine's final definition in *De beata vita* serves as a tacit commentary on the relationship between God as Being, and definition as an attempt at defining what is. The relevant passage in its entirety is this:

And we tremble to behold this entirely: this appears to be nothing else than God, **perfect** without the hinderance of any **degeneration**. For where there is whole and total **perfection**, there is omnipotent God. But as long as we seek, we are not yet saturated by that fount, and, since I use that word, **fullness**, and cannot profess that we have attained to our measure. And yet, although God is still a source of help to us, we are still not wise and happy. This then, is the full satisfaction of souls, this the happy life: to recognize with perfect piety by whom you are led to the Truth, what Truth you enjoy, and through what you are connected to the Highest Measure. These three show to those who understand the one God and one Substance, with all the vanities of changeable superstition shut out.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁸ DBV 4.35. *et totum intueri trepidamus: nihilque aliud etiam hoc apparet esse quam Deum, nulla degeneratione impediante perfectum. Nam ibi totum atque omne perfectum est, simulque est omnipotentissimus Deus. Sed tamen quamdiu quaerimus, nondum ipso fonte, atque ut illo verbo utar, plenitudine saturati, nondum ad nostrum modum*

The most basic component of this wordplay is the fact that Augustine's word of "*Substance*" to describe God is the same as the very term for a substantial definition (*substantialis*). In the passage above, Augustine precedes his claim that God is Substance by twice associated God with perfection, and then emphasizing that this perfection is also a "fullness." Fullness is a term especially associated with Platonic characterizations of God, as is perfection; but these terms are also associated, in tandem, with Victorinus' characterizations of the substantial definition. When describing substantial definition, he writes, "Aristotle says a full and perfect definition consists of *genus* and *differentia*."³⁰⁹ In the same passage, he attributes *fullness* to those who best expressed how to teach what he again calls the "perfect" type of definition.³¹⁰ Such "full and perfect" substantial definitions are also, of course, the definitions which incorporate the *genus*, *species*, and *differentia*, and *proprium* of the thing being defined. Victorinus enumerates these thus:

And in all these [descriptions of definitions] I think it is clear that *that* definition which ought to be [called] substantial should be formulated thus: that, after the genus of that thing being defined is put forward and the species are connected to it with their differentiations, we come to what is distinctive about the thing being defined, once all things that share qualities with it have been excluded.³¹¹

It is possible that Augustine alludes to these terms when he states in the above passage that God admits of no degeneration--in other words, God is the original *genus*. The verb Augustine uses to describe the happy man's relationship to God is *connectere*: the happy life consists in

nos pervenisse fateamur: et ideo, quamvis iam Deo adiuvante, nondum tamen sapientes ac beati sumus. Illa est igitur plena satietas animorum, hoc est beata vita, pie perfecteque cognoscere a quo inducaris in veritatem, qua veritate perfruaris, per quid connectaris summo modo. Quae tria unum Deum intelligentibus unamque substantiam, exclusis vanitatibus variae superstitionis, ostendunt.

³⁰⁹ *De def. Verum Aristoteles definitionem perfectam et plenam ait consistere ex genere et differentiis.*

³¹⁰ *Ibid. Quidam tamen, cautiore pleniores que in docendo, definitionis ipsius quasi quaedam membra constituunt dicunt que eam debere consistere - perfectam definitionem istam quam appello substantialem - ex quinque partibus: id est genere, specie, differentia, accidenti, proprio.*

³¹¹ *De def. Et his omnibus arbitror apertum esse, istam definitionem quae substantialis debet esse sic esse dicendam: ut, proposito eius rei de qua quaeritur genere et adiunctis speciebus cum differentia, usque ad eius proprium, disclusa omnino communione, veniamus.*

understanding how one is connected to the “Highest Measure.” This is the same verb Victorinus uses to describe the relationship between a *species* and its *genus*; thus, it seems possible that Augustine’s use of the verb here is a subtle reference to the notion that the wise and happy man might be connected to God in a manner analogous to how a *species* is connected to a *genus*--it is part of that *genus*, but not identical to it. Finally, Victorinus’ description of the substantial definition states that once the *genus* and *species* have been defined, one comes to that distinctive element “once all things that share qualities with it have been excluded.” Augustine uses a similar language of exclusion to describe all that is not God, i.e., the One Substance; he says that this Substance is recognized “with all the vanities of changeable superstition shut out.”

If my reading is correct, then Augustine’s final definition of the happy life uses the terminology of a substantial definition to make an ontological point about the nature of God as being and the means of achieving happiness. In this model, the relationship between *genus* and *species* becomes a representation of the Platonic concept of emanation or participation, in which man achieves intelligible knowledge by connection to God. This is the central issue of the Platonic ascent paradigm which Augustine claims for his particularly Christian brand of Platonism in *De beata vita*, much as in *Contra Academicos* he subtly argued that Christ’s person solved the knowledge gap necessary for humankind to move from the sensible to the intelligible.

The problem (or rather the irony) of this passage is that while Augustine couches his final definition using the terminology of substantial definitions to describe God, the definition he gives of the happy life itself is not itself substantial. It is rather a descriptive definition, which is the fourth category of definition in Victorinus’ list.³¹² In other words, when Augustine says

³¹² *De def. Descriptiva ista dicitur esse definitio, ut cum quaeritur ‘quid avarus sit, quid crudelis, quid luxuriosus’ et universa avari, luxuriosi, crudelis natura describitur. Quae definitionis species dicitur ex orationis genere descriptio, ut ‘luxuriosus est victus non necessarii, sed sumptuosi et onerosi appetens, in delicias affluens, in libidinem pronus’: haec talia definiunt luxuriosum, et descriptione definiunt.*

that the happy life consists in recognizing how one is led to the truth, what truth one enjoys, and by what one is connected to the highest measure, this is not a statement of the essence of the happy life, but rather an expression of what Victorinus calls its “universal nature.” Not surprisingly, at the end of his discussion of this species of definition Victorinus states that it is “suited for the orator” and places it in direct contrast to the substantial definition,³¹³ which, as we have already seen Victorinus has associated with philosophers in particular. Given that Augustine’s final definition of the happy life occurs at the culmination of a speech, it is stylistically sensible that he should opt for this choice of definition--an aspect of the text which we will consider in Part Two of this chapter below. Nevertheless, by failing to produce a substantial definition even as his wordplay evokes the ultimate importance of such definitions, Augustine essentially calls into question the whole purpose of his attempts to formulate such a definition in the first place.

The point of this irony, I think, is precisely that contraries are the only viable way to define God. Although in one sense Augustine abandons his attempt at helping his students produce a definition by contraries after phase two of the dialogue, the fact that he continues to make use of contraries and synonyms within his final speech in *De beata vita* serves to show that they are, in fact, his preferred method of definition in the dialogue. Furthermore, his use of contraries lays the foundation for the whole argument of the final Cassiciacum dialogue, *De ordine*, where Augustine will argue that the problem of evil is “solved” by seeing bad and evil events as the absence of God: the exact idea Augustine tries to show his students in the passage where he speaks of darkness as the absence of light, or nakedness as the same thing as not-having clothes. Much as the *Contra Academicos* argues that students require rhetoric because they cannot understand dialectic in its perfect form--leading to intelligible truth--Augustine’s

³¹³ *De def. Haec definitio apta semper est oratori: huic enim laus dicendi per circuitum tribuitur propter honestatem, non ille aptior et determinatus sermo, qui veluti familiaris est definitioni quam supra substantialem esse praecepimus.*

final (rhetorical) definition of the happy life stands as a monument to the idea that students cannot define God, at least when they are not connected to Him.

II. *The Ethics of Style*

Augustine's use of definition is woven into the fabric of his exploration of the second area of rhetorical training he explores in *De beata vita*, which is style. In this section, I will argue that *De beata vita* can be read as a theorization of the three styles of speech which were a commonplace of Roman education,³¹⁴ and which were especially associated with Cicero's dialogue the *Orator*, which I show below to be an important source in *De beata vita*. The dialogue may be divided into sections which transition from the plain, to middle, and finally to high styles: a tri-phasic division which intersects with Augustine's transitions from the substantial definition, to contraries and synonyms, and finally to his descriptive or rhetorical definition. Augustine upholds the middle style--the style which most embodies moderation--as the ideal form. In an apparent twist of irony, is the middle style corresponds to Augustine's elevation of contraries without middles as the best way of defining God. Ultimately, however, this irony once again underscores a deeper point: the very nature of moderation, as a virtue associated with the *Summus Modus*, admits of no lack but is experienced as fullness. In this way, Augustine, following Cicero's model in the *Orator*, demonstrates how a lesson in rhetorical style belongs within the Platonic classroom.

The division of "style" into three classes first appears in this form in the handbook *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, but had roots in the treatises of earlier Greek rhetoricians.³¹⁵ The use of these three classes is nearly ubiquitous in stylistic treatises from Cicero on. While the specific

³¹⁴ See Reydam-Schils 2015, Steel 2009.

³¹⁵ For the ongoing debate as to the extent of this division in Theophrastus, see Gualtierio 1998. Also Pernot 2005, 59 ff. for this, and an overview of the history and development of the tripartite division of style.

terms used for each class varied by author and period, the general sense of the divisions remained constant: plain referred to direct, unadorned speech, the grand style included relatively abundant use of figures of speech and ornamentation, and the middle style reflected a combination of the two. In terms of a bare-bones outline, we can see that in a way all three of the scenic Cassiciacum Dialogues transition from a more plain style--direct, back and forth argumentation, to the grander style of the speeches which mark the conclusion of each dialogue.³¹⁶ Augustine's special interest in style particularly in *De beata vita* is evident from the extent to which he alludes to, and shapes the nuances of his discourse around, the discussion of style in Cicero's *Orator*. It is in this text that Cicero assigned each style its respective aim of teaching, delighting, and persuading that became entrenched in the Roman rhetorical tradition.

Augustine hints at his exploration of style--and his reliance on the *Orator*--twice near the beginning of the *De beata vita*. For one thing, in the dedicatory epistle, his description of three types of sailors who are attempting to reach the harbor of "philosophy" parallels Cicero's description of the three styles at the beginning of the *Orator*. In the second place, early on in *De beata vita*, when Augustine is leading the group through a series of questions by which they will agree that the happy man "has" God, he says that the happy man cannot have anything "mortal and subject to change" (*mortale et caducum*).³¹⁷ This phrase, especially in conjunction with the theme of possessing God, is a borrowing from Cicero's *Orator* 101, where Cicero describes the nature of the orator who can speak in the three styles of plain, middle, and grand:

I discuss what I would wish to see, not what I have seen, and I return to that form and appearance which I have spoken about, which, though we cannot see it, nevertheless we are able to hold in our mind. For I seek an eloquence that is neither mortal nor transient (*mortale et caducum*), but that thing itself which makes its possessor eloquent. And this is nothing other than eloquence itself which we can see with no eyes except those of the mind. He will be eloquent,

³¹⁶ For comments on the overall rhetorical style at Cassiciacum and his use of rhetoric for the philosophical aims envisioned by Cicero, see Claes 2007.

³¹⁷ *De beata vita* 2.11.

therefore, as I have said identically elsewhere, who is able to speak about small subjects humbly, moderate subjects temperately, and great ones seriously.³¹⁸

In addition to the borrowed phrase, *mortale et caducum*, from this passage, we see that Cicero, like Augustine in this passage of *De beata vita*, is speaking of *having* something absolute--ultimately, God, the source and object of intelligible knowledge, which only the mind can grasp. In other words, Augustine is referencing passage of Cicero's in which his very model had argued for a synthesis between the use of the three styles and a form of Platonism. As Augustine's quotation comes near the beginning of his dialogue, it may be that the reference alerts the attentive reader to the fact that throughout the dialogue Augustine, too, will perform his own synthesis to this effect, offering a display of how the possession of his own absolute quality of mind is somehow at evidence in his display of the use of the three styles.

The point in the dialogue where Augustine makes his theorization of styles most explicit, however, is a liminal one: the so-called "Academic Interlude." Here we receive indirect confirmation, I think, that Augustine is himself using the three styles--plain, middle, and grand--throughout the dialogue. The conversation of the Academic Interlude provides evidence to suggest that Augustine is particularly concerned with showing himself adept at teaching by means of the middle style, in other words, through the moderation between plain and high. This conversation occurs near the end of the group's initial attempt to formulate a substantial definition of the happy man. The ostensible purpose of the "Academic Interlude" is to give the group a break from their work, turning instead to a new question: whether the Academic wise man can be happy. Given the context of this digression, we may surmise that Augustine wants to remind the group about the Academic claims that the wise man cannot know truth as a hint as to why their attempts at definition are failing. An underappreciated element of this passage is the extent to which the content of the discussion at this point revolves not around the

³¹⁸ Orator 101, *Ego enim quid desiderem, non quid viderim disputo, redeoque ad illam Platonis de qua dixeram rei formam et speciem, quam etsi non cernimus tamen animo tenere possumus. Non enim eloquentem quaero neque quicquam mortale et caducum, sed illud ipsum, cuius qui sit compos, sit eloquens; quod nihil est aliud nisi eloquentia ipsa quam nullis nisi mentis oculis videre possumus. Is erit igitur eloquens, ut idem illud iteremus, qui poterit parva summis, modica temperate, magna graviter dicere.*

contents of the arguments students have misunderstood, but rather the language in which those arguments were presented.

This conversation unfolds after Augustine expresses, in a tight-knit syllogism, an argument as to why the Academic is not wise:

If it is evident that a person is not happy who does not possess what he wants, as our reasoning has just demonstrated, but nobody seeks to find what he does not wish to find, and these (the Academics) strive for truth, therefore they must wish to find the truth and wish to possess the faculty of finding it. But they do not find it; consequently they do not possess what they wish, and therefore cannot be happy. Nobody, however, is wise if he is not happy. Therefore, the Academic is not wise.³¹⁹

The participants of *De beata vita* who were also present during the debates of *Contra Academicos* shout out in agreement, thrilled to have a simple argument that puts the problem to rest.

Licentius hesitates, however. Augustine, narrating, affirms this hesitation when he describes Licentius as “listening with more attention and caution” (*attentius et cautius advertens*) than the others.³²⁰ The syllogism is faulty, even though we see in Augustine’s final speech that he agrees with the conclusion that the Academic wise man is not really happy. In the ensuing discussion of *De beata vita*, the holes within his argument will be revealed; but for the moment, Licentius is the only participant to remain skeptical.

Augustine presses Licentius to argue against the syllogism, asking which premise he rejects. Is it 1) that a person could seem happy, who did not possess the great good of the soul which he so ardently desired, 2) that the Academics did not want to find the truth, or 3) that the happy man was not wise? Augustine then describes these arguments as composed of small food groups: “For with these three arguments, as if with honey, wheat, and nuts, the conclusion

³¹⁹ DBV 11.14, trans. Schopp. *Si manifestum est...beatum non esse qui quod vult non habet, quod paulo ante ratio demonstravit; nemo autem quaerit quod invenire non vult, et quaerunt illi semper veritatem: volunt ergo invenire; volunt igitur habere inventionem veritatis. At non inveniunt: sequitur eos non habere quod volunt; et ex eo sequitur etiam beatos non esse. At nemo sapiens, nisi beatus: sapiens igitur Academicus non est.*

³²⁰ Ibid.

you're afraid to taste was concocted."³²¹ Licentius bristles at this, but responds, "Do you think Alypius would yield to this little lure of boys, abandoning the richness of the Academics, by the very flood of which this brief monstrosity of an argument would be overwhelmed or prolonged?"³²² This response focuses not on what Augustine said, but how he said it: Licentius uses the terms "richness" and "flood" to describe Academic argumentation, as opposed to the "brief monstrosity" Augustine had used. Augustine had earlier referred to his argument as a *ratiuncula*, a technical term for a form of Stoic argument, and also a diminutive which emphasizes the "small" form of its presentation.³²³ Thus in one sense, Licentius is objecting to a Stoic presentation as opposed to an Academic one. However, we cannot divorce his critique of a particular school with his critique of rhetorical style associated with that school. Indeed, Augustine's character picks up on the Licentius' objection to the brevity of his argumentation, retorting, "As if we're inquiring after something long..." he responds. "For...those small things are strong and useful in no mean way, sufficient for the body."³²⁴ Furthermore, Licentius' use of the term *ubertas*, the "richness" of the Academics, is another allusion to the introduction of Cicero's *Orator*, in which Cicero describes his own indebtedness to the Academy for oratorical training:

I confess that I have emerged as an orator--if I am one at all, of whatever sort--I did so not from the workshops of rhetors, but the circuits of the Academy. For those are the tracks of many and various speeches in which the footsteps of Plato were first imprinted. In his debates, and those of other philosophers, the orator was greatly attacked, but also greatly helped: for all the richness and the forest of speaking, as we say, was derived from them. And besides, the orator was not sufficiently trained when it comes to speaking in the courts.³²⁵

³²¹ Ibid 2.15, *nam his tribus, quasi melle, farre, atque nucleis, illud quod metuis gustare, confectum est.*

³²² Ibid, Illene, *inquit, huic tam parvae puerorum illecebrae cederet, Academicorum tanta ubertate deserta, qua inundante hoc nescio quid breve aut obruetur, aut pertrahetur?*

³²³ Harwardt 1998 and Wetzel (1992: 48-55).

