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Theories of Vision: Augustine of Hippo and the Augustinian Tradition

Edited by

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Introduction

Under the heading *Theories of Vision: Augustine of Hippo and the Augustinian Tradition* an international meeting was held between the 14th and 15th November 2019 in the Faculty of Arts of the University of Porto. The main purpose of this meeting was to contribute for a deeper knowledge of the theories of perception in the work of Augustine of Hippo as well as to better understand their influence on the subsequent theories developed in the Middle Ages.

Augustine's conception of the process of knowing both material objects and intelligible forms is principally rooted on two strands: the theories of cognition developed in late antiquity and the principles of Christian metaphysics on the nature of man and his ultimate end. Concerning the former, Augustine's interlocutors are mainly Porphyry and Plotinus, while for the latter his source of inspiration is fundamentally the biblical text and the writings of the Christian authors who preceded him. Augustine's philosophical and theological thought develops throughout his life in multiple directions, being often guided, especially after his episcopal ordination, by questions related to his duties at the head of the Christian community of Hippo.

Thus, it is possible to find in Augustine's work explanations of human perception discussed on strictly philosophical ground, as in the writings of his youth, alongside explanations in which his philosophical conceptions are clearly put to the test when used at the service of major theological issues. An example of his first elaboration on theories of cognition is found in the epistolary exchange with Nebridius on the perception of corporeal objects by the human spirit. As for the possibility of applying these theories of perception to theological questions, Augustine's difficulties in solving the problem on the basis of philosophical categories are evident in the writings resulting from the debates, held between the years 408 and 412-13, on the possibility of seeing God by means of the corporeal eyes. Among the most interesting developments of Augustine's theory of vision is his

long analysis of Saint Paul's ecstatic experience, reported in 1 *Cor*, 12, 2-4, and commented on by Augustine in Book XII of his *Literal Commentary on the Book of Genesis*.

In the texts above mentioned, Augustine gradually builds up his theory of the perception of material objects and immaterial realities. In the first case, that of his epistolary exchange with Nebridius, he will defend a conception close to the Neoplatonic theories of perception based on the superiority of the soul regarding the body. In the second case, known by scholars as 'the vision of God dossier', he proposes a hierarchical conception of the perceptive and intellectual functions of the human soul, still of Neoplatonic matrix, which he will make compatible with a creationist conception of man. From this perspective, the ontological category of relation takes priority in explaining man's dependence on God. This dependence, in the case of the knowledge of intelligible forms, leads to the formulation of Augustine's doctrine of illumination. Grasped in *De magistro*, confirmed in *De libero arbitrio*, and consolidated in *De trinitate*, this theory explains the origin of true knowledge. Augustine's paradigm of human perception of the intelligible according to which divine mind ultimately guarantees the truth of human knowledge, remained unquestionable in medieval theories of cognition. In the Scholastic period, authors of the Franciscan school adopted it unconditionally and it can be found, directly or indirectly, even in the theories of philosophers who closely followed the Aristotelian tradition, as is the case of Thomas Aquinas.

This volume publishes the papers presented at the *Theories of Vision* meeting.

Emmanuel Bermon focuses on the epistolary exchange between Nebridius and Augustine, particularly on *Letter 7*. In this letter, Augustine discusses with Nebridius the question whether it is possible to imagine objects that have never been seen. Bermon shows how Augustine is against the possibility, put forward by Nebridius, that imagination is an *a priori* faculty. As Bermon explains, in the reply to Nebridius in *Letter 7* we find one of Augustine's most extensive analyses of the nature of imagination and of its functions in the process of human cognition of the material world. In the wake of Plotinus, Augustine will argue that imagination is a faculty of receiving impressions. Its activity depends, therefore, on the type of impressions it receives – either seen, imagined, or thought. According to Augustine, therefore, imagination is not a self-induced faculty since its activity is totally dependent on the mechanisms of vision, fantasy, and reasoning.

Giovanni Catapano, in his article, analyses Augustine's *Letter 147* to Pauline, also known as the treatise *De videndo deo*. Catapano explains the genesis of this

treatise, integrating it into the wider debate which Augustine held at the time on the problem of the possibility of seeing God with the eyes of corporeal body. Focusing mainly on the distinction between seeing and believing, Catapano shows the heuristic function of this distinction in the main argument of the treatise - the impossibility of seeing God with the eyes of the body and the exhortation to purity of spirit to reach Him.

Still on the subject of the vision of God, Paula Oliveira e Silva analyses Book XII of the *Literal Commentary on the Book of Genesis* aiming at showing the relevance of this text to the development and further consolidation of Augustine's position on the vision of God. Oliveira e Silva defends that, in the exegesis of 1 *Cor*, 12, 2-4, elaborated in Book XII Augustine finds the biblical argument that in *Sermo* 477 he mentioned as required to support the thesis according to which God will be seen with the eyes of the body. Oliveira e Silva shows that in the same Book XII Augustine also identifies a philosophical premise to argue for the participation of corporeal body in the vision of God. She therefore states that in Book XII Augustine overcomes the epistemological obstacles mentioned in *Sermo* 477 to argue for the participation of the body in the vision of God *in patria* and concludes that Book XII of *De genesi ad litteram* constitutes an important turning point in Augustine's establishment of his final doctrine on this matter.

Lydia Schumacher analyses some aspects of the nature of the human soul as stated in the works of philosophers and theologians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and shows how the ancient theories, either of Aristotelian matrix or of Augustinian affiliation, were transformed by the Arabic interpretations of Aristotle. Schumacher highlights the importance of Avicenna's *De anima* in this process of transformation, and the influence of this work on the 12th-13th century doctrines on human cognition. As Schumacher shows, especially in the case of authors of the early Franciscan school, there is a confluence of both Avicennian and Augustinian interpretations on the faculties of the soul and their function in the cognitive process, which decisively shaped the interpretation of the Franciscan tradition on these questions.

Georgina Rabassó, in turn, focuses her analysis on figurative representations, abundant in the work of Hildegard of Bingen and, in particular, in the *Liber diuinorum operum*. Rabassó shows how the visual representations of time and eternity, present in the works of Hildegard's, are in line with Augustine of Hippo's statements about time that can be found especially in the paradigmatic Book XI of the *Confessions*. According to Rabassó, Hildegard makes use of geometric resources - lines, circles, polygons, and other figures - to didactically illustrate the

relationship between time and eternity, categories that express in a particular way the attributes of God and the created world, the difference but yet the communion between creator and creatures.

Finally, still on the influence of Augustine's theories of vision, Yael Barash analyses what she considers a paradox common to both Augustine of Hippo and Hildegard of Bingen. This paradox consists in the fact that on the one hand they both value the nature of the material world as the work of God and as a way for human beings to grasp His nature whereas, on the other hand, they both state that sensitive knowledge is limited concerning human cognition of God's nature. To Yael, the Eucharistic phenomenon, specific to Christian belief, manifests this paradox to an utmost level. Yael thus analyzes this paradox by focusing on Hildegard's vision of Eucharist as described in *Scivias*.

The international meeting *Theories of Vision: Augustine of Hippo and the Augustinian Tradition*, whose results are published here, was organized by the thematic line Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy (Gabinete de Filosofia Medieval) of the Instituto de Filosofia da Universidade do Porto in the context of the research project *From Data to Wisdom. Philosophizing Data Visualizations in the Middle Ages and Early Modernity (13th-17th Century)*, funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (Ref. POCI-01-0145-FEDER-029717 — PI José Higuera Rubio — coPI José Meirinhos). The project's main goal is the treatment of image diagrams that were used to promote the transmission of knowledge in the context of the teaching of the *trivium* and *quadrivium* arts during the Middle Ages. Among the objectives of the project is the study of cognitive processes related to imagination, in which human cognition of the material world, either empirical or scientific, underlies. The articles gathered in this volume analyze some features of cognitive processes present in works of Augustine of Hippo and developed during the Middle Ages. These processes underpin the models of figurative representation of God and the world, produced for the teaching of arts and sciences in the medieval institutions of learning. The results of research published here aim to clarify the theoretical foundations of the visual representations of the world, visible and invisible, and thus constitute a contribution to the research work carried out within the project *From Data to Wisdom*.

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**Comment pouvons-nous imaginer des choses que nous
n'avons jamais vues ?
À propos de la lettre 7 d'Augustin à Nebridius**

Résumé

Dans la *Lettre 6* du corpus augustinien, Nebridius avait demandé à Augustin si les images de l'imagination ne sont pas *a priori*, ce qui expliquerait notre faculté d'imaginer des choses que nous n'avons jamais vues. Dans sa réponse, qui constitue l'un de ses développements les plus approfondis sur l'imagination, Augustin montre que les représentations de l'imagination sont fondamentalement dépendantes des sens et, de façon significative, il définit comme Plotin avant lui l'image comme un « coup » (*plaga*) reçu des sens. Dans ces conditions, comment comprendre qu'il nous arrive d'imaginer des choses que nous n'avons jamais perçues ? Pour répondre à ce problème, Augustin établit une tripartition des images, selon qu'elles sont « imprimées » à partir de choses qui ont été senties (*sensis rebus*), de choses que l'on s'est figurées (*putatis*) ou de choses que l'on a calculées (*ratis*). Dans le premier cas, nous nous souvenons de nos perceptions. La formation des deux autres types d'images s'explique quant à elle par la recomposition de souvenirs, suivant un processus qui est rapidement présenté. Cet article aborde trois points difficiles : (1) la démonstration par l'absurde de la dépendance fondamentale de l'imagination par rapport à la vision (§3) ; (2) la classification des différents genres d'images et plus particulièrement la nature des images du troisième genre ; (3) l'argument final qui est dirigé contre l'idée selon laquelle l'âme contiendrait des images *a priori* et qui fait intervenir, semble-t-il, l'âme du monde (§7).

Mots-clés : Imagination, réminiscence, phantasia, phantasma, âme du monde.

Auteurs anciens et médiévaux étudiés : Augustin, Nebridius, Aristote, Plotin, Porphyre.

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How can we imagine things that we have never seen? About Augustine's Letter 7 to Nebridius

Abstract

In *Letter 6* of the Augustinian corpus, Nebridius asked Augustine if the images of the imagination are not *a priori*, which would explain our ability to imagine things that we have never seen. In his answer, which is one of his most comprehensive analyses of the imagination, Augustine shows that our imaginative impressions are fundamentally dependent on the senses, and significantly, he defines – as Plotinus before him – the image as a «blow» (*plaga*) received from the senses. Under these conditions, how can we account for the fact that we sometimes imagine things that we have never perceived? To solve this problem, Augustine establishes a tripartition of the images, according to whether they are «impressed» by things we sense (*sensis rebus*), things we fancy (*putatis*), or things we reason (*ratis*). In the first case, we remember our perceptions. The formation of the other two types of images can be explained by the reconfiguration of memories, according to a process which is quickly presented. This article addresses three difficult points: (1) the demonstration by a *reductio ad absurdum* of the fundamental dependence of imagination on vision (§3); (2) the classification of the different kinds of images and more particularly the nature of the images of the third kind; (3) the final argument against the existence of *a priori* images, which apparently involves the soul of the world (§7).

Keywords: Imagination, reminiscence, phantasia, phantasma, world-soul.

Ancient and Medieval Studied Authors: Augustine, Nebridius, Aristotle, Plotinus, Porphyry.

Dans la *Lettre 6* du corpus augustinien, Nebridius avait posé à Augustin deux questions précises à propos de l'imagination et de ses représentations (*phantasiae*). Il lui demandait tout d'abord si la mémoire peut se passer d'images. Ensuite, suivant peut-être une suggestion venue de Porphyre¹, il formulait cette étrange question :

Pourquoi, je te le demande, ne disons-nous pas que la *phantasia* tient toutes ses images d'elle-même plutôt que de la sensation ? Car il se pourrait que, de même que notre âme intellectuelle est avertie par la sensation de voir des intelligibles qui lui appartiennent plutôt qu'elle ne les reçoit, de même l'âme imaginative soit avertie par la sensation de contempler des images qui lui appartiennent, plutôt que d'acquérir quelque chose. Car c'est peut-être de là que vient le fait que ce que la sensation ne voit pas, l'âme imaginative peut pourtant l'observer, ce qui est le signe qu'elle a en elle-même et qu'elle tient d'elle-même toutes ses images (*Ep.* 6, 2)².

¹ Cfr. E. Bermon, « Note complémentaire » : « Lettre 6 », in Saint Augustin, *Lettres 1-30/Epistulae I-XXX*, traductions, introductions et notes de S. Lancel et collaborateurs, introduction et notes des Lettres 1-14 par E. Bermon, IEA, « La Bibliothèque Augustinienne », vol. 40A, Paris 2011, p. 549.

² « Cur, quaeso te, non a se potius quam a sensu phantasia habere omnes imagines dicimus ? Potest enim, quem ad modum noster animus intellectualis ad intellegibilia sua uidenda a sensu admonetur potius quam aliquid accipit, ita et phantasticus animus ad imagines suas contemplan-

Bref, à l'instar de l'intellection, l'imagination serait une forme de réminiscence, les sensations ne jouant que le rôle d'un rappel (une « commemoratio », dira Augustin en *Ep.* 7, 3), qui avertirait l'« animus phantasticus » de contempler des images *a priori* qu'il trouve en lui-même. Ainsi s'expliquerait le fait que nous puissions imaginer des choses que nous n'avons jamais vues, puisque dans cette hypothèse leurs images sont déjà en nous.

Dans la *Lettre 7*, qui constitue l'un de ses développements les plus approfondis sur l'imagination³, Augustin analyse de façon très détaillée les rapports qui existent entre la vision, l'imagination et l'intelligence. En ce qui concerne la seconde question de Nebridius – qui seule retiendra notre attention –, il *démontre*, dans un premier temps, que les représentations de l'imagination sont fondamentalement dépendantes des sens et, de façon significative, il définit, comme Plotin avant lui, l'image comme un « coup » (*plaga*) reçu des sens. Si toutefois il est prouvé que toutes nos images sont *a posteriori*, c'est-à-dire qu'elles dérivent de ce que nous avons vu, comment comprendre que nous ayons, comme l'a dit Nebridius, la faculté d'imaginer des choses que nous n'avons jamais vues ? Pour résoudre ce problème, Augustin établit, dans un deuxième temps, une classification de toutes les images. Cette classification oppose d'une part les souvenirs de ce que nous avons vu et d'autre part les différents types de représentations *purement imaginaires* (c'est-à-dire les représentations de choses qui n'existent pas). Dans un troisième temps, Augustin rend compte de la formation de ces représentations purement imaginaires en expliquant qu'elle consiste en une recombinaison de souvenirs que nous avons gardés de choses déjà vues, suivant un processus qui est rapidement présenté.

Outre la question, déjà évoquée, des relations entre les trois facultés de la vision, de l'imagination et de l'intelligence, j'aborderai dans l'explication de cette lettre trois points difficiles : (1) la démonstration, au §3, de la dépendance fondamentale de l'imagination par rapport à la vision ; (2) la classification des différents genres d'images et plus particulièrement la nature des images du troisième genre ; (3) un dernier argument, à la fin de notre lettre, dirigé contre l'idée selon laquelle l'âme posséderait des images *a priori*.

das a sensu admoneri potius quam aliquid adsumere. Nam forte inde contingit ut ea, quae sensus non uidet, ille tamen aspicere possit ; quod signum est in se et a se habere omnes imagines ».

³ Sur l'imagination chez Augustin, voir la synthèse de G. O'Daly dans *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, Duckworth, London 1987, pp. 106-130.

1. Les images dérivent des sensations (§3)

1.1. L'imagination n'est pas antérieure à la sensation

Augustin récuse fermement l'hypothèse de Nebridius selon laquelle l'imagination serait une faculté *a priori*. Il formule un raisonnement par l'absurde, qui se fonde sur une comparaison des degrés de fausseté auxquels sont respectivement sujets les sens et l'imagination :

Si, avant d'user du corps pour sentir les corps, l'âme peut imaginer ces mêmes corps et si – ce dont personne de sain d'esprit ne doutera – la façon dont elle était affectée avant d'avoir affaire à ces sens trompeurs était préférable, alors la façon dont sont affectées les âmes de ceux qui dorment est préférable à la façon dont sont affectées les âmes de ceux qui veillent et celle dont sont affectées les âmes des frénétiques est préférable à celle dont sont affectées les âmes de ceux qui sont exempts d'un tel mal, car ces âmes sont affectées par des images, qui les ont affectées avant ces sens qui sont des messagers très vains ; et soit le soleil qu'elles voient est plus vrai que celui que voient les personnes en bonne santé et celles qui veillent, soit des représentations fausses seront préférables à des représentations vraies⁴.

L'argument n'est pas évident. Si je le comprends bien, il repose sur l'implication suivante : si les *phantasiae* sont *a priori* (c'est-à-dire qu'elles précèdent l'expérience au lieu d'en dériver), alors elles sont meilleures que les sensations, qui sont trompeuses en ce sens du moins qu'elles sont « non-compréhensives » (ou vraisemblables seulement), selon une thèse fondamentale qu'Augustin a soutenue tout au long de sa carrière⁵. Or, quand nous rêvons ou que nous sommes hallucinés, nos *phantasiae* sont assurément moins bonnes que nos sensations, parce qu'elles sont purement illusoire. On conclut par voie de contraposition que nos *phantasiae* ne sont pas *a priori*. Elles dérivent au contraire de nos sens, qui « frappent » de l'extérieur notre imagination, comme l'établit la suite du texte.

On peut formuler deux remarques pour mettre en évidence la cohérence du raisonnement d'Augustin. Premièrement, l'affirmation selon laquelle les âmes de ceux qui rêvent ou qui sont victimes d'hallucination « sont affectées par des

⁴ *Ep.* 7, 2, 3 : « Si anima, priusquam corpore utatur ad corpora sentienda, eadem corpora imaginari potest et melius, quod nemo sanus ambigit, affecta erat antequam his fallacibus sensibus implicaretur, melius afficiuntur animae dormientium quam uigilantium, melius phreneticorum quam tali peste carentium ; his enim afficiuntur imaginibus quibus ante istos sensus uanissimos nuntios afficiebantur, et aut uerior erit sol quem uident illi quam ille quem sani atque uigilantes, aut erunt ueris falsa meliora ».

⁵ Dans le meilleur des cas, la sensation ne nous donne que des représentations qui sont *vraisemblables*, c'est-à-dire semblables au vrai (cfr. *Ep.* 13, 3).

images, qui les ont affectées *avant* ces sens qui sont des messagers très vains » est une prémisse qui exprime la pensée de Nebridius et non pas celle d'Augustin, puisque celui-ci entend montrer que *toutes les images* sont *a posteriori*. Deuxièmement, il est vrai qu'il vaut mieux, pour l'âme, ne pas être affectée par les sens ; cependant cet état préférable à la sensation ne correspond pas à celui où l'on imagine, mais à l'*apathie*⁶, car imaginer (au moins dans le cas du rêve et de l'hallucination) est pire que sentir.

1.2. La *phantasia* comme « coup »

Augustin peut conclure :

Si toutefois cela est absurde, comme c'est bien le cas, l'imagination n'est rien d'autre, mon cher Nebridius, qu'un coup infligé par les sens (*plaga inflictata per sensus*), en vertu desquels il se produit, non pas, comme tu l'écris, un rappel grâce auquel de telles images se formeraient dans l'âme, mais l'introduction (*inlatio*) même de cette fausseté ou, pour le dire plus exactement, son impression⁷.

Augustin se souvient ici d'une « définition » plotinienne : « L'imagination est un coup donné de l'extérieur à la partie irrationnelle <de l'âme> » (φαντασία δὲ πλιγγή ἀλόγου ἔξοθεν) (*Enn.* I, 8 [51], 15, 18)⁸. En connotant l'idée de violence faite à l'âme par le sensible⁹, le terme de « plaga » exprime ici de façon dramatique l'idée ancienne selon laquelle la *phantasia* provient d'une *tupôsis*, c'est-à-dire de l'« impression » dans l'âme de la forme de l'objet qui affecte le sens (cfr. par ex. *De Trin.* XI, 1, 1 sq.) – par quoi elle ne saurait aucunement précéder la sensation. Une telle définition est métaphorique, bien sûr : elle doit être contreba-

⁶ Cette thèse s'accorde avec l'analyse de la perception présentée en *De mus.* VI, 4, 7-5, 10 et critiquée en *Retract.* I, 11, 2. Sur ces textes, cfr. E. Bermon, *Le Cogito dans la pensée de saint Augustin*, Vrin, Paris 2001, pp. 264-270 (« La sensation et la santé »).

⁷ *Ep.* 7, 2, 3 : « Quae si absurda sunt, sicuti sunt, nihil est aliud illa imaginatio, mi Nebridi, quam plaga inflictata per sensus, quibus non, ut tu scribis, commemoratio quaedam fit ut talia formentur in anima, sed ipsa huius falsitatis inlatio siue, ut expressius dicatur, impressio ».

⁸ À l'encontre des manuscrits et de l'*editio maior* de Henry-Schwyzler, Igal, Kalligas et la seconde édition de l'*editio minor* donnent πλιγγή. Le texte d'Augustin, qui a dû avoir accès à ce passage de Plotin ou à sa traduction en latin, me paraît infirmer la correction. Le terme de πλιγγή est repris par Porphyre. Cfr. *Ad Gaurum*, IV, 86-88 ; 102 sq., à propos de l'âme de l'embryon (qui est végétative) ; 8, 8, à propos de la matrice, conçue comme un animal.

⁹ L'âme se voit littéralement « infliger » la fausseté même des sensations : « inlatio » signifie le fait d'infliger des sévices, la mort par ex. (cfr. *Serm.* 280, 3). « Verberare » (frapper) est employé en *Ep.* 7, 5. Voir aussi *Ep.* 4, 2 ; *De ord.* I, 1, 3 ; *De uera relig.* 35, 65.

lancée par le postulat selon lequel l'âme est en elle-même *impassibile* par rapport à tout ce qui est corporel¹⁰. Ce postulat fondamental de la théorie augustinienne de la vision se lit par exemple dans le *De musica* :

Il est complètement absurde de soumettre de quelque façon que ce soit l'âme au corps, comme une matière soumise à un artisan. Car jamais l'âme n'est inférieure au corps, tandis que toute matière est inférieure à l'artisan. C'est pourquoi l'âme n'est en aucune façon assujettie au corps à la façon dont une matière est assujettie à l'artisan¹¹.

Il faut en conclure que, « lorsque, du fait de ces opérations qui sont les siennes, elle subit quelque chose, c'est de son propre fait qu'elle le subit, et non de celui du corps (*a seipsa patitur, non a corpore*) »¹².

En conclusion de ce premier temps de la réflexion d'Augustin, il est établi que toutes nos images dérivent de nos sens. Pourtant, ce résultat ne fait qu'aiguiser la « question » qui « trouble » Nebridius, à savoir « comment il se fait que nous pensons à des visages ou à des formes que nous n'avons jamais vus ».

2. Les trois espèces de *phantasiae* (§4)

Pour résoudre ce problème, Augustin établit une tripartition des images, selon la nature de leur objet intentionnel :

À ce que je vois, toutes ces images que tu appelles avec beaucoup de personnes des *phantasiae* peuvent être distinguées de façon très commode et très vraie en trois genres : l'un est imprimé à partir de choses qui ont été senties (*sensis*), l'autre à partir de choses que l'on s'est figuré (*putatis*), le troisième à partir de choses sur lesquelles on a raisonné (*ratis*)¹³.

¹⁰ Voir en particulier Porphyre, *Sent.* 18, «qui semble hésiter entre l'attribution et le refus de pâtir aux incorporels» (J. Pépin, in L. Brisson et al., *Porphyre, Sentences*, vol. 2, Vrin, Paris 2005, p. 479).