³²⁴ *De beata vita*, 2.15 *Quasi vero, inquam, longum aliquid nos quaeramus, praesertim adversus Alypium: nam non mediocriter parva ista esse fortia et utilia, satis sibi ipse de suo corpore argumentaretur.*

³²⁵ *Orator* 13, *fateor me oratorem, si modo sim aut etiam quicumque sim, non ex rhetorum officinis, sed ex Academiae spatiis exstitisse. Illa enim sunt curricula multiplicium variorumque sermonum, in quibus Platonis primum sunt impressa vestigia. Sed et huius et aliorum philosophorum disputationibus et exagitatus maxime orator*

Here, Cicero claims that the Academy is the ultimate source of the stylistic foundation of oratory. He argues that it is the tradition which arises from the Platonic dialogues, and the discourse of other philosophers, which has provided him with the foundations of oratorical training. Moreover, in the final line he seems to suggest that track of preparation which led directly to pleading forensic cases was weak or incomplete. In this passage, Cicero attributes even stylistic richness--Licentius' *ubertas*--to Academic training. Elsewhere, Cicero tells us that the Academics were known for the middle style in particular; thus it is possible, that both in the above passage and in Licentius' reference to it, this "richness" is shorthand for the middle style--particularly when compared with the abruptness of Stoic argumentation.³²⁶ When Augustine bears out the idea that Licentius' complaint about his lack of *ubertas* is valid, he thereby also endorses this middle, Academic style to some extent.

In addition to Licentius and Augustine's miniature debate in this passage, there are several aspects of *De beata vita* which suggest that Augustine is ultimately interested in showing himself to be a teacher who uses the middle style. For one thing, the Academic Interlude does not merely raise--albeit obliquely--the idea of the importance of the middle style. In addition, this entire conversation can be read as a dramatization of the theoretical function of the middle style, which Cicero assigned in the *Orator* as "delight." I say dramatization of the theoretical function in order to distinguish this from Augustine's dramatization of the use of the middle style, which occurs in the phase of debate following the middle style, which we will discuss below. When he transitions to the Academic Interlude, Augustine emphasizes that this conversation is meant to be a "dessert" within the dialogue--a sweet spot, as it were. And indeed, interlocutors show pleasure throughout the Cassiciacum dialogues, most often when

est et adiutus—omnis enim ubertas et quasi silva dicendi ducta ab illis est—nec satis tamen instructus ad forensis causas.

³²⁶ Cicero, *Orator* 95-96.

someone or other has impressed with a compelling point, the Academic Interlude is notable for the exuberance and frequency of shows of delight and humor. The group extends upon and plays with this metaphor throughout this phase of the dialogue. For instance, when Licentius objects to the initial conclusion that the Academic cannot be wise, Augustine teases Navigius “fear the sweet foods more on account of his vicious spleen.”³²⁷ In other words, he shouldn’t have digested the argument so quickly, but been cautious like Licentius. When Licentius continues to refuse “the sweets” --i.e., the group’s conclusion about the Academics, Augustine and the others, “jested with these words, as if pushing him to eat his little share.”³²⁸

In this vein, Augustine’s and Licentius’ “debate” about *ubertas* vs. Stoic *ratiuncula* might be read in jest. Given the jovial tone of the passage as a whole, we should perhaps imagine that Licentius’ complaint about the dryness of Augustine’s syllogisms is meant as friendly censure of Augustine’s excessive use of the plain style--it’s all part of the joke. But there is also a more serious lesson to be gleaned from the levity of this passage. As many scholars have noted, already at Cassiciacum and in *De beata vita* particularly we see Augustine’s career-long focus on the importance of enjoyment and delight (*fructus*) of God.³²⁹ If, as we have seen, God as the *Summus Modus* is the embodiment of measure, and the middle style is itself an enactment of moderation, then it makes sense that Augustine would home in on this style, and its concomitant aim of delighting, as central to his dialogue in a way that teaching and persuading are not.

A third sense in which Augustine focuses on the middle style can be seen in the overall balance of his use of style throughout the dialogue. The overall structure of the *De beata vita* is one in which Augustine transitions from the plain style, to the middle, and finally the grand. And here, we can see that Augustine’s use of the three modes of definition fits well with his use

³²⁷ *De beata vita* 2.14, *Dulcia, inquam, magis metuere Navigius deberet, splene vitioso.*

³²⁸ *Ibid* 2.16, *Sed cum his verbis eum iocantes, quasi ad vescendam particulam suam provocaremus...*

³²⁹ See Clavier 2014 and Topping 2012.

of style; or perhaps it would be more correct to say that definition is a subset of his style. In the opening discussions, we find simple language and Stoic syllogistic characteristic of the plain style. The substantial/philosophical type definition, which Victorinus says belongs exclusively to philosophers, fits this style in being direct and unadorned. When Augustine feels this discussion is losing steam, he introduces the Academic Interlude, where, as we have seen, Licentius raises the question of whether Augustine has been using the best style available to him.

Following the Academic Interlude, Augustine attempts to support his students through a few more syllogisms, but he intersperses longer periods of direct speech, including one miniature speech which he delivers himself on the figure of Sergius Orata. This mixture of plain and high thus becomes an instance of the middle style. And here, Augustine introduces definition by synonyms and contraries. It is probably no coincidence that these, as single words, can easily be adapted to the direct language of syllogisms and incorporated seamlessly into continuous speech. In other words, they are “middle” insofar as they run the gamut of use between the plain and high style. Finally, Augustine launches into his final speech, which is rife with figures of speech, literary quotes, and rhetorical flourish--in short, an instance of the high style. Here, he continues to use synonyms and contraries, but also presents his final definition in the descriptive type, which with its embellishments fits well with the high style. Thus, just as the middle of the dialogue with its combination of the shorter *oratio* and back and forth argumentation can be seen as an execution of the middle style, so the dialogue as a whole reflects the middle style to the extent that it balances the three styles.

We must also note that, while the initial “plain style” philosophical type of definition was not very productive for the dialogue as a whole, the type of definition Augustine uses during the middle section--contraries and synonyms--is pivotal for the whole course of his argument, and he uses them throughout his final speech. In this way, Augustine shows the “middle style” to be an effective learning tool for his students. The irony with respect to his use of contraries is, of course, that he emphasizes the use of contraries without middles--right at the

section of his speech in which evokes the most concentrated use of the middle style. I take this to be a playfully serious reflection of Augustine's reading of the concept of moderation that he develops in relation to the concept of fullness--i.e., the *plenitudo* which, as we saw in the definition section, he makes equivalent to measure (*modus*) and temperance (*temperantia*). The contraries' lack of middles is a form of fullness: each term is absolute and untempered in its significance. For Augustine, this absolute fullness is itself reflected in moderation, or the middle road. This connection between fullness and the middle style--the style of moderation--may be reflected in Cicero's use of the term *ubertas* to describe the Academics' style. Elsewhere, he makes it clear that the Academics are especially known for their use of the middle style. Thus, it is possible that Cicero himself associated moderation with the fullness of *ubertas* in a manner which parallels Augustine's implicit play on the relationship between style and Stoic virtue theory. In any case, that Augustine puts Cicero's term *ubertas* into Licentius' mouth should be seen as a point of contact between Augustine's ethics of style and the ethics of definition we saw on display in part one of this chapter.

III. Conclusion: Ontology and Style in Platonic Ethics

Augustine's integration of ontology (as worked out through his exercises in definition) and style should be seen as a continuation of a Platonic tradition in which these topics were already deeply intertwined. Because it is not clear which texts of Aristotle comprised the "logic" portion of the Platonic ascent corpuses (corpora) examined in Chapter Two, it is more difficult to assess how Augustine's integration of the *De inventione* with the *Contra Academicos* maps onto the broader Platonic tradition. In the case of Platonic ethics, however, we have considerably more evidence as a source of comparison. This renders *De beata vita* a good case study for how the arc of Augustine's dialogues are shaped by the subject matter and mechanics of other philosophical and rhetorical texts. To conclude this chapter, I would like to gesture to some of these points of contact as an invitation to further study, and as an example of how a fuller

understanding Augustine's early work on rhetoric requires us to reassess some of the assumptions about Augustine's engagement with classical rhetoric, particularly as it informed his later thought.

As I hope has become apparent throughout this chapter, Augustine's first interlocutor on this point is Cicero in the *Orator*. That late dialogue of is often seen as offering the fullest articulation of Cicero's Platonic theory of rhetoric, epitomized in the passage we saw above in which Cicero likens the ideal orator to one who possesses a "form" of eloquence only visible to the mind.³³⁰ As Emanuele Narducci's study of this dialogue suggests, the *Orator* is itself an extended exercise in definition: Cicero's project is precisely to define the ideal orator.³³¹ It cannot be a coincidence that the dialogue in which Augustine explores definition is also the one he structures around the content of Cicero's dialogue exploring the same. And yet, definition is often seen--in ancient sources as well as modern--to belong to the province of logic rather than ethics. Cicero himself categorizes it as "logic" in the *Orator* when he lists the subjects philosophical study necessary for the ideal orator.³³² This begs the question of why Augustine would include his most extended study of definition in *De beata vita* as opposed to *Contra Academicos*, his dialogue on logic proper. One simple answer is that, in keeping with the sentiment that all branches of philosophy are interconnected, there is no clear cut distinction between the branches. Particularly within expansive genres such as the dialogue as opposed to a handbook, we ought to expect the study of an individual branch to be worked out by means of emphasis rather than exclusive focus.

Nevertheless, there are indications in the ancient sources that definition is especially associated with ethics. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle tells us the following:

And when Socrates, disregarding the physical universe and confining his study to moral questions, sought in this sphere for the universal and was the first to concentrate upon definition,

³³⁰ *Orator* 101.

³³¹ Narducci 2002.

³³² *Orator* 116.

Plato followed him and assumed that the problem of definition is concerned not with any sensible thing but with entities of another kind; for the reason that there can be no general definition of sensible things which are always changing. These entities he called “Ideas,” and held that all sensible things are named after them.³³³

In this passage, Aristotle says that Socrates, whom he routinely credits as the founder of definition, developed definition through his study of ethical matters (τὰ ἠθικὰ). For Aristotle, the distinction here is between ethics and physics: Plato extrapolated his theory of ideas from Aristotle’s use of definition. Later, Aristotle expands on this idea, telling us Socrates’ development of definition was the proof of the relationship between particulars and universals--i.e., the basis of the entire ascent paradigm.³³⁴ Thus, Aristotle gives us an origin story of the relationship between definition and ontology which bridges the transition from ethics to physics. In short, Augustine’s treatment of definition and ontology in a dialogue on ethics can be seen as a re-creation of the narrative Aristotle gives of Plato’s developments on natural philosophy based on Socrates’ insights into the practical matters of the world around him. The connection between ethics and physics lies within the question of the immortality of the soul, which is one of the central themes of the *Tusculan Disputations*--i.e., Cicero’s most “ethical” dialogue. Augustine also presents this as the theme of *De beata vita*. For both authors, the connection has to do with the fact that the soul’s immortality sets the boundaries within which happiness can be understood.³³⁵

³³³ *Metaphysics* 987b, trans. Tredennick. Σωκράτους δὲ περὶ μὲν τὰ ἠθικὰ πραγματευομένου, περὶ δὲ τῆς ὅλης φύσεως οὐθέν, ἐν μέντοι τούτοις τὸ καθόλου ζητοῦντος καὶ περὶ ὁρισμῶν ἐπιστήσαντος πρώτου τὴν διάνοιαν, ἐκείνον ἀποδεξάμενος διὰ τὸ τοιοῦτον ὑπέλαβεν ὡς περὶ ἐτέρων τοῦτο γιγνόμενον καὶ οὐ τῶν αἰσθητῶν· ἀδύνατον γὰρ εἶναι τὸν κοινὸν ὅρον τῶν αἰσθητῶν τινός, ἀεὶ γε μεταβαλλόντων. οὗτος οὖν τὰ μὲν τοιαῦτα τῶν ὄντων ιδέας προσηγόρευσε, τὰ δ’ αἰσθητὰ παρὰ ταῦτα καὶ κατὰ ταῦτα λέγεσθαι πάντα. See also *Metaphysics* 1078 b.

³³⁴ *Metaphysics* 1086b, trans. Tredennick. τὸ δὲ καθόλου παρὰ ταῦτα εἶναί τε καὶ ἕτερόν τι εἶναι. τοῦτο δ’ ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν ἐλέγομεν, ἐκίνησε μὲν Σωκράτης διὰ τοὺς ὁρισμούς, οὐ μὴν ἐχώρισέ γε τῶν καθ’ ἑκάστον· καὶ τοῦτο ὀρθῶς ἐνόησεν οὐ χωρίσας. δηλοῖ δὲ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων· ἄνευ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ καθόλου οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιστήμην λαβεῖν, τὸ δὲ χωρίζειν αἷτιον τῶν συμβαινόντων δυσχερῶν περὶ τὰς ιδέας ἐστίν.

³³⁵ DBV 1.5.

In his *Ep.* 58, the Roman philosopher Seneca gives a clear explanation of how the idea of definition of “universals” came to be associated with God as Being: i.e., he gives an ontological conclusion which is very similar to Augustine’s conclusion in *De beata vita* that God is at once the ultimate definition and beyond definition. Where Augustine implied the relationship between God to *genus* and *species*, Seneca makes this connection explicit: he associates the primary *genus*, i.e., that which is capable of embracing everything, with God, whom he calls “The Pre-eminent Being.” Importantly, Seneca is clear throughout that this is a Platonic teaching; and frankly, he presents it as a fairly basic one.

Moreover, there is some evidence in Seneca’s *corpus* to suggest that he associates this teaching on ontology with style in particular. Seneca’s very next letter, 59, takes up the topic of pleasure and joy--attempting to distinguish the difference between sensual pleasure and the true joy which comes from union of one’s reason with the divine. The connection between this letter and *De beata vita* is to be found in the fact that Seneca discusses word choice and the moderation of style as examples of pleasure. This is not a passing reference; rather, a full half of this letter is consumed with the relationship between literary style and pleasure. Seneca opens by complimenting his student’s style, saying that Lucilius’ letter to him was not too bombastic, and yet replete enough to fully express his point--although this goes unstated, these are characteristics of the middle style. Seneca goes on to make the very Ciceronian comment that this moderation of style reflects the moderation of his student’s mind. If the interplay between other letters in Seneca’s *corpus* are any indication, the juxtaposition of this letter with 58, on being, is no accident. Seneca’s letters are arranged with purpose, and often side-by-side letters include themes which are meant to be read together. Seneca’s combination of being, definition, delight, and style is close enough to the moves we have seen Augustine make in *De beata vita* to suggest that Augustine is working within a well-defined tradition of specific topics within a philosophical curriculum.

While there is much more work to be done in excavating Augustine’s engagement with the tradition of the *Platonis aemuli*, I hope that even these cursory suggestions of Augustine’s

self-positioning within that tradition are sufficient to speak to what *De beata vita* can tell us about two interrelated areas of study on Augustine's thought which have received considerable scholarly attention: namely, the concept of delight in Augustine's thought, and the development of his rhetorical theory in his later text, the *De doctrina christiana*.