¹¹ *De mus.* VI, 5, 8. Comme l'écrit G. Verbeke : « L'organisme corporel, en effet, ne reçoit que des impressions externes, qui stimulent l'âme à se former une représentation du monde matériel au milieu duquel nous vivons : les impressions reçues du dehors ne sont donc pas la cause adéquate de ces images spirituelles, qui sont produites par l'âme elle-même, sous stimulation des impressions sensibles» (G. Verbeke, *L'Évolution de la doctrine du pneuma*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris – Louvain 1945, p. 502) . « Cette supériorité du *spiritus* vis-à-vis du monde matériel est encore plus évidente dans le cas où cette vision spirituelle se produit sans excitant extérieur » *ibid.*, p. 504.

¹² *De mus.* VI, 5, 12.

¹³ *Ep.* 7, 2, 4 : « Omnes has imagines, quas phantasias cum multis uocas, in tria genera commodis-

Augustin passe très rapidement sur le premier genre de *phantasiae*, c'est-à-dire sur les souvenirs, qui sont les *phantasiae* au sens strict dans son propre lexique¹⁴ : « On a des exemples du premier genre lorsque l'âme forme en elle ton visage, ou Carthage, ou notre ami de jadis, Verecundus, et tout ce qui fait partie des choses qui demeurent ou qui sont mortes et que j'ai cependant vues et perçues »¹⁵.

Les deux autres genres ont pour objets les images de choses que nous n'avons jamais vues.

2.1. Les fictions

Le second genre est si touffu qu'il constitue comme une « forêt » dans la « forêt » de toutes les *phantasiae* (cfr. §5)¹⁶ : c'est celui de ce qu'Augustin appelle habituellement les *phantasmata*. Il comprend d'abord « ce que nous nous figurons avoir été tel ou être tel, lorsque par exemple nous imaginons nous-mêmes certaines choses pour les besoins de l'argumentation, sans qu'elles ne fassent aucunement obstacle à la vérité »¹⁷. On peut l'illustrer en se référant au scéná-

sime ac uerissime distribui uideo, quorum est unum sensis rebus inpressum, alterum putatis, tertium ratis ». La tripartition est reprise par Kilwardby dans la Question 2 du *De spiritu fantastico*, §29-35 ; cfr. J. Lichacz, « Robert Kilwardby sur la perception sensitive et l'imagination (II) », *Studia antyczne i mediewistyczne* 11/46 (2013) 193-194.

- ¹⁴ Il est intéressant de remarquer d'un point de vue terminologique qu'Augustin s'adapte ici à la manière de parler de Nebridius. Sur le vocabulaire augustinien de l'imagination, cfr. O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, cit., pp. 106-107 (« Terminology : *phantasia* and *phantasma* ») ; J. Pépin, « Attitudes d'Augustin devant le vocabulaire philosophique grec. Citation, translittération, traduction », in *La Langue latine, langue de la philosophie*, École Française de Rome, Rome 1992, pp. 282-287 (« *Phantasia / Phantasma* ») ; J.-L. Solère, « Les images psychiques selon S. Augustin », in D. Lories – L. Rizzerio (éds.), *De la phantasia à l'imagination*, Peeters, Louvain 2003, pp. 103-136 ; C. Pietsch, « Imaginatio(nes) », *Augustinus-Lexikon*, 3, 504-507 ; I. Bochet, « Imago », *ibid.*, 507-519 ; E. Bermon, « *Phantasia, phantasma* », *Augustinus-Lexikon*, 4, 712-716.
- ¹⁵ Verecundus, grammairien dont Nebridius fut l'assistant, était le propriétaire du domaine de Cassiacum (cfr. *Conf.* VIII, 6, 13 ; IX, 3, 5).
- ¹⁶ L'image de la forêt vient sans doute de l'*Orateur* (92, 139), où Cicéron l'emploie au sujet des figures de la rhétorique. En *De ord.* II, 17, 45, Augustin se dit effrayé par la « forêt des problèmes » dans laquelle il doit se retrouver.
- ¹⁷ « ... illa quae putamus ita se habuisse uel ita se habere uel cum disserendi gratia quaedam ipsi fingimus nequaquam impediencia ueritatem ... ». On lit « uel cum disserendi gratia » dans Goldbacher et dans Daur ; « uelut ... » dans l'éd. bénédictine. « Vel » est ici un adverbe, semble-t-il, et non pas une particule de coordination.

rio imaginé dans le *De magistro* pour montrer à Adéodat que les conjonctions « si » et « parce que » n'ont pas la même signification :

Imagine que nous voyions quelque chose de trop loin, que nous ne soyons pas certains de savoir si c'est un animal ou une pierre ou quelque chose d'autre et que je te dise : " Parce que c'est un homme, c'est un animal " ; ne parlerais-je pas de façon inconsidérée ? (*De mag.* 5, 16).

En l'occurrence, il convient bien sûr de dire : « Si c'est un homme, c'est un animal »¹⁸.

Vient ensuite « ce qui est tel que ce que nous nous figurons à la lecture d'un récit historique (*historia*) ou lorsque (...) nous avons l'idée de certaines fictions » en littérature¹⁹. Ainsi, nous nous imaginons à notre guise le visage de saint Paul (cfr. *De Trin.* VIII, 4, 7), celui de Médée avec ses serpents ailés attelés à son char²⁰, ou encore celui de Chrémès et Parménon (deux personnages de l'*Eunuque* de Térence).

¹⁸ Cfr. E. Bermon, *La Signification et l'enseignement*, texte latin, traduction française et commentaire du *De magistro* de saint Augustin, Vrin, Paris 2007, pp. 200-203 (« " Si " et " parce que " ») ; pp. 292-295 (« La définition de la proposition »).

¹⁹ « ... qualia figuramus, cum legitur historia, et cum fabulosa uel audimus uel componimus uel suspicamur ». « Susplicari », que je traduis faute de mieux par « avoir l'idée de ... », a un sens technique. En *Conf.* III, 6, 10, Augustin dénonce en ces termes la vanité de la doctrine manichéenne : « C'était des représentations purement imaginaires de corps (*corporalia phantasmata*), de faux corps, par rapport auxquels les corps célestes ou terrestres que nous voyons de nos yeux de chair sont plus certains : avec les bêtes et les oiseaux, nous voyons ces corps et ils sont plus certains que lorsque nous les imaginons ; de même, nous imaginons ces corps avec plus de certitude que nous n'avons l'idée (*susplicamur*) à partir d'eux d'autres corps plus grands et infinis, qui n'existent absolument pas » (« Illa erant corporalia phantasmata, falsa corpora, quibus certiora sunt uera corpora ista, quae uidemus uisu carneo, siue caelestia siue terrestria : cum pecudibus et uolatibus uidemus haec, et certiora sunt, quam cum imaginamur ea. Et rursus certius imaginamur ea quam ex eis susplicamur alia grandiora et infinita, quae omnino nulla sunt »). Trois opérations de l'âme sont donc distinguées et ordonnées, selon que nous voyons des corps de nos yeux (*uidere*), que nous les « imaginons » (*imaginare*), c'est-à-dire ici que nous nous en souvenons, ou enfin que nous avons à partir d'eux l'idée (*susplicari*) de choses qui n'existent pas, comme en l'occurrence, dans le cas des Manichéens, des étendues infinies de lumière ou de ténèbres. On note cependant qu'en *Conf.* XII, 6, 6, « susplicari » est opposé à « nosse » avec un sens différent.

²⁰ C'est l'exemple par excellence de fiction chez Augustin. En *Conf.* III, 6, 11, même exemple du « vol de Médée », qu'Augustin déclamaient en vers. On le trouve déjà en *Sol.* II, 15, 29, citant le vers « Angues ingentes alites iunctos iugo », qui est sans doute de Pacuvius et qu'Augustin connaît par Cicéron, *De inu.* I, 27. Cicéron présente une tripartition très intéressante de la narration, que l'on peut rapprocher de notre passage de l'*Ep.* 7 du fait qu'elle traite aussi des fictions : « Ea quae in negotiorum expositione posita est tres habet partes : fabulam, historiam,

Le [second] genre inclut aussi », précise Augustin, tout ce qu'ont fait passer pour véritable soit des sages qui enveloppent de telles figures quelque chose de vrai soit des insensés (*stulti*) qui créent toutes sortes de fictions, comme par exemple le Phlégéon du Tartare, les cinq antres de la race des ténèbres, le pilier du nord qui soutient le ciel et mille autres affabulations des poètes et des hérétiques²¹.

À la différence des fictions littéraires précédemment mentionnées (comme Médée sur son char), qui se donnent comme de pures inventions auxquelles personne ne croit, les fictions de ce nouveau type sont présentées par leurs auteurs comme étant véritables.

S'agissant tout d'abord des « fictions des sages », Augustin pense peut-être aux mythes philosophiques, qui véhiculent un sens qui s'adresse à l'intelligence (à la différence par exemple du char ailé de Médée, qui n'en a pas). Un passage de la *Sentence* 18 – que Francis Bacon n'aurait pas désavoué – produit la théorie d'un tel procédé. Augustin écrit :

Les comparaisons (*similitudines*) sont aussi propices à l'intellection (*intellectu*) parce qu'elles sont présentées à l'âme selon le mouvement même que la nature exige. En effet, les âmes sont pour ainsi dire soustraites à ce dont il s'agit et elles y sont à nouveau ramenées ; elles y sont soustraites pour éviter la paresse ; elles y sont ramenées pour éviter l'erreur. C'est pourquoi les anciens sages ont jugé bon d'indiquer certaines choses à l'aide des images d'une fable afin que, lorsque l'attention se porte vers elles et qu'elle est ramenée vers ce que la fable signifie, l'esprit, par son propre mouvement, s'exerce tout en jouant» (*Sent.* 18, p. 159, 415-424).

Aux « fictions des sages », s'ajoutent donc les « affabulations des poètes », ou plus précisément de certains poètes, et « celles des hérétiques », comme le Phlégéon du Tartare, les cinq antres de la race des ténèbres (à savoir les ténèbres elles-mêmes, les eaux, les vents, le feu et la fumée, d'après *Cont. epist. fund.* 28,

argumentum. Fabula est, in qua nec uerae nec ueri similes res continentur, cuiusmodi est : “ Angues ingentes alites, iuncti iugo ... ”. Historia est gesta res, ab aetatis nostrae memoria remota ; quod genus : “ Appius indixit Carthaginensibus bellum ”. Argumentum est ficta res, quae tamen fieri potuit. Huiusmodi apud Terentium : “ Nam is postquam excessit ex epebis, [Sosia] ” ». Sur l'exemple de Médée, cf. G. Catapano, « Il volo di Medea e la voce della ragione. Metaletteratura e autoriflessività nei *Soliloquia* di Agostino », in J. Hernández Lobato & Ó. Prieto Domínguez (ed.), *Literature Squared: Self-Reflexivity in Late Antique Literature*, Brepols, Turnhout 2020, pp. 151-174.

²¹ *Ep.* 7, 2, 4: « In hoc genere sunt etiam illa quae siue sapientes aliquid ueri talibus inuolentes figuris siue stulti uariarum superstitionum conditores pro uero adtulerunt, ut est tartareus Phlegethon et quinque antra gentis tenebrarum et stilus septentrionalis continens caelum et alia poeta- rum atque haereticorum mille portenta ».

31), le « pivot du nord » qui maintient le ciel (*stilus septentrionalis continens mundum*)²², etc.

Un texte parallèle des *Confessions*, qui présente pour ainsi dire la version augustinienne de la « Caverne » de Platon, explique quelle différence cruciale il existe entre les fictions littéraires précédemment mentionnées et de telles « afabulations ». Augustin rappelle combien les « splendida phantasmata » qui lui furent « servis » par les Manichéens, alors qu'il avait faim de la vérité, étaient plus nocifs que ceux des poètes :

²² L'allusion n'est pas claire. « Stilus » signifie « tout objet en forme de tige pointu » (Gaffiot) et en particulier le stylet (et à partir de là le style et l'œuvre), le pivot ou la cheville, le gnomon (cfr. *In Somn. Scip.* II, 7, 15), etc. On ne voit pas bien à quoi Augustin se réfère ici. Dans la représentation archaïque de l'univers, une colonne sépare le ciel et la terre (cfr. *Od.* I, 53). Chez Eschyle, Prométhée évoque son frère Atlas, qui soutient de ses épaules la colonne (κίον) du ciel et de la terre. Celui-ci est cependant situé dans la région du couchant (πρὸς ἑσπέρους) (*i.e.* l'Italie) et on pas au nord (*Prom.*, 348-349). Cette « colonne » est réutilisée par Platon dans le mythe d'Er, qui l'intègre à un univers désormais sphérique. Les âmes arrivent dans un lieu « d'où l'on voyait une lumière qui s'étend (τεταμένον) directement d'en haut à travers le ciel et la terre, comme une colonne, et qui est tout à fait semblable à un arc-en-ciel, tout en étant plus brillante et plus pure » (*Rép.* 616b). Arrivées « au milieu de cette lumière », les âmes « virent les extrémités des liens qui la rattachaient au ciel, car cette lumière était le lien du ciel, maintenant ensemble (συνέχον) toute sa révolution comme le font les cerclages des trières » (616b-c) (sur ce passage, cfr. S. Halliwell, *Plato : Republic 10*, Aris & Phillips, Warminster 1988, pp. 177-79). Comparer avec *Tim.* 40b, qui présente la terre « pressée autour de l'axe (πόλος) qui est étendu (τεταμένον) à travers le Monde ». Cette cosmographie se retrouve sous une forme épurée de tout élément mythique dans le *Περὶ κόσμου* du Pseudo-Aristote : « Le Ciel tout entier et le Monde étant de forme sphérique, et se mouvant, ainsi que je l'ai dit, continuellement, il y a nécessairement deux points qui sont immobiles, situés à l'opposé l'un de l'autre, comme dans le cas du mouvement de rotation imprimé à la roue d'un tour : points qui restent fixes et retiennent la sphère (συνέχοντα τὴν σφαῖραν), et autour desquels la masse entière du Ciel tourne en cercle. Ces points sont appelés pôles. Si nous imaginons (νοήσομεν) une ligne droite passant par ces pôles et les joignant l'un à l'autre (l'axe, comme on la nomme parfois), on aura le diamètre du Monde, avec la Terre pour centre et les deux pôles pour extrémités. De ces pôles immobiles, l'un est toujours visible, étant le sommet de l'axe dans la région septentrionale du Ciel, et il est appelé pôle arctique ; l'autre est toujours caché au-dessous de la Terre dans la région méridionale, et il est appelé pôle antarctique » (391b 19-392a5, tr. J. Tricot). Dans cette doctrine, qui est reprise dans *De mundo* d'Apulée (I, 290), il est cette fois question de deux pôles, nord et sud, qui « maintiennent » (συνέχοντα) le monde. Les versions latines du *De mundo* emploient « contineo », le même verbe qu'utilise Augustin dans notre passage (cfr. W.L. Lorimer, *The Text Tradition of Pseudo-Aristotle 'De Mundo'*, Oxford University Press, London 1924, pp. 44-45). On évitera toutefois de traduire ici « stilus septentrionalis » par « pôle nord » (*pace* R. Teske, *The Works of Saint Augustine, Letters* 1-99, Hyde Park, New City Press, New York 2001, p. 28) (même si c'est bien de lui qu'il s'agit en un sens). En effet, au regard d'Augustin, ce « stilus » est la fiction d'un poète insensé et non pas une réalité astronomique indéniable. Il doit donc viser une représentation « mythique » du pôle nord sous la forme d'une sorte de pivot mécanique.

J'errais, loin de toi, privé même des gousses dont je nourrissais les pores ; car combien les fables des grammairiens et des poètes valaient mieux que ces pièges ! En effet, les vers et la poésie et Médée qui s'envole sont assurément plus utiles que les cinq éléments simulant diversement les cinq antres des ténèbres qui sont un pur néant et qui tuent celui qui y croit. Les vers et la poésie, je les transforme en une vraie nourriture ; que Médée s'envole, j'avais beau le déclamer, je ne l'attestais pas (*non asserebam*) ; j'avais beau l'entendre déclamer, je n'y croyais pas. Mais ces choses-là [qu'affirmaient les Manichéens], j'y ai cru. Malheur, malheur ! Par quels degrés ai-je été entraîné aux profondeurs de l'enfer, souffrant et fiévreux, faute de vérité ... (*Conf.* III, 6, 10).

Augustin se présente ici comme un « fils prodigue » qui nourrissait les autres de « doctrines séculières » comme de « gousses »²³, sans s'en nourrir lui-même puisqu'il leur préférerait les *phantasmata* des Manichéens. Les fictions littéraires, auxquelles il ne croyait pas, étaient pourtant plus nourrissantes, dans la mesure où elles font partie de la grammaire et que la pratique des arts libéraux est bénéfique pour l'esprit (cfr. *De ord.* I, 8, 24).

Vient enfin la dernière espèce du second genre d'images : « Nous disons également au milieu d'une discussion : " Suppose (*puta*) qu'il y ait trois mondes semblables à ce monde unique, empilés les uns sur les autres " et " Suppose que la terre soit contenue dans les limites d'un cube " et d'autres choses du même type »²⁴. Cette espèce recouvre apparemment ce que la rhétorique ancienne appelait les *adynata*. Aucun exemple de « discussion » ne nous est malheureusement donné. Peut-être peut-on se référer au passage du *Contra academicos* où Augustin allègue l'argument suivant pour montrer que les propositions logiques sont nécessairement vraies, à la différence des perceptions sensibles : « Que, s'il y a un monde et six mondes, il y ait sept mondes, quelle que soit la façon dont je suis affecté, cela est manifeste, et ce n'est pas manquer de prudence que d'affirmer que je le sais » (*Cont. Acad.* III, 11, 25). Dans cet argument, l'*image* que l'on peut avoir de six mondes (quelle que soit la manière dont on les dispose spatialement) doit être du même type que celle de trois mondes l'un sur l'autre.

Ou peut-être Augustin pense-t-il déjà à une « discussion » exégétique qui porterait sur la nature du « troisième ciel » auquel saint Paul dit avoir été ravi (2

²³ Cfr. *Quaest. euang.* II, 33, 1 : « siliquae quibus porcos pascebat, saeculares doctrinae, sterili uanitate resonantes » (cité par J. O'Donnell, *Augustine : Confessions*, vol. II, The Clarendon Press, Oxford 1992, p. 182).

²⁴ *Ep.* 7, 2, 4 : « Dicimus etiam inter disputandum : " Puta esse tres super inuicem mundos, qualis hic unus est " et : " Puta quadrata figura terram contineri " et similia ». Augustin introduit ses deux exemples par « *puta* », le verbe qui donne son nom au deuxième genre de *phantasiae* (« *putatis rebus inpressum* »).

Cor. 12, 2-4) ? Au livre XII du *De genesi ad litteram*, Augustin formule (avant de l'exclure) l'hypothèse selon laquelle la vision de Paul fut « spirituelle », c'est-à-dire imaginaire :

S'il s'est produit une image à la ressemblance des choses corporelles, ce ciel n'était pas le troisième ciel, mais cette manifestation (*ostensio*) s'est déroulée de façon telle que Paul eut l'impression de monter à un premier ciel, au-dessus duquel il en vit un autre, puis que, montant à nouveau jusqu'à lui, il en vit encore un troisième au-dessus, et que, parvenu là, il put dire qu'il avait été ravi au troisième ciel²⁵.

2.2. Les images des choses sur lesquelles on raisonne

Restent finalement (comme annoncé) les représentations imaginaires « imprimées » à partir de « choses sur lesquelles on a raisonné » (*ratis*). En considérant comme une espèce distincte les images par lesquelles nous nous représentons ce que nous comprenons, Augustin s'inscrit dans le prolongement d'Aristote, qui établissait une différence entre la *φαντασία αισθητική*, qui appartient à tous les animaux, et la *φαντασία λογιστική*, propre à l'homme (*DA* III, 10, 433b29). En effet, « la *phantasia* est produite soit par l'intellection soit par la sensation » (*MA*, 8, 702a 18-19). D'après le *De Memoria*, quand le géomètre pense à un triangle, il « se met sous les yeux » un triangle déterminé (1, 450a5)²⁶. Par conséquent, « il existe une forme supérieure de *φαντασία* qui implique ou au moins qui est liée à la pensée »²⁷. À la suite d'Aristote, Plotin affirme que la *phantasia* est double : l'inférieure retient les images de la perception sensible et la supérieure reflète l'intelligible (cfr. IV, 3 [27], 28-32)²⁸. On peut donc penser que les *phantasiae*

²⁵ *De gen. ad litt.* III, 8. Voir dans ce volume l'article de Paula Oliveira e Silva sur ce thème.

²⁶ Dans le *De anima*, l'imagination rationnelle est encore appelée *βουλευτική* (*DA* III, 11, 434a5-8) en tant qu'elle intervient dans le syllogisme pratique. Elle est différente de l'*αισθητική*, car faire ou non quelque chose est le fait de la réflexion. Il faut peser le pour et le contre avec la même balance et choisir le meilleur, ce qui implique de combiner différentes images. Ce type de représentation n'est pas mentionné dans l'*Ep.* 7, mais il en est question en *Conf.* X, 8, 14 : « “Faciam hoc et illud” dico apud me in ipso ingenti sinu animi mei pleno tot et tantarum rerum imaginibus, et hoc aut illud sequitur ».

²⁷ D. Ross, *Aristotle De anima*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1961, p. 317.

²⁸ Sur cette distinction, cfr. G. Watson, *Phantasia in Classical Thought*, Galway University Press, Galway 1988, pp. 101-102 ; H. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology. His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1971, pp. 85-91 ; J. Dillon, « Plotinus and the Transcendental Imagination », in J.P. Mackey (éd.), *Religious imagination*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1986, pp. 55-64 : pp. 55-6. Sur sa postérité, cfr. R. Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators. A Sourcebook*, Duckworth, London 2004, vol. 1, pp. 63-65 (« 2(b) Higher *phantasia* of intelligibles »). On lit notamment dans un passage du commentaire au *De anima*

imprimées « à partir des choses sur lesquelles on raisonne » correspondent, chez Augustin, aux images de la *phantasia logistikè* d'Aristote ou de la *phantasia* supérieure de Plotin.

Pourtant, Augustin est loin de considérer que les images du troisième genre soient supérieures aux autres, parce qu'il leur fait jouer un rôle dans l'intellection qui est très différent de celui qu'Aristote et Plotin leur attribuent. Il déclare en effet :

Maintenant, s'agissant des choses qui concernent le troisième genre d'images, on en traite surtout par les nombres et les dimensions ; et cela pour une part dans la nature, lorsqu'on trouve la forme du monde tout entier et qu'une image s'ensuit de cette découverte dans l'esprit de celui qui pense, et pour l'autre part dans les disciplines libérales, comme par exemple dans les figures géométriques et les rythmes musicaux et l'infinie diversité des nombres. Ces choses ont beau être appréhendées en toute vérité comme je l'affirme quant à moi, elles font pourtant naître de fausses images, auxquelles la raison elle-même s'oppose difficilement, même si ce n'est pas sans peine que l'art du raisonnement s'exempte lui-même de ce mal lorsque, dans les divisions et les conclusions, nous imaginons comme des jetons ²⁹.

Il existe donc un double usage, appliqué ou théorique, des nombres et des dimensions, suivant que l'on fait de la physique ou bien que l'on pratique les arts libéraux. Dans le premier cas, on a affaire à des nombres et à des dimensions qui sont ceux de quelque chose de corporel (par exemple la sphère de l'univers) ; dans le second, à des nombres et à des dimensions tels qu'ils existent *a priori* dans la mémoire (comme la sphère en géométrie)³⁰. Dans les deux cas, cependant – et

attribué à Simplicius : « Même si l'imagination s'empreint de toutes nos activités rationnelles, comme le veut Jamblique, elle produit néanmoins des images des formes qui ont une figure et des parties à la façon des choses sensibles » (*In de anim.* 214, 18-20) (sur ce texte, cfr. A. Sheppard, « *Phantasia* and Mathematical Projection », *Syllecta Classica* 8 (1997) 118).