Augustine's association of *frugalitas* with being and God in the *De beata vita*, as I have discussed it in this chapter, amounts to a muted intimation of the idea that one must "delight" in God that becomes such a staple of his thought in his mature works, including the *Confessions* and *De Trinitate*.³³⁶ While his focus on delight is often treated as one which was inspired by Augustine's biblical readings or personal theology, Mark Clavier argues that for Augustine, this function of delight is one which he adopts from the three aims of style Cicero ascribes to the orator, and thus Clavier sees Augustine's theology of delight as a rhetorical theology. This is a development of Michael Leff's idea that the *Zeitgeist* of late antiquity included a Neoplatonic lens of Cicero's rhetoric which re-framed Cicero's civic focus towards a Platonic intellectualism.³³⁷ In this vein, Clavier follows Leff, Copeland, and others in crediting works such as Marius Victorinus' commentary as marking an intermediary phase in the synthesis of Neoplatonism and Ciceronian rhetoric which enabled Augustine to read Cicero's rhetorical handbook in light of Neoplatonic philosophy.³³⁸ In the first place, they sometimes associate Augustine's emphasis on delight as particularly linked to his interest in recuperating rhetorical theory, underestimating the extent to which pleasure plays a role in the philosophical tradition which predates Cicero. Plato's *Philebus*, for instance, concludes that the best life is one which is

³³⁶ TeSelle 2001, Teske 2008, Clavier (2014: Part Three).

³³⁷ Leff (2008: 236).

³³⁸ Copeland (2003: 191). Clavier (2014: 44-50). Clavier stops short of arguing that Augustine had read Victorinus' commentary, but suggests that it serves as evidence of a Neoplatonic "lens" of late antiquity of which Augustine would have been aware, and which therefore he might have applied to Cicero on his own. Cary (2003: 81-83) notes that other late antique thinkers, including Macrobius and Ambrose, attributed Neoplatonic thought to Cicero.

mixed between pleasure and intelligence. Without necessarily linking this mixture to the middle style as Augustine does, we can see in this conclusion the beginnings of a model in which pleasure is elevated to the high plane of intellectual knowledge.

The second problem with crediting Augustine with a Platonizing theory of Ciceronian rhetoric is, of course, that this underestimates the extent to which Cicero himself, and the intervening philosophical tradition, relates Platonic philosophy to rhetorical theory. The fact that Cicero posits a Platonic form of ideal eloquence in a passage of the very same text in which he instantiates the roles of style as teaching, delighting, and persuading should be taken as serious indication that there is more philosophical depth to Cicero's rhetorical theory than he is often given credit for. Regardless, Augustine's revision of Cicero seems to suggest that *he* credits his predecessor with such a view, and hence we should see Augustine's ethics of style as part and parcel of his move to be a *Platonis aemulus*.

The fact that Augustine's theory of rhetorical delight is so grounded in his philosophical predecessors also has implications for the way we read *De doctrina christiana*. In this treatise Augustine most explicitly interweaves Cicero's rhetorical theory with his own theory of Christian rhetoric;³³⁹ as such, it has often been hailed as a watershed moment in the passing down of rhetorical theory to the Christian Middle Ages.³⁴⁰ Because the fourth book of this treatise was composed near the end of Augustine's life, *De doctrina* is often taken as the product of Augustine's long experience as a bishop and homilist: the idea is that his experience guiding souls has allowed him to reconsider the value of Ciceronian rhetoric, which he might otherwise have eschewed.³⁴¹ That Augustine had already thought so deeply about the relationship

³³⁹ An opinion which has not, however, received universal acceptance. E.g. Mohrmann (1958: 360-362). These readings, however, are based on a misunderstanding of the parallels between Augustine and Cicero's respective views on rote rhetorical handbooks as opposed to the organic learning Cicero emphasizes in the *De oratore*.

³⁴⁰ Ward (1978: 41).

³⁴¹ Conybeare (2017: 301-311).

between rhetoric, philosophy, and Christianity at Cassiciacum should serve as an invitation for us to reconsider the narrative by which Augustine arrived at his conclusions in *De doctrina*. Augustine's interweaving of style, ontology, and delight in *De beata vita* reveals that his rhetorical theory was more indebted to the philosophical tradition than is suggested by the argument that he applied a Neoplatonic synthesis to Cicero's rhetorical theory: to the contrary, the fact that he might have been aware of such a synthesis not only in Cicero, but also in authors like Seneca, suggests that any Neoplatonic transformation of that heritage was already couched within a model in which rhetorical style and philosophical teaching were mutually implicated. As such, whatever conclusions Augustine promotes in later texts like *De doctrina* should be seen not only as the product of Augustine's career as bishop, but also as a continuation of what was, in Augustine's *corpus*, an on-going attempt to promote a Christian model for teaching a rhetorical program from which Augustine never really departed.

CHAPTER FIVE

WORDS AND THINGS:

A PHYSICS OF MEMORY IN *DE ORDINE*

Augustine's third dialogue, *De ordine*, is not typically read as a study of memory. Yet, my aim in this chapter is to show that *De ordine* is indeed an extended exploration of memory, and particularly artificial or "rhetorical" memory as it is presented in Roman rhetorical handbooks of the first century B.C E. and the first century C.E. As an exploration of artificial memory, *De ordine* enacts a process we have already seen in the *Contra Academicos* and *De beata vita*, whereby Augustine's treatment of his philosophical-*cum*-rhetorical subject runs, in a somewhat hidden manner, much deeper through the text as a text than it does with respect to his conversation with students in the dialogue. This partially explains why Augustine says, in *De ordine*, that he will postpone his treatment of memory for a later date: from the perspective of his characters, this is exactly what he does. But the readers' perspective represents a different case altogether.

The three main ancient sources for the rhetorical art of memory are the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Cicero's *De oratore*, and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*. The descriptions of the art are remarkably similar in each. First, the practitioner of memory art visualizes a series of interconnected places (*loci*). These are usually architectural--the rooms of a house, sections of an intercolumnar space, etc. The practitioner then represents either individual words (*verba*) or things (*res*) she wants to remember by "placing" images which stand for those things in the places. Then, she "moves" through the places in her mind, such that entering the new place will remind her of the images she has put there, which will in turn remind her of the things or words she wishes to recall.

The two major studies of memory art, each of which has been influential in its own right, were published by Frances Yates (1966) and Mary Carruthers (1990).³⁴² Both of these are concerned primarily with the art of memory as it developed in the Middle Ages and flourished in the Renaissance, where memory art was expressed through elaborate depictions of text and image. Presumably because the rhetorical art of memory represents an internal practice, it is often assumed that there are no extant examples of the practice in the ancient world. The evidence for the art in the ancient world which Yates so impressively compiled is restricted largely to brief descriptions or allusions to terminology. Thus, if *De ordine* does represent a late ancient enactment of rhetorical memory, it would represent the earliest of its kind of which we are aware by hundreds of years. As such, the aim of this chapter is not only to illuminate the role of memory in Augustine's educational program of philosophical rhetoric, but also to suggest how his use of memory fills a gap between the evidence of the rhetorical handbooks and that of the scholastics whom Yates and Carruthers credit with reviving the practice in the 12th century via their readings of Cicero and Aristotle.

My specific thesis is that Augustine not only exercises rhetorical memory in *De ordine*, but that this performance is intimately bound up with the text's exploration of physics.³⁴³ The result is that he creates a synthesis between "rhetorical" memory and the philosophical or moralizing aspect of memory which prepares the soul for knowledge of the intelligible, i.e., God. The scholastics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries made a similar synthesis between "rhetorical" and "philosophical" memory, and yet the way Augustine makes this connection within the paradigm of Platonic physics invites us to consider that this "moralizing" memory is more ancient than is often supposed. The picture Augustine gives us is one in which there is no hard and fast distinction between the rhetorical practice of memory and his philosophical project as a whole. In rendering this dialogue an instance of "memory art," he reveals once again how the practice of rhetoric is embedded in his philosophical program. As physics is a

³⁴² See also Rossi 2000 and Coleman 1992.

³⁴³ I made the argument for *De ordine* as an exploration of ancient "physics" in Chapter Two.

microcosm of his whole philosophical paradigm, so memory—as a part of physics—serves as the container for all the rhetorical teaching he harnesses in service of ascent to the divine.

Perhaps more than invention or style, the rhetorical canon of memory is well-suited for illustrating how problematic it can be to read Augustine's apparent "rejections" of rhetoric in a totalizing manner. The fact that rhetorical handbooks on invention share so much in common with dialectic, and that style is inevitable in all speech, has somewhat tempered readers' perception of the divide between these rhetorical canons and philosophical usage. While readers have adopted somewhat of a spectrum of views with respect to how Augustine sees the intersection of rhetorical art and memory theory, the weight of consensus lies heavily on the side that he rejects rhetorical memory outright.³⁴⁴ The special conviction with which readers accept Augustine's intimations of the shortfalls of rhetorical memory can be attributed to the fact that ancient authors divide memory into "natural" and "artificial" categories, which creates a binary much more stark than one finds with the topics of invention, for example. And yet, this divide is problematic insofar as the technical terms used to describe memory are notoriously difficult to define in any given author. For the purposes of this chapter, I would like to distinguish between "natural" and "artificial" memory, on the one hand-- both are storehouses of sense impressions for in the "Platonic" tradition --and a higher level of memory on the other hand, which can be understood as memory of the divine. It seems to me that some scholars of Augustine have created a binary between artificial memory in particular and this higher level without accounting for how one or both of these aspects of memory are treated in ancient sources: (1) natural and artificial memory are treated as two sides of a coin, and (2) the relationship between this "memory" and the higher level, which Plato calls "recollection," is not so much a total binary as it is a spectrum. Only by carefully distinguishing between these

³⁴⁴ Studies of this topic have largely focused on Augustine's famous discussion of memory in *Confessions* X rather than on *De ordine*. See e.g., Hochschild 2012, Chin 2001, Tell 2006 for the idea that Augustine, in the *Confessions*, totally rejects rhetorical memory. Carruthers 1998, 2008 understands ancient rhetoricians to work within a more "ethical" framework, but does not treat the *Confessions* as extensively.

categories can we recognize the place of artificial memory in Augustine's thought. I offer a general overview of this distinction in Part One below.

I have divided my argument with respect to Augustine's use of rhetorical memory into three sections. In the first, I offer an account of the points of thematic and terminological overlap between so-called "rhetorical" memory and memory / recollection as they are treated in the philosophical tradition. This overlap is grounded in the paradigm of physics, and the notion of memory as part of physics. In the second section, I argue that the majority of ancient and medieval evidence for the art of memory betrays a connection to this paradigm of physics, including that of the integration of the cosmos and the liberal arts. This serves as the framework for understanding how Augustine's integration of rhetorical and "philosophical" memory sits within his work as a *Platonis aemulus* vis-à-vis metaphysical ascent. In the third section, I make the case for reading *De ordine* in particular as an instance of the rhetorical art of memory. In the conclusion, I compare Augustine's treatment of rhetorical memory in *De ordine* with that in *Confessions* 10, in order to strengthen the argument that he is in fact advocating for the use of rhetoric, and not merely co-opting rhetorical memory as a framework to be rejected and discarded. I then strengthen this case by arguing that all of *De ordine*, and in a sense, all the Cassiciacum dialogues, can be read as the cumulative production of a speech—Augustine solidifies the place of rhetoric in the cosmos of his educational program not only by enacting it on the level of the text, but by teaching it to his students within the text.

I. Rhetoric, Memory, And Recollection

In this first section, my aim is to offer an overview of the Platonic tradition of memory which will provide the context for understanding Augustine's treatment of memory within this tradition. This section is not merely descriptive, however: part and parcel of my overview is an argument for the inherent connection, within this tradition, between three types of memory: what Plato calls "recollection" as a higher form of memory, as well as the sensible aspect of

memory which authors often divide into the categories of “natural” and “artificial.” A key component of my discussion about the distinctions and overlap between these categories of memory is the argument that all three types of memory can be understood as united within the paradigm of physics which I outlined in Chapter Two: this is evident in that the “core themes” of physics, such as movement, order, and unity, are also central to descriptions of memory.

Within the tradition of these authors and the metaphysical ascent paradigm, it is not surprising that Augustine should interweave an examination of physics with one on memory: this is a connection which can be traced back to the *Timaeus*.³⁴⁵ The role of memory in Platonic cosmology is tied to its place as part of the soul, itself a microcosm of the universe. Paige Hochschild has traced Platonic theories of the soul, memory, and learning as Augustine might have inherited them from Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus. As she points out, we need not limit consideration of the stream of influence on Augustine to these individual philosophers; however, her narrative provides a plausible account for which texts Augustine may have read and which ideas within this tradition were widely accessible to him.³⁴⁶

For Plato, knowledge is recollection; this both serves as the basis for one of his proofs of the immortality of the soul and explains how learning takes place. It also accounts for why the *topos* of learning appears regularly in texts on physics. Crucially, for Plato, recollection does not refer primarily to the recall of sensible things or experiences, but to apprehension of forms, which represent *a priori* knowledge--a lesson most famously exemplified in the *Meno* by the story of the slave’s ability to perform geometry.³⁴⁷ The ascent from sensible to intelligible, then, might be roughly described as one in which the soul, via the faculty of memory, converts sensible experience into recollection of eternal forms. This process of conversion gives rise to some confusion within the Platonic tradition as to the terminology of memory. Some ancient

³⁴⁵ See Hochschild (2012: 12-23) for a succinct overview of the relationship between sense perception, memory, and the soul in Plato’s dialogues.

³⁴⁶ Hochschild (2012: Part One).

³⁴⁷ *Meno* 80c.

authors distinguish between memory as a storehouse of sensible experience, and recollection as knowledge of the forms; others use the term memory to encompass both.³⁴⁸

In *De ordine*, the student Licentius wrestles with this distinction when Augustine asks him whether the wise man ever needs memory.³⁴⁹ Licentius correctly assumes that the wise man, united with God, holds all knowledge present. He then concludes that the wise man does not need memory, since Licentius understands memory to be of the sensible realm which is no longer relevant to the wise man. Apparently, Licentius imagines the wise man to make use of recollection alone. Augustine attempts to correct the mistake: if “memory” is sensible in this way, for the wise man to discard it would be tantamount to positing an unwanted separation of soul and body. But there is another reason Augustine wishes the wise man to retain memory. Even if, he asks Licentius, the wise man no longer needs memory for learning, does he not still need it in order to share what he has learned with others, and so fulfill his duty as a teacher? In this way, Augustine adopts a two-fold function of memory: teaching and learning. And he does so in a way which emphasizes the role of memory as a mediator between sensible and intelligible experience. Even the wise man, rapt in intelligible knowledge, needs a “storehouse” that can convey that knowledge back to the world of the senses.

The distinction scholars often posit between rhetorical and “philosophical” memory is not unlike that which Licentius makes between the two. The notion that memory as recollection pertains only to knowledge of the forms has led to common conclusion that Plato’s recollective memory has nothing to do with the sensible world, and therefore nothing to do with the rhetorical memory art which seeks to imprint pictures of the sensible into the mind of the one practicing it.³⁵⁰ The problem with this division is precisely that which Augustine suggests to Licentius: it necessitates a division between body and soul. It is a division which pertains both

³⁴⁸ For the distinction in Aristotle, see Carruthers (2008: 60-61).

³⁴⁹ DO 2.2.7.

³⁵⁰ A premise Hochschild (2012: 19-20) adopts in choosing not to treat Cicero’s “philosophical” influence on Augustine, on the grounds that he only influenced him “rhetorically.”

to learning and teaching. It pertains to learning, because within human experience, there can be no recollection without an initial “stimulating cause” which comes from the sensible world. The slave who learns geometry, for instance, is able to extrapolate mathematical theories based on his experience of shapes which he has seen in the physical world. It pertains to teaching because the one who seeks to convey lessons from intelligible knowledge cannot do so without some bridge back to the sensible world: i.e., the bridge of memory.

In *De ordine*, Augustine identifies the production of a *speech* as means by which a wise man might do this. At first, his recourse to a speech might seem to be a departure from Socrates’ famous advice in the *Phaedrus* in which he laments the use of writing as something which detracts from memory.³⁵¹ However, by the end of that dialogue, Socrates endorses the use of both poetry and political speeches so long as they work using knowledge of the truth and with the understanding that the written format is inferior to the ideas which words signify.³⁵² This conclusion is quite similar to that which Augustine arrived at in the *Contra Academicos*, which I discussed in Chapter Three. Augustine’s own endorsement of rhetoric presumes that rhetoric occupies an inferior, though necessary, place within the ascent paradigm. Moreover, Augustine’s endorsement of rhetoric is grounded in the assumption that the rhetoric is being used dialectically--that is, in service of the truth: exactly the demand Socrates makes at the conclusion of the *Phaedrus*. Thus, it is possible Augustine and other philosophers in the Platonic tradition interpreted Socrates’ reservations about writing much less stridently than many modern readers have done. For them, Socrates’ disavowal may not have been dissimilar to Augustine’s own rhetorical rejection of rhetoric in the preface of the *Contra Academicos*. After all, as Augustine gives speeches at the end of the Cassiciacum dialogues, so Plato includes three speeches in the *Phaedrus*.