²⁹ *Ep.* 7, 2, 4 : « Nam de rebus quod ad tertium genus adinet imaginum, numeris maxime atque dimensionibus agitur, quod partim est in rerum natura, cum totius mundi figura inuenitur et hanc inuentionem in animo cogitantis imago sequitur, partim in disciplinis tamquam in figuris geometricis et rhythmicis musicis et infinita uarietate numerorum. Quae quamuis uera, sic ut ego autumo, comprehendantur, gignunt tamen 10 falsas imaginationes, quibus ipsa ratio uix resistit, tametsi nec ipsam disciplinam disserendi carere hoc malo facile est, cum in diuisionibus et conclusionibus quosdam quasi calculos imaginamur ». La précision sur les « jetons » n'est pas claire. R. Teske écrit : « Des cailloux étaient utilisés comme des jetons sur un tableau de comptage comme un moyen de calcul, un peu de la même manière que les perles sont utilisées sur un boulier » (R. Teske, *The Works of Saint Augustine...*, cit., p. 28, n. 7). Cependant, il s'agit en l'occurrence d'opérations logiques (division et conclusion) et non pas arithmétiques.

³⁰ Cfr. *Conf.* X, 12, 19, qui établit l'opposition entre les nombres nombrants et les nombres nombrés mais donne peu d'indication sur les dimensions intelligibles. Augustin se contente de préciser

c'est le point essentiel –, lorsqu'il comprend, l'esprit génère des images trompeuses de ces réalités.

S'agissant du physicien, Augustin admet qu'il lui soit possible de déterminer la forme – sphérique – de l'univers (sans toutefois apporter de précision sur le procédé utilisé). Cette forme, qui est réellement celle du monde, ne se laisse pourtant pas imaginer de façon adéquate. Car en imaginant la sphère du monde, nous pourrions penser par exemple qu'il est possible d'empiler ce monde sur deux autres mondes, selon la vue de l'imagination mentionnée dans la seconde catégorie d'images.

Ceux qui pratiquent les arts libéraux ont également affaire à des réalités qui sont unimaginables (en tant qu'elles sont pures) et qu'ils ne peuvent pourtant pas s'empêcher d'imaginer. La fin des *Soliloques* précise la nature de ce phénomène. Elle met en évidence « la différence entre la véritable figure (*uera figura*), qui est contenue dans l'intelligence, et la figure telle que la pensée se la représente (*eam quam sibi fingit cogitatio*) et qu'on appelle en grec ou *phantasia* ou *phantasma* » (*Sol.* II, 20, 34). Cette différence tend à être ignorée par ceux-là mêmes qui pratiquent les arts libéraux car

à partir de ces arts, des couleurs et des formes qui sont fausses se diffusent pour ainsi dire sur le miroir de la pensée (*se fundunt uelut in speculum cogitationis*), et elles trompent souvent les chercheurs, qui s'égarent en pensant que c'est là tout ce qu'ils connaissent et cherchent³¹.

Par exemple, dit la Raison dans un passage qui fait lointainement écho au texte du *De memoria* sur la « pensée-géomètre », la pensée se « met en quelque sorte sous les yeux » (*quasi ante oculos praefert*) un carré de telle ou telle grandeur, mais « l'esprit intérieur » (*mens interior*)³² « se tourne » quant à lui vers « ce par quoi il juge que tous sont des carrés » (*Sol.* II, 20, 35). Et pour bien montrer que cette « règle » de jugement ne vient pas des sens, la Raison déclare que notre imagination est incapable de percevoir qu'une sphère n'est tangente qu'en un seul point à un plan ou que, dans un cercle de la taille d'une tête d'épingle, on

qu'il a vu des lignes tracées par des artisans qui étaient aussi fines que des fils d'araignée mais que les lignes de la mémoire sont autres. Sur les figures intelligibles chez Plotin, cfr. *Enn.* VI, 6 [34], 17, 25 : les figures primordiales existent là-haut ἀσχημάτιστα (selon *Phèdre*, 247c). Cfr. aussi *Rép.* VII, 529d3.

³¹ *Sol.* II, 20, 35. Sur ce texte, cfr. D. Doucet, « *Speculum cogitationis* : *Sol.* II, 20, 35 », *Revue de Philosophie ancienne* 10, 2 (1992) 221-245.

³² Littéralement, « l'esprit qui est plus intérieur » (sous-entendu : que l'imagination) (« interior » est un comparatif en latin).

puisse mener un nombre innombrable de lignes qui concourent en son centre sans se confondre. C'est pourquoi « il faut écarter avec grand soin les imaginations » (*Sol.* II, 20, 35).

On perçoit ici la radicalité de la conception augustinienne de l'intelligence. Augustin ne dit même pas ici que le mathématicien s'aide de figures, qui fournissent un soubassement à ses opérations (cfr. *Rép.* VI, 510c ; Plotin, *Enn.* III, 8 [30], 4, 8)³³. L'intellection s'accomplit plutôt *en dépit* des images qu'elle génère. Augustin affirme ainsi son originalité au sein du néoplatonisme. Il se démarque de Plotin, ainsi que de Porphyre, qui avaient tout deux admis le principe aristotélicien selon lequel, chez l'homme, l'intellection nécessite la *phantasia*³⁴. Plus haut dans notre lettre, il a affirmé que, pour venir à mon esprit, l'idée d'éternité, par exemple, n'a pas besoin d'emprunter de représentations imaginaires comme si elles étaient des véhicules (*quasi uehiculis*) (§2). L'esprit *humain* comprend donc immédiatement, sans l'intervention d'aucune image, même si, encore une fois, il ne peut pas ne pas imaginer (inadéquatement) ce qu'il comprend. En minimisant ainsi la portée de la thèse d'Aristote selon laquelle l'âme ne pense jamais sans image, Augustin est sans doute plus proche de Platon que les Néoplatoniciens. Il reprend l'affirmation que la νόησις abandonne à la pensée discursive l'emploi des images et s'en tient aux formes mêmes (*Rép.* VI, 510b)³⁵.

³³ Un rôle plus positif est cependant concédé au sensible en *Sol.* I, 4, 9, où il est dit que les sens « peuvent dans une certaine mesure aider les novices ».

³⁴ Comme l'écrit Ch. Tornau, lorsque Plotin déclare : « Nous-mêmes et ce qui est nôtre remontons en effet vers l'être, et nous nous élevons vers lui et son premier rejeton, et nous intelligeons les intelligibles sans le secours d'images ni d'empreintes d'eux » (VI, 5 [23], 7, 1-8, trad. R. Dufour modifiée), « Plotin utilise le terme subjectif de “ nous ” pour la partie non descendue de l'âme, dont il thématise l'identité avec l'Intellect. Il n'y a là aucune contradiction avec d'autres passages dans lesquels le “ nous ” est situé au niveau de la pensée discursive (I, 1 [53], 7, 16 sq. : “ les raisonnements, les opinions et les actes intellectuels ; et c'est là précisément que nous sommes surtout ”) ou même ceux dans lesquels il affirme explicitement que nous ne sommes pas l'Intellect (V, 3 [49], 3, 31). Dans ces passages, Plotin parle de la conscience de soi de l'homme empirique, marqué essentiellement par la rationalité : en tant qu'hommes, nous sommes par définition des êtres rationnels et nous pensons toujours de manière discursive, tandis que nous ne faisons l'expérience de la connaissance noétique que de manière intermittente (V, 3 [49], 3, 27-29) » (Ch. Tornau, « Qu'est-ce qu'un individu ? Unité, individualité et conscience de soi dans la métaphysique plotinienne de l'âme », *Les Études philosophiques* 3 (2009), p. 355).

³⁵ Sur le sens de cette affirmation, cfr. I. Mueller, « Mathematical method and philosophical truth », in R. Kraut (éd.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 170-199 : « La façon dont Socrate parle de l'abandon du sensible dans l'argumentation dialectique fut interprétée par les Néoplatoniciens comme impliquant une référence à une pensée

3. La formation des images fictives (§6)

3.1. Le « pouvoir de diminuer et d'augmenter »

Nous pouvons enfin revenir à notre question : « D'où vient-il donc que nous pensions des choses que nous ne voyons pas ? D'où cela vient-il, à ton avis, si ce n'est du fait qu'il y a dans l'âme un certain pouvoir de diminuer et d'augmenter, qu'elle emporte nécessairement avec elle, où qu'elle aille ? »³⁶. Augustin mobilise ici une doctrine stoïcienne³⁷, qu'il reprend chaque fois qu'il veut rendre compte de l'imagination créatrice (cfr. par ex. *De uera relig.* 10, 18 ; *Ep.* 162, 5 ; *Cont. ep. fund.* 18, 20 ; *De Trin.* XI, 5, 8). Il est très facile, par exemple, de transformer imaginativement un corbeau en un oiseau quadrupède (cfr. *De Trin.* XI, 10, 17). Nous n'avons jamais rien perçu de tel, mais les parties constitutives de cette fiction ont nécessairement été perçues dans telle ou telle chose sensible. Par conséquent,

à l'âme qui imagine, il est donc possible de faire naître, à partir de ce que les sens lui ont amené, par soustraction, comme on l'a dit, et par addition, des choses qu'elle n'a jamais atteintes tout entières par aucun des sens ; mais elle avait atteint leurs parties dans telle ou telle chose³⁸.

mystérieusement “ non-discursive ”, qui, entre autres choses, viole le *dictum* aristotélicien selon lequel “ l'âme ne pense jamais sans image ” (cfr. A.C. Lloyd, «XIV – Non-Discursive Thought – An Enigma of Greek Philosophy», in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 70, 1 (1970) 261-274). Rien ne semble justifier cette interprétation dans la *République*. Lorsque Socrate décrit la dialectique comme restreinte aux formes, il ne parle pas de ce qui se passe dans la conscience d'un dialecticien à l'œuvre, mais il oppose les dialecticiens et les mathématiciens : les mathématiciens raisonnent au sujet de sensibles en vue d'intelligibles ; les dialecticiens raisonnent au sujet d'intelligibles en vue d'intelligibles ; que des images se produisent ou non dans leur esprit qui se rapportent à des choses sensibles, ou qu'ils se réfèrent au non aux choses sensibles, ils ne raisonnent pas au sujet des choses sensibles, ils ne les utilisent pas » (p. 189).

³⁶ *Ep.* 7, 3, 6 : « Unde igitur euenit, ut, quae non uidemus, cogitemus ? Quid putas, nisi esse uim quandam minuendi et augendi animae insitam quam, quocumque uenerit, necesse est adferat secum » ? L'existence d'un tel « pouvoir » est rappelée en *Ep.* 9, 5. La précision selon laquelle il accompagne l'âme partout où elle va s'explique sans doute par le fait que celle-ci se rend *post mortem* dans l'Hadès ou dans le sein d'Abraham.

³⁷ Sur les divers modes de formation des images reconnus par les Stoïciens, cfr. DL VII, 52-53 ; Sextus, *Adv. math.* VIII, 57 sq. La conception « par agrandissement » (celle par exemple du Cyclope) ou par diminution (le Pygmée) relève de l'analogie. D'autres représentations imaginaires sont formées par « déplacement » et par « composition ». Sur les images formées par ressemblance, voir aussi *Conf.* X, 8, 14.

³⁸ *Ep.* 7, 3, 6 : « Licet igitur animae imaginanti ex his quae illi sensus inuexit, demendo, ut dictum est, et addendo ea gignere quae nullo sensu adtingit tota ; partes uero eorum in aliis atque aliis rebus adtigerat ». Voir aussi *De Trin.* XI, 5, 8 : « Parce que l'âme a le pouvoir de représenter

3.2. La mémoire comme « limite » de la pensée

Un passage du livre XI du *De Trinitate* montre bien comment les *phantasmata* se distinguent des souvenirs et comment ils en procèdent suivant une sorte de « recyclage ». La tripartition suivante (qui se traduit malaisément) est établie :

Nous ne pouvons nous rappeler des formes corporelles (i) que conformément au *nombre* des formes que nous avons perçues et (ii) ne nous les rappeler qu'avec la *grandeur* que nous avons perçu être la leur et (iii) ne nous les rappeler que *telles que* nous les avons perçues ; car c'est à partir du sens corporel que l'âme a absorbé ces formes dans la mémoire ³⁹.

Or la pensée n'est assujettie à aucune de ces trois « contraintes éidétiques » de la mémoire : elle peut (i) multiplier le nombre des choses dont elle se souvient, (ii) en faire varier la taille et (iii) se les représenter autrement qu'elles ont été perçues⁴⁰.

Premièrement, je ne me souviens que d'un seul soleil car je n'en ai vu qu'un (comme il n'y en a qu'un de fait)⁴¹, mais « le même souvenir qui me fait me souvenir d'un seul soleil informe ma vision quand je pense à de nombreux soleils ». Deuxièmement, je me souviens du soleil comme ayant la taille que j'ai vu être la sienne, mais je peux penser à un soleil plus grand ou plus petit. Enfin, je me souviens du soleil comme étant tel que je l'ai vu, mais je peux me représenter un soleil carré ou vert ... Dans tous ces cas cependant, quelle que soit son inventivité, la pensée imaginative est dépendante du souvenir, c'est-à-dire en dernière instance de la perception. En un mot, « la limite de la pensée (*cogitandi modus*) est dans la mémoire »⁴².

Dans la *Lettre 7*, cette même thèse est illustrée par des exemples autobiographiques :

Nous-mêmes qui sommes nés et qui avons grandi au milieu des terres, nous avons pu imaginer dès ce moment des mers en voyant de l'eau dans une petite coupe, alors que le goût des fraises

(*confingere*), non seulement ce qui est oublié, mais aussi ce qui n'a pas été perçu ou expérimenté, en augmentant, diminuant, changeant ou liant à volonté les souvenirs qui n'ont pas disparu, elle imagine souvent être tel ou tel ce qu'elle sait n'être pas tel ou ce qu'elle ignore être tel ».

³⁹ *De Trin.* XI, 8, 13 : « Meminisse non possumus corporum species nisi tot quot sensimus et quantas sensimus et sicut sensimus (ex corporis enim sensu eas in memoria combibit animus) ».

⁴⁰ Cfr. aussi *De uera relig.* 34, 64.

⁴¹ Augustin devait pourtant savoir qu'il est possible de *voir* deux soleils, en cas de parhélie (cfr. Cicéron, *Rep.* I, 10, 15).

⁴² *De Trin.* XI, 8, 14.

et des cornouilles ne pouvait aucunement nous venir à l'esprit avant que nous en ayons dégusté en Italie⁴³.

Là encore, le parallèle entre la *Lettre 7* et le livre XI du *De Trinitate* est remarquable :

Une couleur ou une figure corporelle que l'on n'a jamais vues, un son que l'on n'a jamais entendu, une saveur que l'on n'a jamais goûtée, une odeur que l'on n'a jamais sentie, un contact corporel que l'on a jamais éprouvé sont choses qu'il est tout à fait impossible de penser⁴⁴.

Un argument supplémentaire est enfin apporté, dans la *Lettre 7*, à l'appui de la thèse selon laquelle toutes les images présupposent la vision : « Les aveugles de naissance ne savent que répondre quand on les interroge sur les couleurs et sur la lumière : ils ne font jamais l'expérience d'aucune image colorée ceux qui n'en ont perçu aucune »⁴⁵. Autrement dit, il n'existe pas d'activité imaginative liées aux couleurs chez ceux qui n'en n'ont jamais perçu ⁴⁶.

4. L'âme du monde n'a pas d'images *a priori* des réalités physiques

Le dernier paragraphe de la lettre est le plus difficile, comme souvent dans la correspondance avec Nebridius (cfr. aussi *Epp.* 11, 4 et 14, 4). On est d'abord arrêté par un problème d'établissement du texte. Je propose de lire, au début du §7 : « Nec mirere quo pacto ea quae in rerum natura figurantur et fingi possunt,

⁴³ *Ep.* 7, 3, 6 : « Ita nos pueri apud mediterraneos nati atque nutriti uel in paruo calice aqua uisa iam imaginari maria poteramus, cum sapor fragorum et cornorum, antequam in Italia gustaremus, nullo modo ueniret in mentem ».

⁴⁴ *De Trin.* XI, 8, 15. Cfr. aussi *De mus.* VI, 11, 32 : « Arbitror tamem, quod si nunquam humana corpora uissem, nullo modo ea possem uisibili specie cogitando figurare ».

⁴⁵ *Ep.* 7, 3, 6 : « Hinc est quod a prima aetate caeci, cum de luce coloribusque interrogantur, quid respondeant non inueniunt ; non enim coloratas ulla patiuntur imagines, qui senserint nullas ».

⁴⁶ L'absence de représentations des couleurs chez les aveugles-nés est mentionnée par Damascius (*In Phaed.* II, §26). On trouve une belle utilisation théologique de cet exemple dans le *Commentaire du Parménide* attribué à Porphyre. Comment pouvons-nous dire, comme Platon, que l'Un n'est ni nommé, ni défini, alors que certaines traditions sacrées, comme celle des *Oracles chaldaïques*, nous révèlent un enseignement à son sujet ? En fait, « même si ces *Oracles* sont vrais, nous ne pouvons comprendre ce qu'ils nous disent, parce qu'il nous manque la faculté qui nous permettrait de percevoir l'objet dont ils nous parlent. Nous sommes comme des aveugles à qui l'on ferait une description des couleurs (*In Parm.* IX, 8-26) (...). L'âme doit donc se contenter de son ignorance, qui est la seule représentation qu'elle puisse se faire de Dieu (X, 25-29) » (P. Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, I, Études Augustiniennes, Paris 1968, p. 125).

non primo anima quae omnibus inest secum uoluat, cum ea numquam extrinsecus senserit »⁴⁷ : « Et ne t'étonne pas si les choses qui sont figurées dans la nature et qui peuvent être imaginées, l'âme qui est présente en tout ne les retourne pas d'emblée en elle, puisqu'elle ne les a jamais senties extérieurement ».

Les « choses qui sont figurées dans la nature » doivent être les réalités physiques que nous comprenons mathématiquement, comme la forme de l'univers. La nouveauté du passage réside dans le fait qu'il n'y est apparemment plus question de l'âme humaine mais de l'« anima quae omnibus inest », c'est-à-dire, si je comprends bien, de l'âme du monde⁴⁸. En effet, dire ici que l'âme est « en tous les

⁴⁷ Comparer avec « Nec mirere quo pacto ea, quae in rerum natura figurantur et fingi possunt, non primo in anima quae omnibus inest commista volvantur, cum ea numquam extrinsecus senserit » (éd. bénédictine : ajout de « in » sans garant paléographique) ; « Nec mirere, quo pacto ea, quae in rerum natura figurantur, effingi possint non primo anima, quae omnibus inest, secum ista uolvente, cum ea numquam extrinsecus senserit » (Goldbacher, qui fait de « anima » un complément d'agent) ; « Nec mirere quo pacto ea quae in rerum natura figurantur et fingi possunt, non primo anima, quae omnibus inest, commista uoluat, cum ea numquam extrinsecus senserit » (Daur, qui retient la leçon « commista », dont il fait un attribut du complément d'objet direct « ea quae ») ; « Nec mirere quo pacto ea quae in rerum natura figurantur et fingi possunt, non primo anima, quae omnibus inest, commista uoluantur, cum ea numquam extrinsecus senserit » (Lancel [« La Bibliothèque Augustinienne », vol. 40A, p. 260], qui fait d'« anima » à l'ablatif le complément de « commista », alors qu'Augustin construit habituellement ce verbe avec le datif, par ex. en *De Trin.* XI, 2, 2 [« anima commixta tamen corpori per instrumentum sentit corporeum »] et en *De gen. ad litt.* VIII, 21, 42).

⁴⁸ C'est la seule occurrence de cette expression chez Augustin. L'âme du monde est appelée « uniuersitatis anima » en *De ciu. Dei*, X, 2. En *De ord.* II, 30, on lit « animam aut in nobis aut usque quoque ». Il arrive qu'Augustin ait présent à l'esprit l'âme du monde sans que nous nous en doutions en le lisant, comme le montre cette rétractation au sujet d'un passage du *De musica* : « “ L'amour de ce monde est fort laborieux. En effet, ce que l'âme cherche en lui, à savoir la constance et l'éternité, elle ne le trouve pas, parce que la beauté infime [du monde] se trouve réalisée par l'écoulement des choses et que ce qui, dans cette beauté, imite la constance passe par l'âme en venant de Dieu ; parce que la beauté (*species*) qui est muable seulement selon le temps précède celle qui est à la fois muable par le temps et les lieux ” [*De mus.* VI, 14, 44]. Si ces paroles peuvent être entendues au sens où l'on comprend par “ beauté infime ” seulement celle qui est dans les corps des hommes et de tous les animaux, la raison le soutient évidemment. Car ce qui imite la constance dans cette beauté, c'est le fait que les mêmes corps demeurent dans l'organisme, autant qu'ils peuvent demeurer. Or, cela passe en eux par l'âme en venant de Dieu. Car l'âme maintient l'organisme lui-même pour l'empêcher qu'il se dissolve et qu'il se défase – ce que nous voyons se passer dans les corps des animaux lorsque l'âme s'en est allée. Mais si on comprend que cette beauté infime est dans tous les corps, mon affirmation nous oblige à croire que le monde est un animal et qu'en lui aussi ce qui imite la constance passe par l'âme en venant du Dieu souverain » (*Retract.* I, 11, 4). Augustin avoue alors qu'il n'est pas parvenu à se prononcer sur la question de savoir si le monde a une âme.

hommes » ne présente guère de sens. En outre, la phrase qui suit immédiatement ce passage introduit une analogie entre ce qui se passe dans le cas de cette âme-là et ce qui nous arrive à nous-mêmes (*etiam nos*), lorsque nous nous émouvons.

Cette âme, donc, qui est celle du monde, n'a pas d'emblée ou d'abord (*primo*) d'images parce qu'elle ne perçoit pas les choses extérieurement (*extrinsecus*)⁴⁹. De fait, rien n'est extérieur au monde, son corps. C'est la raison pour laquelle, d'après le *Timée* (33c), l'âme du monde n'a pas d'organes corporels⁵⁰. Pourtant, Augustin ne dit pas que cette âme n'a *jamais* d'images ; on peut supposer qu'elle imagine pour ainsi dire « après coup » les « choses qui sont figurées dans la nature », une fois qu'elle les a produites et qu'elle les a senties « intérieurement ».

La suite du texte suggère cette interprétation :

Il n'est pas vrai non plus que dans notre cas (*etiam nos*), lorsque nous formons sur notre corps de nombreuses mimiques et que nous passons par toutes les couleurs du fait que nous nous indignons ou que nous nous réjouissons, ou du fait de tous les autres mouvements semblables de notre âme, notre pensée (*cogitatio*) conçoit d'abord que nous puissions produire de telles images⁵¹.

L'idée formulée semble être la suivante : nous n'avons pas conscience *a priori* des manifestations corporelles que nous produisons en réaction aux différentes émotions que nous pouvons éprouver. Par exemple, nous devons *d'abord* éprouver de l'indignation pour pouvoir prendre conscience *a posteriori* des images somatiques de cette passion qui s'impriment sur notre corps⁵².

⁴⁹ Cfr. « ἔξοθεν » dans la définition plotinienne de la *phantasia* en *Enn.* I, 8 [51], 15, 18.

⁵⁰ On lit en *Serm.* 241, 7 que, d'après les Platoniciens, le monde est un animal qui a une âme mais qui est dépourvu de sens corporels, parce qu'il n'y a rien à percevoir à l'extérieur de lui.

⁵¹ *Ep.* 7, 3, 7 : « Non enim etiam nos cum indignando aut laetando ceterisque huiusce modi animi motibus multos in nostro corpore uultus coloresque formamus, prius nostra cogitatio quod facere possimus tales imagines concipit ».