³⁵¹ *Phaedrus* 278c.

³⁵² On this, see Carruthers (2008: 35-36) and Hochschild (2012: 20-21).

The idea that Platonic recollection is inseparable from “sensible” memory--and even the production of speeches--is reinforced by thematic and terminological points of contact between the two as they are described in ancient sources. In their studies of rhetorical memory, Yates and Carruthers have both taken these points of contact to be loosely referential. When allusions to rhetorical memory appear in discussions of philosophical memory, these are taken as metaphors, comparisons, or illustrations. Where the principles of philosophical memory crop up in descriptions of the rhetorical art of memory, these are treated as if rhetoricians have borrowed or adapted them for a purpose distinct from their original one. And yet, from their earliest sources, descriptions of how artificial memory operates are so closely aligned to the core principles of how the cosmos operates in texts in physics--and how “natural memory” operates within this paradigm--that artificial memory cannot be severed from philosophical memory, or vice versa.

In the first place, rhetorical handbooks describe the relationship between artificial and “natural” memory on a spectrum that operates just like that which texts on physics describe with respect to the development of the arts as “second senses” enhancing learning via the physical senses.³⁵³ The author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* describes the relationship this way:

There are, then, two memories: one natural, the other artificial. Natural memory is that which is innate in our souls and is born simultaneously with thought. Artificial memory is that which is made firm by a certain induction and the method of instruction. But in the same way that in other things the endowment of natural ability often mimics what is taught, while art makes firm and strengthens the advantages of nature, so it happens in this case that sometimes natural memory, if someone was endowed with an exceptional one, is similar to this artificial one, and that in the same way this artificial one retains and augments the advantages of nature by its method of instruction.³⁵⁴

³⁵³ See Chapter Two, pp. 90-92.

³⁵⁴ RAH 3.28-29, translation adapted from Caplan. *Sunt igitur duae memoriae: una naturalis, altera artificiosa. Naturalis est ea quae nostris animis insita est et simul cum cogitatione nata; artificiosa est ea quam confirmat inductio quaedam et ratio praeceptionis. Sed qua via in ceteris rebus ingenii bonitas imitatur saepe doctrinam, ars porro naturae commoda confirmat et auget, item fit in hac re ut nonnumquam naturalis memoria, si cui data est egregia, similis sit huic artificiosae, porro haec artificiosa naturae commoda retineat et amplificet ratione doctrinae. See also RAH 3.36: Nihil est enim quod aut natura extremum invenerit aut doctrina primum; sed rerum principia ab ingenio profecta sunt, exitus disciplina comparantur.*

The natural memory described here is not the same as Platonic recollection, but rather represents untrained memory of the sensible world. In the Platonic model Augustine outlines in *De ordine*, it represents the bridge between sense experience and intellection. The author sees no clear-cut distinction, however, between this natural memory and the adduction of any memory aids to enhance it: the difference between the two, in his mind, is a matter of talent rather than principle. Those who are naturally gifted will inevitably need fewer aids. Quintilian likewise opens his discussion of artificial memory by discussing the art/nature divide. He uses the same verb as the author of the *ad Herennium* (*augere*) to express how artificial memory enhances one's natural endowment.³⁵⁵ In the same passage, he states that every subject of study (*disciplina*) depends upon memory. If this is an obvious point, the fact that he makes it here serves to emphasize the close relationship between memory and the arts, and thus implies that artificial memory--which he has just adduced as an augmentation to natural memory--is helpful for the arts.

The connection between philosophical and rhetorical memory is also evident in the fact that they are both understood in terms of three of the most fundamental principles which undergird the unity of the cosmos within the paradigm of physics. The first of these is the notion that sight is the most powerful of the senses. In terms of rhetorical memory, this is the principle which animates the practice of visualizing scenes or pictures to "represent" words or sections of a speech one wishes to memorize. In the *De oratore*, Cicero describes the discovery of artificial memory as one that depended upon the recognition of sight as the most powerful of the senses:

It has been sagaciously discerned by Simonides or else discovered by some other person, that the most complete pictures are formed in our minds of the things that have been conveyed to them and imprinted on them by the senses, but that the keenest of all our senses is the sense of sight,

³⁵⁵ Quintilian 11.2: *Memoriam quidam naturae modo esse munus existimaverunt, estque in ea non dubie plurimum, sed ipsa excolendo sicut alia omnia augetur: et totus de quo diximus adhuc inanis est labor nisi ceterae partes hoc velut spiritu continentur. Nam et omnis disciplina memoria constat, frustra docemur si quidquid audimus praeterfluat, et exemplorum, legum, responsorum, dictorum denique factorumque velut quasdam copias, quibus abundare quasque in promptu semper habere debet orator, eadem illa vis praesentat: neque inmerito thesaurus hic eloquentiae dicitur.*

and that consequently perceptions received by the ears or by reflexion can be most easily retained if they are also conveyed to our minds by the mediation of the eyes.³⁵⁶

It is interesting that Cicero attributes the discovery of the *principle* of the primacy of sight to the alleged founder of memory art, Simonides. In so doing, Cicero implies that the theory of sight which we find in philosophical texts (such as Aristotle's *Metaphysics*) and memory art arose simultaneously. This, in turn, suggests an intimate relationship from the beginning between the art of memory and memory as it was elucidated in texts on physics. The language Quintilian uses to describe the importance of sight for memory suggests that, just as in texts on physics, physical sight is merely an extension of the inner sight which allows one to progress to the intelligible. He is thinking, therefore, of internal visualization when he describes the practice of artificial memory. He says, "There is no doubt that the most important factor in memory is mental concentration, a sharp eye, as it were, never diverted from the object of its gaze."³⁵⁷

As authors writing about the rhetorical practice of memory adduce a theory of sight from natural philosophy, so philosophers writing about memory writ large rely upon a theory of sight which encompasses the practice of speech--i.e., words that are written or heard--within the realm of visual memory. Paige Hochschild has traced how this concept might have been transmitted to Augustine, beginning with Plato, whom she argues had at least a basic theory of the soul's ability to think in "verbal pictures."³⁵⁸ On Hochschild's reading, it is Plotinus who, in late antiquity, most clearly linked the concept of a verbal picture to the soul's faculties of imagination and memory.³⁵⁹ Thus, whether or not Plato and Aristotle themselves had a concept

³⁵⁶ Cicero, *De oratore*, 2.357, trans. Sutton. *Vidit enim hoc prudenter sive Simonides sive alius quis invenit, ea maxime animis effingi nostris quae essent a sensu tradita atque impressa; acerrimum autem ex omnibus nostris sensibus esse sensum videndi; quare facillime animo teneri posse ea quae perciperentur auribus aut cogitatione si etiam commendatione oculorum animis traderentur; ut res caecas et ab aspectus iudicio remotas conformatio quaedam et imago et figura ita notaret ut ea quae cogitando complecti vix possemus intuendo quasi teneremus.*

³⁵⁷ *Institutes* 11.2.10, trans. Russell. *Nec dubium est quin plurimum in hac parte valeat mentis intentio et velut acies luminum a prospectu rerum quas intuetur non aversa*

³⁵⁸ Hochschild (2012: 21, see p. 60 for verbal images in Plotinus).

³⁵⁹ Hochschild (2012: 53-56).

of words--and by extension, speeches--becoming images in the mind, this concept was well developed by Augustine's time.

The second core concept of physics which appears in discussions of memory is that of "order"—which is also, of course, the titular concept of the dialogue *De ordine*. One might even describe order as the central underlying principle of rhetorical memory. Cicero describes its role in his account of Simonides' discovery of the art of memory: as the only surviving member of a dinner party, Simonides was able to identify guests killed when the roof caved in based on where they sat. Simonides realized from this, Cicero tells us, "that the best aid to clearness of memory consists in orderly arrangement."³⁶⁰ It was on the basis of this observation that, according to Cicero, Simonides developed the system of recollection based on devising images to put into places. And indeed, the principle of order is prominent in the accounts of artificial memory in both the *ad Herennium* and Quintilian's *Institutes*. The former writes: "I likewise think it obligatory to have these backgrounds in a series, so that we may never by confusion in their order be prevented from following the images—proceeding in either direction from any background we please."³⁶¹ Quintilian writes, "you must also follow the chain of things and words contained in what you have thought out, remember everything that has been said by the other side, and refute it, not necessarily in the order in which it was said, but arranging it as is most advantageous."³⁶² The language these authors use to describe the order within rhetorical memory is not only akin to the centrality of order in Platonic and Aristotelian theories of memory;³⁶³ it is also reminiscent of the language of order one finds in texts on physics. In

³⁶⁰ Cicero, *De oratore* 2.354, trans. Sutton. *hac tum re admonitus invenisse fertur ordinem esse maxime qui memoriae lumen afferret.*

³⁶¹ RAH 3.31 trans. Caplan. *Item putamus oportere ex ordine hos locos habere, ne quando perturbatione ordinis inpediamur quo setius quoto quoque loco libebit, vel ab superiore vel ab inferiore parte, imagines sequi.*

³⁶² Quintilian, *Institutes* 11.2.2, trans. Russell. *Sed non firme tantum continere verum etiam cito percipere multa acturos oportet, nec quae scripseris modo iterata lectione complecti, sed in cogitatis quoque rerum ac verborum contextum sequi, et quae sint ab adversa parte dicta meminisse, nec utique eo quodicta sunt ordine refutare sed oportunis locis ponere.*

³⁶³ Carruthers (2008: 34).

particular, Quintilian's concept of a "chain of things and words" evokes the common idea of a chain of fate or necessity which is a function of order in the universe, as Cicero describes in the *Academica*.³⁶⁴ The image of a chain to describe memory was common in ancient, medieval, and Renaissance sources.³⁶⁵ This is unsurprising, since Aristotle used the term in *De memoria et reminiscentia* to describe associative recollection.³⁶⁶ He recommends that one "start" at a middle point in the sequence she wants to remember, so that she can move in either direction--an instruction akin to *ad Herennium's* injunction that in a memory house one move "backwards and forwards, in any direction."

The third core concept of physics which informs the art of memory is that of movement and fixedness. Motion is closely related to order, as exemplified by the planets, which are the paradigmatic illustration of order within the physical universe: the planets are arranged in fixed positions but are in motion. Thus, motion and fixedness are not mutually at odds in this model. The importance of this concept to rhetorical memory is already evident in the examples from Quintilian and Aristotle which I have given above: the one practicing memory moves backwards and forwards, in any direction, through the fixed "chain" of words and things to be remembered. As Quintilian puts it, the elements of an opponent's speech can and should be rearranged according to the advantage of the speaker. Like the planets, the elements of a speech are "fixed" in the mind, but they are not static.

The most common image for the "fixing" of objects in memory is that of an imprint on wax. This metaphor was memorialized by Aristotle's famous explanation that a "sense image" is impressed on the soul like a signet ring on a seal.³⁶⁷ The author of the *ad Herennium*, intent on preparing his students to give speeches, makes much of the parallel between written speech and

³⁶⁴ See Ch. 2. Cicero, *Academica* 1.29.

³⁶⁵ Cf. Carruthers (2008: 78-82).

³⁶⁶ *De memoria*, 449a 9ff.; Sorabji (2004: 47-48).

³⁶⁷ *De memoria* 450a 25, trans. Sorabji. Sorabji (2004: 5 n.1) notes that this image also comes from Plato's *Theatetus*.

the impress of a speech on the mind: “For the backgrounds are very much like wax tablets or papyrus, the images like the letters, the arrangement and disposition of the images like the script, and the delivery is like the reading.”³⁶⁸ Though these images are “fixed” in the mind (*insignita*), the author of the *ad Herennium* suggests that the best form of images are nevertheless “active,” which we might again take as analogous to fixed *motion* of the planets. For this author, what makes the images “active” is that they are made especially memorable on account of their peculiarity:

If we disfigure [the image] with some thing, for instance, by introducing one stained with blood or soiled with mud or smeared with red paint, so that its form is more impressionable [*insignita*] or by assigning certain absurd things to our images, that kind of thing will also help us remember more easily.³⁶⁹

What I find striking about this example with respect to the paradigm of physics is that the fixedness of the images depends on their messiness: the fact that they are out of place does not detract from their importance of the orderliness of memory, but rather adds to it. Both this aspect of rhetorical memory, and the notion that to truly “grasp” a speech one must be able to rearrange its contents in any order, seem to me not entirely different from the concept of providence, of order amidst disorder—that is to say, one of the central concepts of texts on memory, as I argued in Chapter Two.

But perhaps the point of contact between the philosophy of memory and the workings of the cosmos which ultimately matters most is Aristotle’s idea that experience is produced from the repetition of memories. For it is here that the theory of memory most clearly embodies the most fundamental principle of the workings of the physical universe, i.e., that of oneness. This is the idea with which he opens the *Metaphysics*, and repeats in the *Posterior Analytics*:

³⁶⁸ RAH 3.30, trans. Caplan. *Nam loci cerae aut chartae simillimi sunt, imagines litteris, dispositio et conlocatio imaginum scripturae, pronuntiatio lectioni.* Cicero makes exactly the same point in the *Partitiones oratoriae*, 26.

³⁶⁹ RAH 3.37, based on Caplan’s translation. *aut si qua re deformabimus, ut si cruentam aut caeno oblitam aut rubrica delibutam inducamus, quo magis insignita sit forma, aut ridiculas res aliquas imaginibus adtribuamus, nam ea res quoque faciet ut facilius meminisse valeamus.*

Thus sense-perception gives rise to memory, as we hold; and repeated memories of the same thing give rise to experience; because the memories, though numerically many, constitute a single experience. And experience, that is, the universal when established as a whole in the soul—the One that corresponds to the Many, the unity that is identically present in them all—provides the starting-point of art and science: art in the world of process and science in the world of facts.³⁷⁰

In this passage, Aristotle describes memory with the same language we saw many *Platonis aemuli* use to describe the workings of the universe writ-large in Chapter Two. The idea that many memories produce a single experience, the creation of one unity out of many, is analogous to the discussions of unity amid diversity which is such an important topos in texts of physics. As I shall suggest below, this is the ultimate effect of Augustine's use of memory in the *De ordine*: and it is, I think, no accident that, just as Aristotle states that this is the starting point of art and science, so Augustine uses memory to discuss the arts as they lead to science (knowledge) of the intelligible.

II. *Memory Art and Physics in Ancient and Medieval Sources*

In addition to the thematic correlation between the underlying principles of artificial memory and of physics, evidence for the connection between the two can be found in descriptions of the practice of memory art from Aristotle onwards. Since Yates is primarily concerned with the development of mnemotechnics in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, she does not make much of the somewhat vague cosmological connections she finds in Aristotle and other ancient authors, and she sees much of the later use of cosmology in terms of memory art as primarily a function of a “bastard” tradition of astrology from which Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas--the Christian philosophers who, in her narrative, revived the mainstream use of memory art which was passed on to Renaissance authors--wished to distance

³⁷⁰ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 2, 100a. Trans. Tredennick. Ἐκ μὲν οὖν αἰσθήσεως γίγνεται μνήμη, ὥσπερ λέγομεν, ἐκ δὲ μνήμης πολλάκις τοῦ αὐτοῦ γιγνομένης ἐμπειρία· αἱ γὰρ πολλαὶ μνήμαι τῷ ἀριθμῷ ἐμπειρία μία ἐστίν. ἐκ δ' ἐμπειρίας ἢ ἐκ παντὸς ἡρεμήσαντος τοῦ καθόλου ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, τοῦ ἑνὸς παρὰ τὰ πολλά, ὃ ἂν ἐν ἅπασιν ἐν ἐνῇ ἐκείνοις τὸ αὐτό, τέχνης ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐπιστήμης, ἐὰν μὲν περὶ γένεσιν, τέχνης, ἐὰν δὲ περὶ τὸ ὄν, ἐπιστήμης.

themselves.³⁷¹ And yet, all of the sources she adduces as early evidence—not only those she identifies a problematic for Aquinas—betray some suggestion of a connection to the physics of the cosmos. In the Renaissance, it became common to use maps of the zodiac or the planets instead of the architectural structures described by the Roman authors. However, I wonder if the connection between the two might derive all the way from the use of the term “houses” to describe the fixed spaces of the sky through which planets move in ancient astrology. Cicero intimates such a connection in the *De natura deorum*, when he uses the term “architecture” to describe the heavenly map Plato lays out in the *Timaeus*:

What power of mental vision enabled your master Plato to descry the vast and elaborate architectural process which, as he makes out, the deity adopted in building the structure of the universe?³⁷²

The earliest evidence for the construction of artificial memory in which the backgrounds themselves were based on the physical cosmos is Quintilian’s aside about Metrodorus of Scepsis, who was a contemporary of Cicero. After noting that Metrodorus found “360 sites (*loci*)” in the twelve signs of the zodiac, Quintilian opines that this was a display of “vanity and ostentation in a man who, where memory was concerned, took more pride in his art than his natural powers.”³⁷³ Philostratus tells us in the *Lives of the Sophists* that a story was bandied about that Dionysius of Miletus, who lived in the time of Hadrian, trained his students in memory art with the help of Chaldean arts.³⁷⁴ While Philostratus’ point in telling this story is to deny it, his evidence suggests that mnemotechnics were, in some cases, associated with the magical and

³⁷¹ Yates (1966: 43).