⁵² « Augustin observe que les émotions comme la joie ou la colère peuvent affecter le corps avant que nos processus réflexifs ne forment d'image de réponses possibles aux émotions en question. Notre expression faciale et notre complexion sont affectées spontanément par des sentiments avant que nous réagissions par rapport à eux au niveau mental (*cogitatio*) » (O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, cit., p. 53, n. 144). Cette remarque d'Augustin à propos de ces « images » que les *Confessions* appellent des « paroles naturelles » (I, 8, 13) va clairement à l'encontre de la conception du langage que Wittgenstein lui prête au début des *Recherches Philosophiques*. Ces « images » sont d'une importance fondamentale. C'est grâce à la « compréhension » qu'il en a que le petit enfant apprend à parler. Le phénomène de l'autisme serait lié à l'incapacité de certains bébés à percevoir la signification des expressions faciales des personnes de leur entourage (cfr. P. Hobson, *The Cradle of Thought*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004).

Cette analogie donne à comprendre que l'âme du monde n'a pas, elle non plus, d'images *a priori* des réalités physiques et qu'il lui faut d'abord percevoir ces réalités pour pouvoir les imaginer – et cela, bien qu'elle les produise elle-même (sans aller jusqu'à les créer) en leur étant immanente. À l'instar de la nature (naturante) néoplatonicienne, elle produit le monde en contemplant le monde intelligible et non pas un ensemble de *phantasiae*, qui ne peuvent être qu'*a posteriori*.

On peut se demander dans quelle mesure une telle explication d'Augustin – si nous la comprenons bien – est plotinienne⁵³. Quoi qu'il en soit, on peut rapprocher ce passage étonnant de la *Lettre 7* de l'explication que le *De genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber* (ca 393) propose du verset « spiritus Dei superferebatur super aquam » (Gen. 1, 2) : il peut s'agir de l'Esprit-Saint ; cependant, ajoute Augustin, « on peut aussi comprendre (...) que l'“ esprit de Dieu ” est une créature vivifiante (*uitalem creaturam*) par laquelle ce monde visible dans sa totalité et toutes les choses corporelles sont contenues et mises en mouvement ; à cette créature, le Dieu tout-puissant a attribué la puissance de le servir pour opérer dans le domaine des choses qui viennent à l'être » (*De gen. ad litt. lib. imp.* 4, 17, 1) (cfr. aussi *De gen. ad litt.* I, 9, 17)⁵⁴. Si donc on admet que l'administration de l'uni-

⁵³ Il est difficile de savoir si, pour Plotin, l'âme du monde a des sensations et des *phantasiai*. Plotin établit la distinction suivante dans le *Traité 14* : « Il y a dans l'Âme une puissance dernière qui part de la terre et qui est entièrement entrelacée [au monde] (cfr. *Tim.* 36e) ; celle qui possède par nature la sensation et qui est capable de formuler des opinions (ή λόγον δοξαστικόν δεχομένη) se tient en-haut dans les sphères célestes en se mouvant au-dessus de la première puissance et en lui communiquant une puissance qui vient d'elle pour la rendre plus vivante » (*Enn.* II, 2 [14], 3, 1-6) (sur cette distinction, cfr. Plotin, *Traités 7-21*, GF, Paris 2003, p. 326, n. 39). Si donc il existe une puissance supérieure de l'âme du monde, qui est sensitive et capable d'opinion, elle doit aussi être capable de *phantasia*. En effet, Platon définit de façon générale la *phantasia* comme étant le « mélange » d'une *aisthêsis* et d'une *doxa* (opinion ou jugement) (*Soph.* 264a-b ; cfr. *Phil.* 38b sq.). Mais d'un autre côté, on lit dans le *Traité 15* : « Quoi ? Elle ne sent pas de sensation ? Elle n'a pas la vue, dit Platon, parce qu'elle n'a évidemment pas d'yeux, ni d'oreilles, ni de nez, ni de langue (cfr. *Tim.* 33c). — Quoi ? n'a-t-elle pas conscience de ce qui est en elle, comme nous de ce qui est en nous ? — C'est le calme, comme lorsque les choses sont conformes à la nature ; il n'y a pas même de plaisir. La puissance végétative est donc présente sans être présente, et il en va de même de la puissance sensitive » (*Enn.* III, 4 [15], 4, 7-13). M. Guyot note qu'une telle position n'allait pas de soi au temps de Plotin et il renvoie à Augustin, *De ciu. Dei*, VII, 23, qui rapporte l'opinion de Varron selon laquelle le soleil, la lune et les étoiles sont les organes par lesquels l'âme du monde sent (Plotin, *Traités 7-21*, p. 359, n. 56).

⁵⁴ Augustin suppose aussi que le « spiritus » sur les eaux ait pu être simplement l'air. L'interprétation strictement *théologique* sera définitivement adoptée à partir *De diu. quaest. ad Simpl.*, II, 1, 5. Cfr. P. Agaesse – A. Solignac, « Note complémentaire » 6 : « L'Esprit porté sur les eaux », in

vers est confiée à une âme du monde, et s'il faut que celle-ci connaisse les créatures pour jouer ce rôle, cette âme connaît *a priori* les raisons des choses, qui sont imprimées en elle⁵⁵, mais elle ne peut pas les imaginer avant de les avoir senties.

Pour conclure, en dépit du pouvoir qu'a l'imagination de se représenter des choses qui n'ont jamais été vues, sa dépendance par rapport à la perception est une loi qui s'impose, non seulement à nous, mais à toute créature rationnelle⁵⁶.

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⁵⁵ Le *De gen. ad litt.* (I, 9, 17) prête une telle connaissance *a priori* des créatures à la « créature spirituelle », qui se substitue à l'âme du monde. C'est par une connaissance « vespérale », c'est-à-dire plus obscure », qu'elle acquiert la connaissance des créatures dans leur nature (physique) propre. Sur les modes de la connaissance angélique, voir *De gen. ad litt.* IV, 22-26, 43, 39.

⁵⁶ Je remercie vivement Paula Oliveira e Silva, José Meirinhos et José Higuera de m'avoir invité à participer au colloque « Theories of Vision: Augustine of Hippo and the Augustinian Tradition » (Porto, 14-15 novembre 2019) et de la publication des actes de cette rencontre.

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Seeing and Believing in Augustine's *De videndo Deo*

Abstract

The aim of my paper is to clarify the content and function of the distinction between seeing and believing stated by Augustine in his *De videndo deo*. I try to achieve this in three steps. First, I briefly describe the genesis, the fundamental ideas and the structure of *De videndo deo*. Second, I analyse in detail the distinction between seeing and believing put forward in the first part of Augustine's text. Finally, I show the role that this distinction plays in the overall argument of *De videndo deo*.

Keywords: faith, God, theophanies, value of theological opinions, vision.

Ancient and medieval studied Authors: Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo.

Distinção entre Ver e Acreditar no *De videndo deo* de Santo Agostinho

Resumo

Este artigo tem o propósito de elucidar o conteúdo e a função da distinção entre ver e crer, enunciada por Agostinho no seu *De videndo deo*. Procuo alcançar este objetivo em três passos: em primeiro lugar, descrevo brevemente a gênese, as ideias fundamentais e a estrutura do *De videndo deo*; em segundo lugar, analiso em pormenor a distinção entre ver e crer, avançada na primeira parte do texto de Agostinho; por último, mostro o papel que esta distinção desempenha na argumentação geral do *De videndo deo*.

Palavras-chave: fé, Deus, teofanias, valor das opiniões teológicas, visão.

Autores antigos e medievais estudados: Agostinho, Ambrósio de Milão.

O essencial é saber ver

(Alberto Caeiro [Fernando Pessoa], *O guardador de rebanhos*, XXIV)

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1. Genesis, fundamental ideas and structure of *De videndo deo*

As we know, *De videndo deo* is a long letter (number 147) that Augustine wrote to keep the promise, made long before to a certain Paulina, to give an answer in a «fulsome and lengthy» way (*prolixè [...] copioseque*)¹ to the question of whether God can be seen through the eyes of the body. In writing to Paulina, Augustine actually addresses every future reader (*lecturus*)² who asks the same question, and in a special way those who are inclined to give a positive answer to it. The letter is dated to AD 412/413³.

Previously, Augustine had addressed the issue in a short letter (number 92), which was sent to a widow named Italica, dating from AD 408⁴. In the letter, the bishop of Hippo denied in no uncertain terms that the divine light can be seen with the eyes of the body, because everything that can be seen with these eyes is in a certain location, occupying a greater portion of space with a greater part of itself and a smaller portion with a smaller part. In other words, all that can be seen with the eyes of the body is a body, and for this reason God is not visible to these eyes, not only at the present moment, but also at the end of time, on the Day of Judgment⁵. God *can* be seen in his incorporeal nature, as shown in biblical verses such as *1 Jn* 3:2 and *1 Cor.* 13:12, but with the mind, not with the body, once we come to our heavenly homeland. Augustine had therefore hurled himself against the «unrestrained loquacity» (*inpunita loquacitas*), the «senselessness» (*insipientia*) and the «madness» (*dementia*) of unspecified adversaries, who claimed instead that we see God with the mind now, while after the resurrection we see him with

¹ Augustinus Hipponensis, *De videndo deo = Epistula* 147, ed. A. Goldbacher, (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, vol. XLIV) Tempsky – Freytag, Wien – Leipzig 1904, 1, p. 275. I quote from the translation by R. Teske, *Letter 147, A Book on Seeing God*, in *The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. II/1, *Letters 100-155*, translation and notes by R. Teske, New City Press, Hyde Park (NY) 2003, pp. 317-349.

² Augustinus, *De videndo deo*, ed. A. Goldbacher, cit., 1, 6, p. 280.

³ «Summer 412 – early 413», according to J. Anoz, «Cronología de la producción agustiniana», *Augustinus* 47 (2002) p. 250, who relies on P.-M. Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie agustinienne*, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, Paris 2000, pp. 183-184.

⁴ Cfr. J. Anoz, «Cronología...», cit., p. 249.

⁵ Cfr. Augustinus, *Epistula* 92, 3, ed. K.D. Daur (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, vol. XXX-1/A), Brepols, Turnhout 2005, p. 161. For the theory of corporal vision underlying this conviction, cfr. footnote 83, in Agostino, *Vedere Dio (Lettera 147)*, traduzione, introduzione e note a cura di G. Catapano, (Collana di Testi Patristici, 261), Città Nuova, Roma 2019, p. 72 (this paper takes up and develops what I wrote in that book).

the body; indeed, everyone will see him like this, even the impious⁶. Augustine had finally urged Italica to read his letter to those adversaries and to let him know their reply; an exhortation repeated to Cyprian, a priest who was the bearer of the letter⁷.

We do not know if the letter to Italica reached the hands or ears of the adversaries that Augustine had in mind; however, a bishop⁸ felt personally struck by the harsh criticism contained in it, and Augustine had to pray to another brother in the episcopate, Fortunatianus of Sicca Veneria, to give his apologies and his true intention, directed against the conception of God being in human form⁹. We can understand the vehemence with which Augustine opposed the conception of God as endowed with members similar to human ones: as a young man, influenced by Manichean criticism¹⁰, he mistakenly believed that this was precisely the idea of God transmitted by the Old Testament; it was Ambrose's homilies, heard in Milan, that revealed to him the spiritual meaning of biblical expressions and made him understand the true meaning of the doctrine of man as the image of God (*imago dei*)¹¹. Since then, the principle of not thinking of anything corporeal

⁶ Cfr. Augustinus, *Epistula* 92, 4-6, ed. K.D. Daur, cit., pp. 162-164.

⁷ Cfr. Augustinus, *Epistula* 92/A, ed. K.D. Daur, cit., p. 166.

⁸ E. Naab, in Augustinus, *Über Schau und Gegenwart des unsichtbaren Gottes*, Texte mit Einführung und Übersetzung von E. Naab, Frommann – Holzboog, Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt 1998, pp. 17-25, hypothesises that the bishop was Silvanus of Summa, primate in Numidia from AD 411 to AD 419.