³⁷² Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1.8 trans. Rackham. *Quibus enim oculis animi intueri potuit vester Plato fabricam illam tanti operis, qua construi a deo atque aedificari mundum potuit...quem ad modum autem oboedire et parere voluntati architecti aer ignis aqua terra potuerunt? Unde vero ortae illae quinque formae ex quibus reliqua formantur, apte cadentes ad animum afficiendum pariendosque sensus?*

³⁷³ Quintilian, 11.2.22, trans. Russell. *Quo magis miror quo modo Metrodorus in XII signis per quae sol meat treceos et sexagenos invenerit locos. Vanitas nimirum fuit atque iactatio circa memoriam suam potius arte quam natura gloriantis.*

³⁷⁴ Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 523.

cosmological practices of the Chaldeans. The same author, in his biography of Apollonius of Tyana, recounts that Apollonius lived to be a hundred, and even in old age would sing a hymn to Simonides: notably, this is the poet to whom Cicero attributes the development of artificial memory.³⁷⁵ Apollonius met a Brahmin who commended him for his remarkable memory and gave him seven rings of the seven planets, which Apollonius alternated wearing on the corresponding seven days of the week. Yates believes that accounts like this may have provided the context in which the practice of the *Ars Notoria* developed, which in the Middle Ages was attributed variously to Solomon, King of Israel, and to Apollonius, and in which one “gazed at figures or diagrams curiously marked and called ‘notae’ whilst reciting magical prayers. He hoped to gain in this way knowledge, or memory, of all the arts and sciences, a different ‘nota’ being provided for each discipline.”³⁷⁶ This practice served as the touchpoint for Aquinas’ condemnation of artificial memory practice in association with magic.

We do not, however, need to assume that some of the aspects of Philostratus’ account of Apollonius applied exclusively to traditions of memory art which strayed from the norm as defined by the rhetorical handbook tradition or mainstream Platonic/Aristotelian philosophy. The fact that Apollonius is a Neopythagorean associates him with the Platonic/Pythagorean model of physics, which included the liberal arts within its purview, as I suggested in Chapter Two. If we posit that this model of physics, and not merely astrology as it refers to divination via the stars, was the background in which artificial memory developed, this model encompasses a wider range of sources than those connected directly to the *Ars Notoria*. These would include Metrodorus of Scepsis and perhaps Martianus Capella. This contemporary of Augustine includes a brief description of memory art as part of his discussion of rhetoric, and his entire narrative of the liberal arts is set in the backdrop of the cosmos. The pre-Scholastic Boncompagno likewise mentions a form of memory art which, he says, relates to the stars, but

³⁷⁵ Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 1. 14.

³⁷⁶ Yates (1966: 43-44).

that only God knows how this works.³⁷⁷ At the same time, he describes the relationship of memory to the four humors, which are themselves related to physics insofar as they pertain to temperatures and seasons. To this list of evidence for the connection between physics, artificial memory, and the liberal arts, we can add Augustine's *De ordine*, as I suggest below.

Faint traces of the influence of physics on memory art are also evident in the rhetorical handbooks themselves, and on the way these are treated in the scholastic sources of the Middle Ages. For Yates, the contribution which Magnus and Aquinas made to the development of artificial memory was to combine Cicero's rhetorical precepts with what she calls the "ethical" dimension of memory which they uncovered in Aristotle's *De memoria et reminiscencia*. Yates' use of the term ethical is derived primarily from the fact that Magnus incorporates his discussion of rhetorical memory within his treatise *On the Good* (*De bono*). Carruthers takes a softer line on the division between Cicero's rhetorical treatment of the art of memory and Magnus' incorporation of Aristotle's theories of memory into the category of ethics. Unlike Yates, she assumes that ancient rhetoric is already infused with an ethical dimension; moreover, her reading of Aristotle is more attuned to the ways in which *De memoria et reminiscencia* itself promotes artificial memory aids, though in her reading she is careful not to conflate these with the memory art as it appears in Roman rhetorical handbooks.

Nevertheless, Carruthers does not question Magnus'--or Yates'--attribution of philosophical memory to the category of "ethics," and so in her reading, too, the connection between memory art and physics passes without comment. Because Magnus and Aquinas worked so much later than Augustine, I will not attempt here to tease out why they included memory in their treatment of ethics, or what the relationship between the divisions of logic, ethics, or physics meant to them. It is possible that for them, as for ancient philosophers, there were not necessarily clear-cut distinctions between these categories. However, it is worth re-assessing what they have to say about the connections between a philosophical or

³⁷⁷ Boncompagno, *Rhetorica Novissima* (Gaudecentio 1891: 275-56).

contemplative dimension of memory and the rhetorical arts. Yates' argument that these authors synthesized ethics and rhetoric has doubtless contributed to the ongoing sense in scholarship that rhetorical memory is largely divorced from its philosophical roots. And yet, Magnus' and Aquinas' treatment of Cicero, when read with attention to how it actually connects artificial memory to the paradigm of physics, provokes the notion that they did not synthesize rhetorical and philosophical memory from a combination of Cicero and Aristotle, but rather adopted it from them.

The scholastics derive their association of rhetorical memory with ethics from the definition of memory which Cicero gives in the *De inventione*. There, Cicero cites memory in his discussion of the four cardinal virtues, where he classes it as a part of prudence (wisdom). The three parts of prudence, he tells us, are memory, intelligence, and providence (*memoria, intelligentia, providentia*).³⁷⁸ He elaborates briefly: Memory is the faculty by which the mind recalls what has happened. Intelligence is the faculty by which it ascertains what is. Foresight is the faculty by which it is seen that something is going to occur before it occurs. These three terms correspond exactly with the three divisions of time which, as I stated in Chapter Two, are fundamental to the genre of physics. Memory organizes the past, intelligence--or contemplation of the *intelligible*--reflects a seizing of the true present reality, and providence is the future perspective which embraces all time in a unified whole.³⁷⁹ Because Cicero gives this definition in

³⁷⁸ De inv. 2.160. Trans. Hubbell. *Partes eius: memoria, intelligentia, providentia. Memoria est per quam animus repetit illa quae fuerunt; intelligentia, per quam ea perspicit quae sunt; providentia, per quam futurum aliquid videtur ante quam factum est.*

³⁷⁹ Interestingly, while Magnus and Aquinas allude specifically to the definition of prudence which Cicero gives in the *De inventione* even as they take their discussion of artificial memory, the *ad Herennium* contains its own definition of memory. This it also classes under the category of prudence. Here, its points of contact and divergence with Cicero's division of prudence into memory, intelligence, and foresight is quite curious. The *ad Herennium* states that "Wisdom is intelligence capable, by a certain judicious method, of distinguishing good and bad; likewise the knowledge of an art is called Wisdom; and again, a well-furnished memory." (*Ad Herennium* 3.3. Trans. Caplan. *Prudentia est calliditas quae ratione quadam potest dilectum habere bonorum et malorum. Dicitur item prudentia scientia cuiusdam artificii; item appellatur prudentia rerum multarum memoria et usus conplurium negotiorum.*) It seems to me that this definition may well be another set of allusions to the relationship between all these topics and the cosmological paradigm: the distinction between good and bad can be seen as a reference to the principle of generation out of opposites (i.e., the problem of evil), the concept of the knowledge of art to *invention* and the discovery of liberal arts, and memory, of course, to the role of memory in physics. These are in fact probably these same divisions which Cicero makes--it is clear that the problem of evil or generation

De inventione, Yates sees the scholastics' adoption of this definition as part of their synthesis of philosophical and rhetorical memory. *De inventione* includes no description of the rhetorical art of memory, and thus in her reading, the scholastics' association of this definition and the art of memory in the *ad Herennium* stems not from an ancient correlation between the two, but from the fact that medieval readers attributed the latter text to Cicero and therefore saw these treatises as two parts of a whole. But Yates misses the connection between Cicero's definition of prudence and texts on physics, even though she is aware of the passage from the *Tusculan Disputations* in which Cicero himself mentions these three aspects of time when he is giving a detailed description of physics. One of the proofs he gives there for the immortality of the soul is that there are no elements on earth which possess memory. He says, "For in these elements there is nothing to possess the power of memory, thought, reflection, nothing capable of retaining the past, or foreseeing the future and grasping the present, and these capacities are nothing but divine."³⁸⁰ We have already seen that Augustine treats each of these aspects of time within his hidden discussion of physics in the *De ordine*.

Moreover, Albertus Magnus himself seems to associate the rhetorical memory of *ad Herennium* not only with prudence as a dimension of ethics, but also with a cosmological paradigm. This is evident from his re-interpretation of a passage from the *ad Herennium* in which the author describes an active scene meant to represent information about a lawsuit. Albertus tells us:

Those wishing to reminisce (i.e., wishing to do something more spiritual and intellectual than merely to remember) withdraw from the public light into obscure privacy, because in the public light the images of sensible things (*sensibilia*) are scattered and their movement is confused. In obscurity, however, they are unified and are moved in order. This is why Tullius in the *ars memorandi* which he gives in the Second Rhetoric prescribes that we should imagine and seek out dark places having little light. And because reminiscence requires many images, not one, he

out of opposites is *providentia*, and where Cicero puts "memory" the *ad Herennium* puts "a well-furnished memory." It follows that perhaps *ad Herennium's* phrase "the knowledge of an art" corresponds to *intelligentia*, since this is defined both as true knowledge in the Platonic tradition and, in the *De ordine*, is achieved precisely by mastery of one or more of the arts.

³⁸⁰ *Tusculan Disputations* 1.66, trans. King. *His enim in naturis nihil inest quod vim memoriae, mentis, cogitationis habeat, quod et praeterita teneat et futura provideat et complecti possit praesentia: quae sola divina sunt...*

prescribes that we should figure to ourselves through many similitudes, and unite in figures, that which we wish to retain and remember (*reminisci*). For example, if we wish to record what is brought against us in a lawsuit, we should imagine some ram, with huge horns and testicles, coming towards us in the darkness. The horns will bring to the memory our adversaries, and the testicles the dispositions of the witnesses.³⁸¹

This is not a straightforward summary of what the author of the *ad Herennium* says, but rather an embellishment. In first place, the language of the obscurity of the sensible realm which Magnus uses in this passages strongly evokes similar discussions in passages of physics. More to the point, his use of the “ram” as a figure in this picture is an innovation upon the *ad Herennium*, which states only that one should imagine a human man holding testes which represent the witnesses in the case.³⁸² As Yates point out, the ram is one of the signs of the zodiac. Because the zodiac became such a popular series of backgrounds for memory art in the Renaissance, she quips:

If we were in the Renaissance instead of in the Middle Ages, we might wonder whether Albertus thought that the ram was Aries, the sign of the zodiac, and was using magical images of the stars to unify the contents of memory. But perhaps he had merely been doing too much memory work in the night, when silence spreads far and wide, as advised by Martianus Capella, and his worries about the lawsuit image began to take strange forms!³⁸³

In reading this passage, one wonders if Yates is holding herself back from suggesting that zodiacal memory art was more mainstream in the Middle Ages than she is willing to argue forthrightly in her book. Regardless, Magnus’ use of it, when it does not appear in the *ad Herennium*, suggests that he is viewing rhetorical memory as portrayed in that text with a cosmological backdrop. Given the profound overlap between astrology and astronomy in antiquity and the Middle Ages, this does not imply that he was necessarily interested in practicing astrology; rather, he could simply have understood the texts he was referencing on memory--Cicero’s rhetoric, and Aristotle’s *de memoria et reminiscencia*--to be animated by this paradigm of physics.

³⁸¹ Trans. Borgnet, IX, p. 108, cited by Yates, 62.

³⁸² *Ad Herennium* 3.33.

³⁸³ Yates (1966: 62).

III. *De ordine* as an Instance of “The Art of Memory”

Thus, my next task is to show how *De ordine* as a text on physics incorporates “rhetorical” memory. The text of *De ordine* falls into two parts: a dialogic portion in which Augustine and a group of students discuss the question of order and divine providence, and a final speech in which Augustine outlines a program of study through the liberal arts. The first sense in which *De ordine* can be seen as an instance of the art of memory is that the dialogic portion “enacts,” in sections, the content of the final speech. Traditionally, scholars have seen these two parts as linked only in a loose sense. In what follows, I will argue that they are intimately linked: the scenes of the dialogue portion of the text “represent” the liberal arts as Augustine describes them in his final speech.³⁸⁴ These arts, in the order which Augustine gives them, are: *grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, music, geometry, astronomy*, and finally *philosophy*, or *number*.

In dividing the dialogue according to these arts, Augustine also makes a higher level division between those which pertain to hearing and those which pertain to sight. This division is evident both in the dialogic portion of *De ordine*, and through a structural break in Augustine’s description of the liberal arts in his final speech. The first three arts, or what would become known as the *trivium* in the medieval adaptation of the liberal arts, are united by their place within the sense of hearing. Music, both in the final speech, and as it is represented in the dialogue, is represented as an intermediary: it is both the culmination of hearing and the first indication the students will turn their attention to sight. Geometry, astronomy, and philosophy / number pertain to sight, but, as is to be expected, primarily to an inner sight which seeks to “see” intelligible realities, as opposed to the external, physical realities of the sensible world. This is in keeping with the central aim of learning as Augustine presents it throughout the dialogue: namely, to perceive vestiges of intelligible reason (*ratio*) in the sensible world, and

³⁸⁴DO 2.12.36ff.

through these, to come to knowledge of intelligible truths. In the survey of dialogic scenes which I offer below, this division between hearing in sight--a division which aligns with the transition from sensible to intelligible--will become apparent.

The *De ordine* opens with a night-time scene in which Augustine is keeping vigil, and then realizes that his two young students Licentius and Trygetius are also awake.³⁸⁵ He asks the boys to consider why the sound of water running through pipes in their villa is inconsistent. This scene represents the first liberal art, grammar. This section of the dialogue, like the grammar section of Augustine's final speech, is replete with terms and themes which pertain to sound. In his speech, Augustine tells us that the ancients invented grammar to give sound to the meanings they had already ascribed to letters.³⁸⁶ He proceeds to divide sound into three types: vowels, semi-vowels, and mutes. In the dialogue-scene, the student Licentius' answer to Augustine's question about water flow represents this division between the same sounds Augustine lists in his final speech. Licentius posits that the sound of water running is inconsistent because leaves block the pipe. This should be read as an illustration of mutes. But sometimes, Licentius suggests, the leaves are dislodged, allowing water to flow; this represents vowels. At other times, the leaves check and release the flow in turns; i.e., they act as semi-vowels. Another indication that this scene represents grammar is the fact that, upon hearing Licentius' answer, Augustine says that Licentius must have been thinking about Calliope--the muse of poetry. Water is a common topos for poetry in antiquity, and canonical poetic texts comprised the majority of subject matter taught by grammarians. Thus, we can see why Augustine might choose a scene about water and sound to represent the study of sounds in poetical texts, which served as the core of the Roman grammatical curriculum.

The next two liberal arts are dialectic and rhetoric.³⁸⁷ Augustine treats these as a pair in his final speech, and his description of each focuses not on their content but on their aims.

³⁸⁵ DO 1.3.6ff.

³⁸⁶ DO 2.12.36-37.

³⁸⁷ DO 2.13.38.

Dialectic, he tells us, “teaches how to teach and how to learn.” In the dialogue, Licentius and Augustine dramatize this lesson when, after Licentius’ astute observation about the sounds of the water, Augustine invites him to practice dialectic by answering questions about why Licentius thinks the leaves behave this way. Licentius is hesitant, and questions the idea that, by answering questions, he could teach anything to Augustine.³⁸⁸ Augustine responds by saying that “[anyone] can teach something when, by certain ties of questioning, they are drawn to the fellowship of those engaged in discussions.”³⁸⁹ This conversation is a reference, I think, to the idea from the final speech that dialectic “teaches how to teach and teaches how to learn.” Augustine affirms that even unskilled interlocutors can teach through dialectic, and that teachers--like himself--can learn by engaging in dialectic with their students. In the final speech, Augustine associates rhetoric with the emotional aims of exhortation and encouragement. He says that people must be exhorted and urged towards the truth often follow their desires rather than the truth. In the dialogue, Augustine enacts this rhetoric when Licentius rebuffs Augustine’s attempts to engage in dialectic. Augustine reproves Licentius’ dismissal of dialectic, effectively using appeals to Licentius’ emotion until the student apologizes and agrees to debate with Augustine.

In the liberal arts speech, music occupies a pivotal place in the liberal arts scheme.³⁹⁰ Augustine states that at this point, reason “wished to be straightway transported to the blessed contemplation of things divine,” but that for fear of falling from on high, it “devised an orderly path for itself through the slopes it had already won.” In doing so, Augustine says here that reason “began with the ears, because they claimed as their own the very words from which it

³⁸⁸ DO 1.3.8ff.

³⁸⁹ DO 1.8.13, trans. Russell. *Sed alii quoque multum sepositi ab huiusmodi studiis dcere aliquid possunt, cum disserentium societati quasi vinculis interrogationum coarctantur.*

³⁹⁰ DO 2.14.39-41. Trans. Russell. *Hinc se illa ratio ad ipsarum rerum diviinarum beatissimam contemplationem rapere voluit. Sed ne de alto caderet, quaesivit gradus atque ipsa siibii viam per suas possessiones ordinemque molita est...et primo ab auribus coepit, quia dicebant ipsa verba sua esse, quibus iam et grammaticam et dialecticam et rhetoricam fecerat.*

had fashioned grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric.” In other words, music is the intermediary between those senses which pertain to hearing and those--the more properly “philosophical” arts--which pertain to sight, for it is the sense of sight which is most suited to the development of inner vision which allows for contemplation of the divine.³⁹¹ In the dialogue scene of *De ordine*, Augustine succinctly represents music’s intermediary state between sensible and intelligible, hearing and sight, in the Psalm which Licentius sings once he has been convinced that the study of philosophy is worthwhile. This is Psalm 79: “God, convert us and show us Thy face and we shall be saved (emphasis mine).”³⁹² In one line, Augustine embodies the transition from hearing to sight: it is a song with words, but it is a song about seeing the face of God. When Licentius finishes singing, he tells Augustine he is no longer interested in studying poetry, a pursuit which has been deeply compelling to him up to this point in the dialogue. But Augustine tells him not to abandon poetry, which here represents the earlier liberal art of grammar. Rather, Augustine advises him to return to poetry³⁹³ so that he does not pursue philosophy too zealously and then lose steam. In other words, Augustine commends to Licentius the same method he recommends in his speech: that Licentius “devise steps of ascent” through the verbal arts he has already conquered.

The fifth liberal art in Augustine’s sequence is geometry.³⁹⁴ The opening line of the geometry section of Augustine’s final speech says that “reason progressed to the realm of the eyes.” In other words, there is a clear shift from hearing to sight. In the speech, Augustine’s language likewise shifts from that of hearing to that of sight, and specifically, a scene in which

³⁹¹ Such a division is consistent with ancient descriptions of the liberal arts within the context of philosophical education specifically. The medieval trivium--grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric--is not included in these, but rather the four arts of *music, geometry, astronomy, and number* are said to comprise an education in philosophy. Since philosophy’s aim is contemplation of intelligible truths, we can interpret Augustine’s division between the *trivium* and the *quadrivium* as a delineation between those arts which properly speaking represent the study of philosophy, or inner sight, and those arts which pertain to hearing, or in this case, the sensible world.

³⁹² DO 1.8.22 trans. Russell. *Deus virtutum, converte nos, et ostende faciem tuam, et salvi erimus.*

³⁹³ DO 1.8.24.

³⁹⁴ DO 2.15.42. *Hinc est profecta in oculorum opes...*

Augustine and his students stop to observe a cockfight in the courtyard, admiring the movements and beauty of the birds. In his record of the group's observations, Augustine's comments follow a pattern of insights which Augustine likewise outlines in the final speech. In the speech, reason recognizes beauty (*pulchritudo*) by seeing shapes (*figurae*). Next, within shapes, reason finds dimension (*dimensiones*), and within dimension, number. Number is, as we saw in Chapter Two, the supreme proof of unity, and an object of contemplation which brings the soul to knowledge of God. In the dialogue-scene of geometry, Augustine enacts this cascade of insights when he describes a fight between roosters which he and his students are watching. For the first time in the dialogue, he speaks of eyes, which behold the beauty (*pulchritudo*) of reason. His descriptions of the cocks' heads and feathers should be read as representations of shapes. Dimension, a word which connotes measure, he enacts with description of the cocks' movements--the word he uses to describe the "blows" (*ictus*) with which they fight, for example, has the second meaning of "measure." He represents the reduction of all these elements to number by saying that the cocks' collect their whole song and bodies into one (*unum*)--a reference, I think, to the unity of number as the culmination of philosophy in Augustine's final speech.

The sixth liberal art in Augustine's reckoning is astronomy. In the final speech, he gives a succinct description of the key physical features of the universe as they are described in ancient treatises on physics:

The movement of the heavens also aroused and invited reason to consider it diligently. And there, too, on account of the most constant alternations of the seasons, as well as the fixed and unerring courses of the stars and the regulated spacing of distance, it understood that nothing other than dimension and number held sway. Linking these also into an orderly whole by definition and division, it gave rise to astrology--a great subject for the God-fearing, but a torment for the curious.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁵ DO 2.15.42 trans. Russell. *Motus eam caeli multum movebat et ad se diligenter considerandum invitabat. Etiam ibi per constantissimas temporum vices, per astrorum ratos definitosque cursus, per intervallorum spatia moderata, intellexit nihil aliud quam illam dimensionem numerosque dominari. Quae similiter definiendo ac discernendo in ordinem nectens, astrologiam genuit, magnum religiosi argumentum tormentumque curiosi.*

In the dialogue portion of *De ordine*, this art is represented at the beginning of the second book.³⁹⁶ There, Augustine seeks to elicit a definition of order from Licentius. He asks a series of leading questions in this attempt: first, whether God governs all things by order. Second, whether all things with God are good. Thirdly, if that which understands (*intellegere*) is with God; the corollary of this is whether the wise man--i.e., the man who understands God--is with God. The fourth question, finally, is whether the wise man can be moved. As I discussed in Chapter Two, each of these themes is central to the genre of physics, as embodied by the map of the heavens. The fact that Augustine introduces the concept of the wise man into this “astronomical” section of *De ordine* is a particularly good illustration of how he uses the principles of natural philosophy without having recourse to the imagery of the cosmos per se. The metaphor of the star for the wise man is a topos in ancient and late antique literature; it is one which Augustine himself uses when he describes his mentor Ambrose in the introduction of the second Cassiciacum dialogue, *De beata vita*.³⁹⁷ By asking Licentius if a wise man can be moved, he is implying that the wise man is a “fixed” star, i.e., one who lives in the uppermost sphere of the cosmos, the intelligible realm of God. In this passage of *De ordine*, then, Augustine’s question about whether a wise man can be moved is tantamount to asking his students whether the fixed stars move in the upper limits of the cosmos. When Licentius fails to grasp this connection, Augustine asks him a further set of questions about how the wise man traverses vast differences over land and sea, and at different times of his life--questions which recall the three points Augustine makes in the astronomy section of the final speech: that astronomy deals with the constancy of seasons, fixed courses of the stars, and moderated intervals of physical space.

In the dialogue, Augustine never properly treats the seventh liberal art--i.e., number, or philosophy. This omission makes sense if we remember that *De ordine* as a whole is, in a sense, a

³⁹⁶ DO 2.1.1ff.

³⁹⁷ DBV 1.4.

representation of unity in number, as represented by physics. Augustine's students fail to comprehend this principle of unity properly, which is why Augustine ultimately transitions to his speech on the liberal arts. Thus, we might say that Augustine treats number on the level of the text--inviting his readers to consider the theory of number--even while his students are not ready for this lesson. It may be no coincidence that his students' ultimate failure to comprehend this principle of unity occurs when they are in the "astronomy" portion of the dialogue: their failure to comprehend unity occurs precisely when they are considering the most paradigmatic aspect of that unity.

In using the scenes of the dialogue to "represent" his final speech, Augustine fulfils the most basic criteria for rendering *De ordine* an instance of the art of memory. However, more evidence is necessary to suggest that this correspondence between the dialogic portion of *De ordine* and the final speech is not merely a playful approximation of--or coincidental parallel to--the rhetorical art of memory. This evidence can be found apparent allusions to the terminology of rhetorical memory which I discussed above. In the first place, the staging of the dialogue can be read to be consistent with the basic operation of artificial memory. It takes place in a villa, namely, an architectural setting. The physical spaces of the villa can be read as *loci*, or places where to practitioner of memory art operates. The *res* or things which Augustine places in the villa are in fact the representations of the liberal arts--the scenes of his final speech. The way he "moves through" different places in the villa is an enactment of the recollector moving through the rooms of their memory house. At the beginning of each phase of discussion, Augustine mentions where the group is meeting that day: they rotate through bedrooms, the fields, and the baths. Moreover, these spaces, as Augustine describes them, meet the four criteria which rhetorical handbooks give for choosing places which are conducive to memory.³⁹⁸ They are (1) far from crowds. Augustine chooses a country villa, and contrasts that with friends who visit the city. Criterion (2) is that backgrounds should be different from each other, but linked;

³⁹⁸ RAH 3.31-32.

Augustine uses different rooms of one villa, rotating discussions between the bedroom, baths, and field outside. Criterion (3) is that backgrounds must be spaced at moderate intervals (*intervalla mediocrita*) from each other; in fact, when Augustine moves locations in the dialogue, he sometimes notes that he is doing so after a set number of days or a discrete break in time.³⁹⁹ Criterion (4) is that backgrounds should have good lighting. And indeed, Augustine comments on the quality of light whenever the characters move location.⁴⁰⁰

Furthermore, Augustine alludes to the three fundamental principles of physics which, I argued above, are also fundamental principles of artificial memory as treated in the rhetorical handbooks. The first of these is sight. The discussion of the dialogue follows the soul's transition from hearing to sight, and the dialogue itself can be read as an illustration of this process: by writing down in the visual medium conversations that were supposedly auditory to begin with, Augustine renders them to be what Plato and Aristotle call a "visual picture." The second fundamental principle Augustine keys into is order, as it pertains to the cosmos and to the memory of the text itself. After the "geometry" scene in which the group watches the spectacle of the cockfight, Augustine notes, "We decided not to lose the words (*verba*) about these things, and the things (*res*) themselves, fugitives of memories, and to fasten them as if by a chain of writing by which they might be led back."⁴⁰¹ The fact that here Augustine describes the conversation as a combination of words and things--the two categories which artificial memory trains students to use--strengthens the idea that this is a tongue and cheek reference to artificial memory. This is especially true when we note that he says this in conjunction with using the terminology of a chain, which as we saw above is a term which connotes both the order of the universe and the order of memory as described by Aristotle, Quintilian, and others.

³⁹⁹ Cf. DO 2.1.1, 2.11.34.

⁴⁰⁰ DO 1.8.22, DO 2.1.1.

⁴⁰¹ DO 1.9.27. *instituiamus iam de istis rebus verba non perdere resque ipsas a memoria fugaces, scriptorum quasi vinculo quo reducantur innectere.*

In the same passage, Augustine also refers to the third fundamental principle of memory art: fixedness. He asks rhetorically, “because the things [i.e., the events of the discussion] were recent, and how could things so impressionable (*insignita*) flee the *memory* of three studious men?”⁴⁰² Not only does he use the Latin version of the term (*insignis*) which Aristotle had used to compare the operation of memory to the imprint of a signet ring on wax, but Augustine does so in the context of a scene which fulfills the *ad Herennium*’s criteria for what makes a memory especially impressionable. The term which the author of the *ad Herennium* gives to impressionable images is *res agentes* -- active images. The handbook instructs readers to use images which are “doing something,” and which are exceptionally beautiful, ugly, comical or striking.⁴⁰³

Each of the dialogic scenes of *De ordine* fulfills this injunction. For example, the “grammar” scene includes an odd description of how Licentius strikes at mice with a piece of wood. In the music scene, Augustine tells us that Licentius had been singing hymns while on the toilet--an image which is absurdly dissonant with the serious philosophical nature of this text. The “geometry” section, by contrast, includes effusive exclamations of the roosters’ beauty. Augustine may even make a pun as a gesture to the fact that this is what his scenes are doing. At *De ordine* 2.1.2, Augustine introduces a scene by saying that the group sat down in the “remembered place” (*memorato loco*). Referring to some of his students’ misbehavior on the previous day, he tells them that he had grown angry with them for behaving childishly about a

⁴⁰² *De ordine* 1.8.26 *Nam et recentes res erant, et quando poterant tam insignita trium studiosorum memoriam effugere?*

⁴⁰³ RAH 1.36-37, trans. Caplan. *Imagines igitur nos in eo genere constituere oportebit quod genus in memoria diutissime potest haerere. Id accidet si quam maxime notatas similitudines constituemus; si non multas nec vagas, sed aliquid agentes imagines ponemus; si egregiam pulcritudinem aut unicam turpitudinem eis adtribuemus; si aliquas exornabimus, ut si coronis aut veste purpurea, quo nobis notatior sit similitudo; aut si qua re deformabimus, ut si cruentam aut caeno oblitam aut rubrica delibutam inducamus, quo magis insignita sit forma, aut ridiculas res aliquas imaginibus adtribuamus, nam ea res quoque faciet ut facilius meminisse valeamus. Nam quas res veras facile meminimus, easdem fictas et diligenter notatas meminisse non difficile est. Sed illud facere oportebit, ut identidem primos quosque locos imaginum renovandarum causa celeriter animo pervagemus.*

serious topic. The Latin here is *vobis...succensuerim pueriliter de magnis rebus agentibus*.⁴⁰⁴

Although in context it is clear that we need the word *agentibus* to mean “behaving”--i.e., it is describing the boys’ action--the word order of the sentence is unusually awkward, particularly because Augustine puts the word *agentibus* so far from the pronoun “you” with which it agrees, and next to *rebus*. With this placement, Augustine inserts the term *rebus agentibus*, that is, the ablative form of *ad Herennium’s* term *res agentes* for “active images.” Coupled with the fact that Augustine uses the term “memory place” to describe this scene, I believe we can read this play on words as a jocular bit of self-referentiality on Augustine’s part--he is reminding his readers that the dialogue doubles as a bit of mnemotechnics.

To conclude this section, I would like to consider the effects of the fact that Augustine makes a memory house out of the liberal arts in particular. On one level, this endows his artificial memory with a “moral” purpose, akin to that which Yates and Carruthers have identified in the scholastics’ apparent re-interpretation of artificial memory, and which became such an important aspect of medieval memory on a large scale. In *De ordine*, each scene is not only an active representation of the contents of the final speech; it is also a meditation or exploration of the central themes of the final speech, which is ultimately the primacy of division and synthesis in learning. Each scene, in its own way, re-creates the “problem of evil” so central to *De ordine*. Throughout the dialogue, Augustine repeatedly reminds his readers through comments that he and his students make to the effect that this principle is evident both in sensible experience and in the arts. At the same time, the text itself becomes an enactment of this principle by presenting, over and over again, scenes which make this point implicitly. This is, in effect, an enactment of Aristotle’s principle that experience is made out of many memories. Each discrete scene of the dialogue, representing its own liberal art, can be seen as a “memory.” Taken together, the reading of the text in its entirety can be seen as an “experience” in which the

⁴⁰⁴ DO 2. 1. 2. *Cum igitur memorato in loco, ut commodè potuimus, consedissemus, ego illis duobus adolescentibus: Quamvis vobis, inquam, succensuerim pueriliter de magnis rebus agentibus.*

cumulative effect of these memories is to instill in the student-reader a better sense of the thesis of the entire work, which is that the collation of this aggregate, apparently disorganized parts creates one, unified whole. Or as Aristotle puts it in the *Posterior Analytics*: the One that corresponds to the Many, the unity that is identically present in them all.⁴⁰⁵ As we saw above, Aristotle goes on to say in this passage that “this is the beginning of the arts and science.”

In sections one and two of this chapter, I suggested that the connection between the liberal arts and memory may be a persistent one throughout the mnemotechnic tradition, owing to the connection between the arts, learning, and physics. The fact that Augustine uses the liberal arts in the context of artificial memory strengthens this argument. It also renders the *De ordine* an exploration of the theory of memory as much as it is about memory’s practice: in a way, this is a memory text about memory, and specifically about the relationship of rhetorical memory as it leads to memory of number, which is ultimately, in Augustine’s Christian Platonism, memory of the divine. Thus, we might say that rhetorical memory is the unspoken eighth art in this dialogue. Augustine teaches what the Quintilian and the *ad Herennium* recommend when they say that artificial memory can strengthen the endowments of nature. It also renders him the answer to Frances Yates’ supposition that Magnus and Aquinas were not the first to unite the notions of what she calls rhetorical and “ethical” memory which they found in Cicero and Aristotle. She posited an early medieval connection between the two, and Augustine has proven her correct in this respect. And yet, Augustine’s extended exploration of memory reveals yet again how deeply embedded his thought is within the philosophical tradition that precedes him, and so I must follow Yates by suggesting that we continue to search for earlier evidence of the deep interdependence of “rhetorical” and “philosophical” memory. If the terminological points of contact I discussed in part one of this chapter are any indication,

⁴⁰⁵ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 2, 100a. Trans. Tredennick. Ἐκ μὲν οὖν αἰσθήσεως γίγνεται μνήμη, ὥσπερ λέγομεν, ἐκ δὲ μνήμης πολλάκις τοῦ αὐτοῦ γιγνομένης ἐμπειρία· αἱ γὰρ πολλαὶ μνήμαι τῷ ἀριθμῷ ἐμπειρία μία ἐστίν. ἐκ δ’ ἐμπειρίας ἢ ἐκ παντός ἡρεμήσαντος τοῦ καθόλου ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, τοῦ ἐνός παρὰ τὰ πολλά, ὃ ἂν ἐν ἅπασιν ἐν ἐνῇ ἐκείνοις τὸ αὐτό, τέχνης ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐπιστήμης, ἐὰν μὲν περὶ γένεσιν, τέχνης, ἐὰν δὲ περὶ τὸ ὄν, ἐπιστήμης.

Augustine's integration of the two may be part of a tradition which goes back, within the tradition of *Platonis aemuli*, at least to Aristotle.

IV. Conclusion: Teaching Rhetoric in the Cosmos

De ordine is not the only place in Augustine's *corpus* where he explores the relationship between artificial memory and memory of the divine. This is, famously, a major theme of the *Confessions* Book 10. And yet, the majority of readers have taken Augustine's use of artificial memory as merely a framework to illustrate its ultimate futility when compared with the ideal of remembering God, who cannot be contained within the bounds of a memory structure.⁴⁰⁶ Thus, the final question I wish to address in this chapter is how Augustine's use of artificial memory should be read when compared with that of *Confessions* 10, and vice versa. If Augustine's use of rhetorical memory in *Confessions* 10 is a mere illustration of its limits, could not the same be said for *De ordine*? The first point I would like to make in this respect is that the notion that Augustine argues for discarding rhetorical memory in the *Confessions* is, as one instance for the arguments that he rejects rhetoric in general, a misunderstanding of his theory of memory as it serves as a bridge from the sensible to the intelligible worlds. For instance, Dave Tell cites *Confessions* 10.26.37, where Augustine says, "we go backwards and forwards, and there is no place [for God]" as evidence that Augustine rejects rhetorical memory in favor of a different—necessarily unbounded—kind of memory which is able to comprehend God. He calls this "an indictment of the entire mnemotechnic tradition."⁴⁰⁷

However, this passage of the *Confessions* might just as well be read as an expression of the limits of rhetorical memory—limits defined by the limits of rhetoric as Augustine lays them out in the *Contra Academicos*. According to his Platonic view of sensible knowledge, there is of course no way to comprehend (or in this case, remember) God within the bounds of the sensible

⁴⁰⁶ Stock (1996: 216), Chin 2001, Tell 2006.

⁴⁰⁷ Tell (2006: 234).

world, for which rhetorical memory is a container. Nevertheless, in this model, rhetorical memory can work as a form of persuasion which prepares the soul for the enlightenment of “Proteus,” as Alypius had suggested in the *Contra Academicos*. Augustine conceives of no way to move from the boundaries of the sensible world to the unlimited plane of the intelligible, and I suggest that it is this frustration which drives his remarks about rhetorical memory in the *Confessions*. The fact that Augustine should even use memory art as a container for expressing its own limits confirms this.

In her study of grammar and memory in *Confessions* 10, Catherine Chin makes the same point about Augustine’s use of Virgil throughout the *Confessions*.⁴⁰⁸ Chin argues that Augustine “rescues” grammar as a viable art by identifying what is universal and unbounded in it. This argument effectively amounts to the idea that Augustine reiterates with respect to grammar what he found essential in all liberal arts at Cassiciacum. Nevertheless, Augustine’s apparent rejection of rhetoric in the *Confessions* prompts Chin to take Augustine’s lead in arguing that he only salvages grammar, logic, and mathematics from all the liberal arts. At the same time, she astutely notices that Augustine cannot ever separate grammar from rhetoric completely. To cite Virgil, for instance, necessitates that he engage with and even implement the subject matter and emotional force of his rhetorical training. I am curious as to why Chin does not also conclude that Augustine’s use of the paradigm of rhetorical memory amounts to the same—his use belies a belief in its necessity, or inevitability, unless, to borrow Pucci’s word once more, we are to arrive at the “fatuous” conclusion that the irony of using an art while giving lip service to its uselessness was somehow lost on one so aware of his words as Augustine.⁴⁰⁹ Both in *De ordine* and in the *Confessions*, then, Augustine’s use of rhetorical memory as a means of parsing out the relationship between sensible and intelligible is not a mere literary motif to be discarded; rather, it is a critical illustration of the precise introductory role that rhetoric has to play within his

⁴⁰⁸ Chin (2002: 177-179).

⁴⁰⁹ Pucci (2014: 7).

wider philosophical paradigm—one Augustine hopes he will outgrow when he attains to knowledge of God, but not as an alternative to this superior memory which can be discarded at will.

Another way to summarize the above is to say that I do not think Augustine's use of memory art is merely the illustration of a theory, because the theory of his use of memory is by its very nature inseparable from its practice. And now I will make the same argument from the opposite side: namely, by extending the argument that *De ordine* enacts the practice of rhetorical memory. I have already argued above that the text itself represents this practice. Yet perhaps the most persuasive endorsement Augustine gives for the use of memory art is to be found not in his own performance of it, but in the fact that he depicts himself teaching it within the text. In other words, the dialogic scenes of *De ordine* do not only "represent" the final speech, they also illustrate the process of teaching students to compose and produce better speeches themselves. In this process, Augustine renders the act of practicing rhetoric to be inseparable from the theory he is teaching: he shows each art itself to be a microcosm of the issue of order in the universe.

This dialogue can be read as a series of attempts--each one increasing in complexity--at building a rhetorical speech. The culmination of this speech is Augustine's final speech at the end; but there are what we might call mini-speeches which Licentius, Trygetius, and Augustine each produce over the course of the dialogue, all as a response to Augustine's repeated question of how evil can exist in a world that is governed and ordered by a good God. Unlike their failed attempts at answering his questions in previous dialogues, here Licentius and Trygetius get the most basic form of the answer right from the beginning of the dialogue. And yet, their answers are still unsatisfactory to Augustine: when he asks them to expand and elaborate, they fall apart with respect to the details. At the same time, the responses students give to the answer get successively better, both in respect of the philosophical content and--importantly for our purposes--the rhetorical structure of the answer. In other words, there is some correlation in student responses between philosophical aptitude and rhetorical competency.

Augustine first directs this “problem of evil” question to Licentius, who gives a succinct, one paragraph response. The gist of it is that evils are integral to order, and thus although God does not love evil, God loves order which includes evil. Licentius concludes:

And because this orderly arrangement maintains the harmony of the universe by this very contrast [between good and evil], it comes about that evil things must need be. In this way, the beauty of all things is in a manner configured, as it were, from antitheses, that is, from opposites: this is pleasing to us even in discourse.⁴¹⁰

In this conclusion, we can already see the main argument of the dialogue: that order exists out of disorder. Moreover, Licentius also mentions a single instance of an art illustrating this point when he says “this is pleasing to us even in discourse.” In so doing, this mini-speech can be read as a brief synopsis of Augustine’s final liberal arts speech. And yet, it is not clear if Licentius fully grasps the implications of his references to antitheses here. In fact, his difficulty in maintaining this position when pressed by Augustine later in the dialogue suggests that he does not.

When Licentius metaphorically absents himself from the discussion, Augustine sets Trygetius the same question of the problem of evil, this time from the angle of whether one who is unwise is included in order. Once again, the student gives the correct answer; this time, Trygetius’ response is more fleshed out than that of Licentius. He replies:

Indeed the entire life of the unwise, although it is by no means consistent and by no means well regulated by themselves, is nevertheless included in the order of things by divine Providence; and certain places having been arranged, so to speak, by that ineffable and eternal law, it is by no means permitted to be where it ought not to be. Thus it happens that whoever narrow-mindedly considers this life by itself alone, is repelled by its enormous foulness, and turns away in sheer disgust. But if he raises the eyes of the mind and broadens his field of vision and surveys all things as a whole, then he will find nothing unarranged, unclassified, or unassigned to its own place.⁴¹¹

⁴¹⁰ De ordine 1.7.18 trans. Russell. *Qui ordo atque dispositio, quia universitatis congruentiam ipsa distinctione custodit, fit ut mala etiam esse necesse sit. Ita quasi ex antithesis quodammodo, quod nobis etiam in oratione iucundum est, id est ex contrariis, omnium simul rerum pulchritudo figuratur.*

⁴¹¹ De ordine 2.4.11 trans. Russell. *Namque omnis vita stultorum, quamvis per eos ipsos minime constans minimeque ordinata sit, per divinam tamen providentiam necessario rerum ordine includitur et quasi quibusdam locis illa ineffabili et sempiterna lege dispositis, nullo modo esse sinitur ubi esse non debet. Ita fit ut angusto animo ipsam solam quisque considerans, veluti magna percussus foeditate aversetur. Si autem mentis oculos erigens atque diffundens, simul universa collustret nihil non ordinatum suisque semper veluti sedibus distinctum dispositumque reperiet.*

Like Licentius, Trygetius here accounts for the apparent ugliness of details in the world. Also like Licentius, Trygetius characterizes the solution to this evil as one of perspective--one must look at the world as an integrate whole, rather than at individual parts. Interestingly, however, Trygetius prefaces his answer by saying that he cannot think of an analogy (*similitudo*), and asking that Augustine supply one. Following Trygetius' answer, Augustine does just this: he lists a whole series of examples of how apparently evil things work for good within a larger system: a hangman has evil character, but effects the law of the state. Prostitutes are immoral, and yet their absence would result in lust running rampant. Given both the starkness and the patness with which Augustine displays these examples, it is possible that he is drawing them from a stock pool of figures of speech. Either way, it is the case that the term he and Trygetius use for these examples (*similitudines*) is a technical rhetorical term for a simile as a figure of speech. Thus, in this passage Trygetius gives the right answer but expresses inadequacy in his inability to produce examples--the line between deficits in philosophy and deficits in rhetorical training is blurred. This notion is reinforced by the fact that Augustine goes on at some length, waxing eloquent with a list of examples some twenty items long, punctuated by rhetorical devices such as tricola, anaphora, and rhetorical questions.

Augustine's final example in this litany of commonplaces--and the one upon which he lavishes the most attention--is nothing other than the style one uses in speech. This effectively picks up and expands upon Licentius' example in the first "mini-speech" which treats the question of evil. Where Licentius had said simply that contrast "is pleasing even in discourse," Augustine expands on the idea that rhetorical style is an illustration of the problem of evil:

Poets have found delight in what they call solecisms and barbarisms. But, by a mere change of name, they chose to call them tropes and metaplasms, rather than refrain altogether from the use of such manifest blunders. Remove these from poems: we shall be wanting in their delightful relish. Crowd a great many of them into one passage: I shall loathe the whole passage as sour, malodorous, and rancid. Carry them over into familiar and forensic speech: who will not bid them flee and retreat to the theatre: Because order directs and restrains them, it does not suffer them to be in excess of their proper place, or to be anywhere out of place. Unpretentious and seemingly inelegant diction, interspersed in a discourse, brings into bolder relief the fancy flights and the ornate passages. If it is ever by itself alone, you throw it out as worthless. On the other hand, whenever it is lacking, those adornments are not conspicuous--they are not

dominant, so to speak, in their own provinces and realms: they are a hindrance to themselves by their own brilliance, and they confuse the whole design.⁴¹²

It is as if in this passage, Augustine imports a lesson of *De beata vita*--that the use of the moderate style is ideal--into the cosmological context of *De ordine*. At the same time, he unites all three of the language arts of the *trivium*: first he speaks of grammar in poetry, then of ordinary and forensic speech, and finally of "discourse"--which probably stands for dialectic debate. Immediately following this, Augustine launches into a description of the philosophical arts of the *quadrivium*.⁴¹³ In this way, his mini-speech very much prefigures the speech at the liberal arts at the end of the *De ordine*, which is the final, most expansive, and most polished version of the speech.

Thus, the progression of speech-making can be summed up as follows: Licentius alludes to the idea of liberal arts as a reflection of the problem of evil by saying that opposites are pleasing in discourse. Trygetius responds to the same question, forgetting, however, concrete examples of his principle such as the one Licentius had supplied. He asks for such examples in language which specifically suggests he is asking for technical help with a speech. Augustine obliges by producing a series of examples which illustrate Trygetius' illustration of the problem of evil. The first of these are pat exercise examples, but then Augustine launches into an account of the liberal arts which treats the *trivium* as a collective and enumerates the *quadrivium*. Following this, the students continue their discussion, and neither Licentius nor Trygetius is

⁴¹² De ordine 2.4.13 trans. Russell. *Talia, credo, sunt omnia, sed oculos quaerunt. Soloecismos et barbarismos quos vocant, poetae adamaverunt; quae schemata et metaplasmos mutatis appellare nominibus quam manifesta vitia fugere maluerunt. Detrahe tamen ista carminibus, suavissima condimenta desiderabimus. Congere multa in unum locum, totum acre, putidum, rancidum fastidibo. Transfer in liberam forensemque dictionem, quis non eam fugere atque in theatra se condere iubebit? Ordo igitur ea gubernans et moderans, nec apud se nimia nec ubilibet aliena esse patietur. Submissa quaedam impolitaeque simillima ipsos saltus ac venustos locos sese interponens illustrat oratio. Quae si sola sit, proicis ut vilem: si autem desit, illa pulchra non prominent, non in suis quasi regionibus possessionibusque dominantur sibi ipsa propria luce obstant totumque confundunt.*

⁴¹³ Interestingly, however, he does not state the first three liberal arts by name--those of the *trivium*--but rather describes them generally. He *then* lists the arts of the *quadrivium* more specifically by name. This more protean presentation of the liberal arts is reminiscent of the presentation of the liberal arts which we have seen in accounts of the liberal arts within treatises on physics.

able to fully answer the questions Augustine poses about the problem of evil. This eventually prompts Augustine to say that they first need to study the order of learning, at which point he gives his speech at the end of the dialogue.

In this way, Augustine once again reveals rhetoric and dialectic to be inextricably connected to each other: his students' success or failure to understand the questions he raises are reflected in their ability to produce and expand upon rhetorical figures which illustrate those points. Thus, he illustrates the central argument of his final speech: that each liberal art teaches the principles of division and synthesis, and in so doing, is a microcosm of the lessons of the universe. Augustine's philosophical rhetoric is a cosmological rhetoric. The place of rhetoric within his philosophical program is justified because rhetoric as an art reflects the workings of the universe. One of the most remarkable aspects of this rhetorical theory is the way in which the terminology of rhetorical handbooks illustrates this very point. The overlap between descriptions of the cosmos and discrete terms for elements of rhetoric is such that the development of rhetoric within this paradigm deserves to be studied much further. But regardless of whether one is inclined to view the terminological overlap as coincidental or the product of a long tradition of philosophical rhetoric, its effect is such that students or readers like those in a classroom of Augustine, are reminded of the integration of rhetoric within the Platonic ascent paradigm at every turn.

Consider, for instance, the language Trygetius uses to introduce his "mini-speech" on divine providence in *De ordine*:

It is easy, he says, to reply to this dilemma of yours. For the moment, however, I cannot call to mind analogy (*similitudo*) by which my opinion ought, I know, to be declared and illustrated (*illustrari*). I shall simply state my impression; for you will do what you did a little while ago. Certainly that mention of the darkness has brought us a great deal of light (*luminis*) on what has been put forward very obscurely by me.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹⁴ DO 2.4.11, trans. Adapted from Russell. *Facile est, inquit, huic quidem respondere complexioni tuae, sed me in praesentia similitudo deficit, qua sententiam meam video asseri illustrarique debere. Tamen dicam quod sentio; facies enim tu quod paulo ante fecisti. Non enim illa commemoratio tenebrarum ad id quod a me involutum erat, parum nobis attulit luminis.*

In this passage, Trygetius' technical use of the term analogy (*similitudo*) can be seen as a request for rhetorical examples. This is borne out by the fact that Augustine responds, as we saw above, by developing his own mini-speech with a series of commonplaces which prove Trygetius' point that nothing is truly unarranged or out of place. But Trygetius makes this request for rhetorical commonplaces using the language of obscurity and light which recall the mysterious workings of the cosmos. In so doing, he endows the terms "to illuminate" (*illustrare*) and "light" (*lumen*) with a double-entendre which simultaneously evoke both their rhetorical and cosmological meanings. In this passage, Trygetius uses the basic meaning of *illustrare* ("to make light") and of *lumen* ("light"). And yet, by using them in the context of production of rhetorical *exempla*, he also summons their more technical meanings in that context, which refer specifically to stylistic production in the creation of speeches: *illustrare* is "to adorn with ornamentation"⁴¹⁵ and *lumina* are ornaments of speech,⁴¹⁶ perhaps such as those which Augustine is about to produce in this narrative. In the *Orator*, for instance, Cicero uses the word *illustrare* to describe the pleasing style of Demetrius of Phalerum, which, he says, "is lighted up by what might be called the stars of "transferred" words (or metaphor) and borrowed words."⁴¹⁷ One can imagine that for students who were discussing rhetoric within this cosmological paradigm, more and more terms might begin to take on a cosmic significance. *Moveri* or *commoveri*, for instance, are verbs Augustine often uses to describe how a speech "moves" its audience. It is also a verb which can be used to describe the movement of physical elements through the cosmos. *Loci* are the places through which one moves in memory house, but they are also the places through which planets move on their set course. Thus, the student who practices rhetoric in this context is constantly reminded of how this art is a microcosm of the universe.

⁴¹⁵ Lewis & Short, cf. Cicero, *Orator* 27. 92; *De inventione* 2.15.49 etc.

⁴¹⁶ Lewis & Short, cf. Quintilian 12.10.14 and 8.5.29.

⁴¹⁷ Cicero, *Orator* 27.92, trans. Hubbell.

This doubly laden significance of terms extends, of course, to the content of the entire ascent paradigm as Augustine teaches it at Cassiciacum. In the *Contra Academicos*, we saw how the textbook definition of *inventio* as the search for what is true or like-true mirrors the terminology of the would-be philosopher's initial problem of skepticism.⁴¹⁸ The textbook definition of style hinges upon the word *accommodatio*, whose root, *modus*, is the same as that of the moderation required of wise man. And memory, finally, is defined as the firm perception of facts; a firmness which recalls, of course, the idea that the wise man, like the fixed stars, should not move errantly through the cosmos. Thus, in Augustine's rhetorical classroom, the student's study of rhetoric takes him through the same paces as the transition from logic, to ethics, to physics. As the ascent paradigm culminates in physics, which embraces the whole of the philosophical journey, so memory embraces the whole of this rhetorical journey: this is why, I believe, Augustine's final speech begins by referencing the content of *Contra Academicos* and *De beata vita*, as I suggested in Chapter One. Thus, one could say of *De ordine* what the author of the *ad Herennium* says about memory as a whole: it is "a treasure-house of inventions and the guardian of every part of rhetoric."⁴¹⁹ And while readers of rhetorical textbooks typically take the distinction between "words" and "things" to refer to the difference between memorizing speeches *verbatim* as opposed to memorizing their main ideas, Augustine shows us another way in which the distinction between memory of "words" and "things" might be understood: within his model of Platonic education, it is precisely the interplay of how the memory of the art of words presages knowledge of the ontology of the universe.

⁴¹⁸ *De inventione* 1.7, *Inventio est excogitatio rerum verarum aut veri similium quae causam probabilem reddant; dispositio est rerum inventarum in ordinem distributio; elocutio est idoneorum verborum ad inventionem accommodatio; memoria est firma animi rerum ac verborum perceptio.*

⁴¹⁹ *Ad Herennium* 3.28. Cf. *Conf.* 10.8.12.

(IN)CONCLUSIONS: RHETORIC IN THE COSMOS

In this dissertation, I have argued that Augustine's Cassiciacum dialogues form the early part of a Platonic curriculum which follows a narrative of metaphysical ascent through the divisions of philosophy from logic, to ethics, to physics, to metaphysics. At the same time, I have argued that Augustine interweaves the canons of rhetoric into this ascent: invention with logic, style with ethics, and memory with physics.⁴²⁰ Thus, Augustine's program might be better described as one of "philosophical rhetoric," provided that we understand this to be a part of his philosophical curriculum and in no way divorced from it. The way in which Augustine integrates rhetoric with philosophy renders the study of rhetoric to be itself an ascent which mirrors the narrative of philosophical ascent through the cosmos. As the divisions of philosophy narrate the soul's ascent from logic, to ethics, to physics, so this ordering of the canons of rhetoric tell the same story. Invention is the inevitable first step in seeking probable arguments when knowledge is obscured. In the *Contra Academicos*, Augustine showed that rhetorical invention is a necessary part of the discovery process. Style is a reflection of the moderation is the fundamental governing principle of the cosmos. In *De beata vita*, Augustine shows how moderating one's style, as moderating one's life, teaches the ontological reality towards which the soul tends. Memory enables the soul to have experiences necessary for learning about the divine. In the *De ordine*, Augustine implicitly argues that the rhetorical art of memory hones and streamlines this process.

As I argued in Chapter One, the theory of rhetoric which Augustine offers in the *Contra Academicos* is grounded in his belief that true, intellectual knowledge can only come through divine inspiration. This creates a space for rhetoric in which the use of rhetoric--persuasion in service of truth--is both necessary and useful within the pursuit of philosophy. In short, for Augustine, there is no alternative *but* to use rhetoric. The apparently negative comments

⁴²⁰ It seems likely to me that the fourth Cassiciacum dialogue, the *Soliloquies*, represents not only "metaphysics" but also "*actio*," the performative canon of speech. But this is a topic for another time.

Augustine makes about rhetoric throughout the Cassiciacum dialogues must be read in light of this theory, particularly because these comments have often been taken to imply that Augustine rejects the use of rhetoric, and particularly the type of rhetoric he taught in the schools at Milan. His pervasive use of rhetoric throughout the Cassiciacum dialogue undermines such an idea, and the fact that his rhetorical theory is so deeply implicated in his epistemology renders it absurd. Insofar as Augustine finds rhetoric a necessary component of the early stages of philosophical ascent, we might compare his disparagement of it to instances when someone references the foolish behavior of their youth. Such self-disparagement is meant to emphasize the disparity between youth and maturity, but not to imply that youth should be dispensed with altogether.

Augustine makes similar denouncements of rhetoric in his later works such as the *Confessions*. In light of the depth and maturity of his thought about rhetoric at Cassiciacum, these comments deserve to be re-evaluated in the context of the rhetorical theory Augustine promotes at Cassiciacum. The fact that Augustine situates the dialogue within a curricular ascent narrative, as I showed in Chapter Two, means that we cannot dismiss them as *juvenilia* with respect to the development of his thought and assume that by the time he laments his overly emotional response to Dido in the *Confessions* he has simply developed a different view of rhetoric. For one thing, his overt statements about the dangers of rhetoric are consistent across his *corpus*. If indeed the Cassiciacum dialogues represent a sustained exploration of “philosophical rhetoric,” they may well represent Augustine’s most involved and sophisticated exposition of a rhetorical theory before the *De doctrina*. Moreover, at Cassiciacum he works out his theory specifically viz-a-viz his philosophical predecessors and the wider, non-Christian educational landscape. As such, these dialogues offer insight into Augustine’s engagement with his educational heritage in a way which is distinct from his other works. He does this at Cassiciacum not so much because he is seeking to understand and reconcile Christianity with his philosophical and rhetorical education, but precisely because, within this ascent narrative,

the first step is to promote one's own philosophical school and agenda. This is what his model Cicero does with the *Academica* in the first stage of his own Platonic ascent sequence.

Thus, reading the Cassiciacum dialogues as a program of philosophical rhetoric has the potential to enrich readings of Augustine's later works in which he deals with the same themes. For example, in the *Contra Academicos* Augustine effects a synthesis between dialectic as truth and rhetoric as persuasion--uniting both in the person of Christ as *ratio*. This is not entirely dissimilar from the way some scholars have argued that Augustine renders Christ to be a "rhetorical" form of truth in the *Confessions* and *De Trinitate*. Such points of contact may help to alleviate some of the gray areas in Augustine's use of rhetoric in texts where he does not theorize it as extensively as he does at Cassiciacum. They may also illuminate the ways in which Augustine's Christian adaptation of rhetoric, which is often understood in terms of transforming a purely secular art into a Christian context, is deeply informed by a tradition of Platonic concerns of ascent and transformation--a tradition which itself wrestled with the apparent binary between rhetoric and dialectic. And finally, given the fact that Augustine structures his corpus according the "recursive ascent" narrative, thematic parallels in different texts deserve to be studied vis-a-vis the question of how he approaches the same topic at an increasingly "higher" level. The distinctive place of the Cassiciacum within a Platonic curriculum invites us to consider the remainder of Augustine's corpus with respect to that same narrative.

In Chapters Three through Five, I have argued that Augustine's integration of core components of both philosophical and rhetorical material operates not only on a thematic, but a highly technical level. His effects his exploration of invention through the five-parts of speech structure used to treat that topic in rhetorical textbooks; at the same time, he alludes to the uses of invention as a dialectic tool in handbooks like the *Topica*. His exploration of style combines the use of Cicero's low, middle, and high style with specific modes of definition as they are expressed in Marius Victorinus' handbook, *De definitionibus*. His exploration of memory is worked out through the theory and practice of the rhetorical art of memory, but particularly as

it relates to natural philosophy and contemplation of the cosmos. Augustine's use of the specific mechanics of this material illustrates the extent to which he possessed a mastery of both rhetorical and philosophical subject matter. Thanks to his own biographical account, scholars take for granted that he was well-versed in rhetorical education. However, his biographical narrative is less explicit about the depth of his training in philosophy. Since he tells us about his encounters in philosophy in the context of a brief period of study with the Manicheans, it is often assumed that his knowledge of the Platonic tradition was relatively superficial at the point of his conversion. That he so confidently and systematically tackles philosophical subject matter suggests that his own account of his philosophical training might be misleading. This question, too, deserves to be explored further.

At the same time, if Augustine's integration of philosophy and rhetoric is any indication, the question of his philosophical inheritance should not be separated from the question of the interrelationship between rhetorical and philosophical education within the so-called schools of philosophy and rhetoric. Throughout this dissertation, I have aimed to illustrate the aspects of Augustine's treatment of philosophy and rhetoric which seem to signal that he not only adopts the raw material of each from his predecessors, but also the very practice of their integration. For instance, the fact that Augustine begins his ascent sequence with logic seems to reflect the fact that Platonic curricula like that of his contemporary Syrianus began with the texts of Aristotle on logic. Subtle connections between Augustine's use of *De inventione* within the context of the metaphysical ascent narrative, and Cicero's use of cosmological language and examples in the *De inventione*, beg the question of whether Augustine inherited the practice of putting questions of invention within this phase of the ascent sequence. Likewise, in Chapter Two I indicated points of contact between Augustine's integration of definition, ontology, and style with some philosophical predecessors; one wonders how "standard" this particular overlap in content was within the corpuses of *Platonis aemuli*. In Chapter Three, I suggested that, for Augustine, the use of rhetorical memory art is integral to his overall search for memory (or recollection) of the intelligible. Insofar as his use of rhetorical memory is indebted to a tradition

in which this memory art was developed in a cosmological paradigm, one wonders how much other authors, too, taught rhetorical memory with the aim of ascent in view.

Such questions of inheritance apply not only to individual topics, but extend to the structure of Augustine's entire curriculum. For instance, I have suggested that not only *Contra Academicos* as a text on "logic," but the entire Cassiciacum sequence, represents the study of "rhetoric" for Augustine. This is evident in the way he combines treatment of literature, dialectic, and speeches in all three of the scenic dialogues. It is also evident, of course, in the fact that each dialogue explores its own canon of rhetoric. Considering that the integration of rhetoric and philosophy is often attributed to Aristotle in ancient sources, I have to wonder whether the first "Aristotelian" phase of Syrianus' Platonic curriculum was also, *in toto*, an exploration of "rhetoric." Such a system tracks with the idea of recursive ascent, and with the persistent notion we find in ancient sources of the inter-permeation of the divisions of philosophy. It seems entirely possible, therefore, that while each phase of recursive ascent in both Syrianus and Augustine's curricula include each of the divisions of philosophy, they are at the same time "studies" of rhetoric as part of logic. The question then follows as to whether the second phase of ascent represents, as a whole, "ethics" and so forth.

Thus, inasmuch as I conclude this project with the conviction that Augustine worked firmly in the tradition of his philosophical predecessors, I am not yet ready to make full claims as to how he adopted and innovated within this context. It is clear that Augustine saw himself an "innovator" insofar as he promotes Christianity as the culmination of the Platonic tradition. And certainly, the particular style and format of the dialogues, which rely on Cicero's *Romanitas* yet Plato's dialectic staging, reflect a conscious decision on his part to select and adapt specific qualities of his predecessors' work in his own sophisticated matter. Yet, inasmuch as the notion of innovation in a modern sense was foreign to authors like Augustine, I suggest that to "assume competence" in this scenario is to assume that even the structures of Augustine's integration of philosophy and rhetoric are deeply informed by patterns of engagement established by his forerunners. Platonic curricula are known for their endurance and resistance

to change, and I suspect that Augustine himself would be insulted to learn that readers assumed his integration of the concrete mechanics of rhetoric education within a program of philosophy was a novel concept.

What is missing is a picture of how the practice of philosophical rhetoric was worked out by other *Platonis aemuli*. This would come from close readings of other authors within the Platonic tradition. For me, the precise place of particular topics within Augustine's curricular narrative raises the question of whether other ancient and late antique authors even outside of the mainstream Platonic schools treated like topics in like "phases" of an educational program. Does this invisible ascent narrative somehow inform the beginning of Basil of Caesarea's *Hexaemeron*, for instance--a (cosmological) study of the first six days of creation which begins with questions of skeptical knowledge? Does the terminology of visual art, fixedness, and motion which pervades Aratus' *Phaenomena*, a text Cicero translated and then embedded into *De natura deorum*, suggest that Cicero--or even Aratus himself--conceived of this work as somehow in relation to the rhetorical art of memory which Augustine treats within the context of physics in *De ordine*?

Augustine's use of the Platonic ascent narrative invites consideration of these questions, especially with respect to Cicero's corpus, to which he is so indebted. Thus, as the students' view of truth at Cassiciacum was obfuscated by the clouds of sensible experience, so I end this dissertation with a set of inconclusions. As the Cassiciacum dialogues sit at the beginning of Augustine's curricular sequence, so I feel that this project has only begun to scratch the surface with respect to how Augustine styles himself a *Platonis aemulus*. I will not say I am certain that his engagement with his philosophical tradition runs much deeper than what I have teased out here, but I suggest that it is probable. In that sense, this dissertation has just begun. And yet, as natural philosophy begins with the question of whether the universe is infinite, so too I might wonder about the bounds of such a project.

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Abbreviations

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
FoC	Fathers of the Church
LLT	Library of Latin Texts, Brepols
PL	Patrologia Latina

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