⁹ The letter to Fortunatianus is number 148 in the epistolary and is called «a warning» (*communitorium*) in Augustinus, *Retractationes*, ed. A. Mutzenbecher, (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, vol. LVII) Brepols, Turnhout 1984, II, 41, p. 123. It may be dated to AD 411/412: cfr. Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches*, cit., p. 57, footnote 132; J. Anoz, «Cronología...», cit., p. 251. Augustine catalogues anthropomorphism among heresies in *De haeresibus* 50 (ed. R. Vander Plaetse – C. Beukers, (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, vol. XLVI) Brepols, Turnhout 1969, pp. 321-322), identifying the Anthropomorphites with the Audians, that is, with the followers of Audius (d. 372). In *Epistula* 148, 4, 14 (ed. A. Goldbacher, cit., pp. 343-344) he quotes a passage of Jerome against the Anthropomorphites.

¹⁰ Cfr. Augustinus, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, ed. D. Weber, (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, vol. XCI), Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien 1998, I, 17, 27, p. 94.

¹¹ Cfr. Augustinus, *Confessiones*, ed. M. Simonetti, (Scrittori Greci e Latini) Fondazione Lorenzo Valla – Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano 1993, V, 10, 19, p. 78; VI, 3, 4 – 4, 5, pp. 98-100. As M.-A. Vannier writes in «La Lettre 147 et la question de la mystique augustinienne», in F. Young – M. Edwards – P. Parvis (eds.), *Studia Patristica*, vol. XLIII, Peeters, Leuven – Paris – Dudley, MA 2006, p. 280, the reference to Ambrose made in *De videndo deo* can be seen first of all as «un écho et un approfondissement du passage qu'il [*i.e.* Augustine] a effectué du manichéisme au

when one thinks of God and the soul had remained the «polar star» of Augustine's philosophical and theological reflection¹².

The question of the vision of God by the risen saints was, however, more complex than Augustine had initially imagined. Bishops who were not exactly crude anthropomorphites (such as the one involuntarily offended by the letter to Italica) and other believers far from heresy seriously questioned the function of the risen body in the future contemplation of God and demanded less peremptory and hasty explanations. Among these believers was Paulina, the «pious handmaid of God», to whom *De videndo deo* is addressed¹³. Paulina too had read the letter to Italica and thought that it «should be explained with greater detail and fullness»¹⁴. Unlike the letter to Italica, in the letter to Paulina Augustine no longer categorically excludes that the eyes of the risen body can see God – provided, however, that we do not assume the corporeity of God himself or the complete spiritualisation of the glorious body, equivalent in fact to a denial of the resurrection of the flesh. Although he is willing to accept a positive response free of these errors, if demonstrated by convincing arguments¹⁵, for the time being he has a still different, negative opinion, supported by Ambrose's authority¹⁶.

Therefore, if in *De videndo deo* Augustine simply keeps open the possibility of a positive solution to the problem, criticising however all those to his knowledge, in *De civitate dei* he comes to find out a plausible one and share it. In book XXII of the work, probably composed in AD 425¹⁷, Augustine in fact judges it

christianisme et plus précisément de l'influence de la prédication d'Ambroise de Milan, qui lui a fait découvrir la nature spirituelle de Dieu et de l'image de Dieu en l'homme».

¹² Cfr. Augustinus, *De beata vita*, ed. J. Doignon, (Bibliothèque Augustinienne, vol. 4/1), Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 1986, 1, 4, p. 56.

¹³ Augustinus, *De videndo deo*, ed. A. Goldbacher, cit., 1, p. 274. We have no certain information about Paulina except the few that can be inferred from Augustine's letter itself. It is possible, but not demonstrable, that she is the same Paulina who, with her husband Armentarius, is the addressee of another Augustinian letter, number 127, from which it appears that the two made a vow of continence (cfr. Saint Augustin, *La vision de Dieu*, Présentation, Traduction et note complémentaire par J. Lagouanère, Préface de P. Cambronne, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 2010, pp. 18-19). From § 2 of *De videndo deo* it appears, however, that Paulina was «weighed down with years», which is not in keeping with the dating of letter 127 to only three years before (cfr. J. Anoz, «Cronología...», cit., p. 250).

¹⁴ Augustinus, *De videndo deo*, ed. A. Goldbacher, cit., 6, 17, p. 288.

¹⁵ Cfr. *ibid.*, 21, 49, p. 324.

¹⁶ Cfr. *ibid.*, 20, 48, p. 323.

¹⁷ Cfr. J. Anoz, «Cronología...», cit., p. 237.

possible and «highly credible» that, through both our spiritual bodies of resurrection and the bodies of the new heaven and the new earth that we will contemplate, we will see with «very clear transparency» God, everywhere present, in the same way in which we now see the life of the human beings around us, which is invisible in itself, observing their bodies with our eyes. This will happen either because the eyes of the spiritual body will be endowed with a power similar to that of the mind (a hypothesis which, however, cannot be demonstrated on the basis of the sacred Scriptures), or because God will be so well known to us that we will be able to see him, not only in himself but also «by means of the bodies in every body» on which our gaze is directed¹⁸.

De videndo deo should therefore be read as the intermediate moment in the evolution of Augustine's thought regarding the problem of the visibility of God through the spiritual body: it testifies to a position no longer totally negative, as in the letter to Italica, and not yet openly positive, as in *De civitate dei*. From this point of view, *De videndo deo* provides significant confirmation of Augustine's description of himself as «one of those who write while making progress and make progress while writing»¹⁹.

Moving on to the structure of *De videndo deo*, we can see that the text clearly has three main parts²⁰. The first, which occupies §§ 1–11²¹, is defined by the author himself as an «introduction» (*praelocutio*)²², which has the function of providing a double «preparatory instruction» (*praestructio*)²³. I dwell on this preamble in the second step of my paper.

The second main part of *De videndo deo* goes from §§ 12–37 and starts from an exegetical problem. The problem concerns the compatibility of the theophanies, which the Scriptures attest in numerous cases («Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job,

18 Cfr. Augustinus, *De civitate dei*, ed. B. Dombart – A. Kalb, (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, vol. XLVIII) Brepols, Turnhout 1955, XXII, 29, pp. 856-862.

19 Augustinus, *Epistula* 143, 2, ed. A. Goldbacher, cit., p. 251 (my translation).

20 For a more articulated division of the text, cfr. J. Lagouanère in Saint Augustin, *La vision de Dieu*, cit., pp. 31-32, who takes up the proposal of M. Albaric, *Les sources bibliques du De videndo deo de saint Augustin*, Le Saulchoir, Paris 1970.

21 As we know, starting with the Maurine edition (1679-1700), Augustine's writings are divided into sections numbered with Arabic numerals. This subdivision is accompanied by the chapter subdivision introduced at the beginning of the sixteenth century by Johannes Amerbach in the first printed edition of the *Opera omnia*.

22 Cfr. Augustinus, *De videndo deo*, ed. A. Goldbacher, cit., 5, p. 279; 1, 6, p. 280; 4, 11, p. 284.

23 *Ibid.*, 1, 6, p. 280.

Moses, Micaiah, Isaiah, and any others»²⁴, with the clear denial stated by the apostle John, according to whom no one has ever seen God (*Jn* 1:18; *I Jn* 4:12). To resolve this difficulty, Augustine proposes to Paulina to pay attention to what he, from the time of the letter to Italica, has meanwhile (*interim*)²⁵ learned «from other distinguished exegetes of the divine Scriptures»²⁶ and, more precisely, by «blessed Ambrose, the bishop of Milan»²⁷, of whom Augustine literally reports a long passage from the commentary on the Gospel of Luke²⁸. Ambrose's position can be summarised as follows:

- 1) In the theophanies, the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit has made himself visible to the bodily eyes of people chosen by him «in that form which was chosen by their [*i.e.*, the Trinity's] will and not that which was fashioned from their nature»²⁹, that is, with a physical appearance that does not belong to God's nature, which instead has remained hidden both from the eyes and from the mind of anyone.
- 2) Even in the resurrection, God will not be seen by everybody, but only by the pure of heart.
- 3) «God is not seen in a location but by a clean heart. He is not sought by bodily eyes»³⁰.

²⁴ Ibid., 5, 14, p. 287.

²⁵ J. Lagouanère in Saint Augustin, *La vision de Dieu*, cit., p. 27, considers plausible the hypothesis, already advanced by A.-M. La Bonnardière, according to which Augustine could have read «directement» Ambrose's *Expositio* only after the arrival in Africa of Paulinus of Milan, who accused Celestius in Carthage in AD 411. In fact, the other quotations from Ambrose's work are to be found not only in the *commonitorium* to Fortunatianus (*Epistula* 148: vide footnote 9 above), but also in Augustinian writings linked to the anti-Pelagian controversy, therefore subsequent to AD 411 (*De natura et gratia*: AD 414-415; *De gratia Christi et de peccato originali*: AD 418; *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum*: AD 420-421; *Contra Iulianum*: AD 420-421; *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*: AD 428-430; *De dono perseverantiae*: AD 429).

²⁶ Augustinus, *De videndo deo*, ed. A. Goldbacher, cit., 6, 17, p. 288.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 289.

²⁸ Ibid., 6, 18, pp. 289-292 = Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, ed. G. Coppa, (Sancti Ambrosii episcopi Mediolanensis opera, vol. XI) Bibliotheca Ambrosiana – Città Nuova Editrice, Milano – Roma 1978, I, 24-27, pp. 120-124.

²⁹ Ambrosius, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, ed. G. Coppa, cit., I, 25, p. 122; quoted in Augustinus, *De videndo deo*, ed. A. Goldbacher, cit., 6, 18, p. 290; 7, 19, p. 293.

³⁰ Ambrosius, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, ed. G. Coppa, cit., I, 27, p. 124; quoted, almost in a refrain, in Augustinus, *De videndo deo*, ed. A. Goldbacher, cit., 6, 18, p. 291; 11, 26, p. 300; 11, 28, p. 303; 12, 29, p. 303; 15, 37, p. 311; 16, 39, p. 314; 17, 44, p. 318; 19, 46, p. 320; 19, 47, p. 322; 23, 52, p. 329.

The third and last main part of *De videndo deo* goes from § 39 to the conclusion (§ 54). Recalling the distinction between seeing and believing set out in the preamble, Augustine invites Paulina to consider both what she saw and what she believed by reading the letter up to that point. It is in this final part of the text that the function of the distinction between seeing and believing placed at the beginning clearly emerges; I therefore consider this in the third step of this paper.

2. The distinction between seeing and believing

Let us now take a closer look at the preamble to *De videndo deo*. As Augustine explains to Paulina, this introduction first of all has the declared purpose, of preparing:

you and others who will read these ideas as to what sort of judge you ought to be of my writings or of those of any others. In that way you will not either suppose that you know (*scire*) something that you do not know or rashly believe something that you have not perceived either by the senses of the body or by the gaze (*contuitu*) of the mind in a direct vision (*evidentia*) of the very thing to be known or something that you have not learned must be believed by the authority of the canonical scriptures, even if it was not present to the senses of either the mind or the body³¹.

This first purpose, pursued in §§ 1-5, consists in knowing how to distinguish between what Augustine will show and what he will propose to believe. Showing (*ostendere*) means remembering (*admonire*) something that you can see (*videre*), either with the eyes of the flesh or with the gaze of the mind; that is, something that you can have experience and direct knowledge of. What is not seen by the eyes or the mind, however, can only be believed (*credere*) on the basis of the authority of the canonical Scriptures (in which case one must believe it without hesitation) or of other witnesses or testimonies (in which case one may believe it or not, depending on their weight):

Therefore, hold on to this distinction. Accordingly, if in the course of the discussion I call your attention to something that you see with the eyes of the flesh or that you perceive or recall that you have perceived with any other sense, as we perceive colors, sounds, smells, tastes, and warmth or anything else we perceive through the body by seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching, or if I call your attention to something that you see with the gaze (*intuitu*) of the mind, as you see your life, willing, thought, memory, understanding, knowledge, faith, and anything else you see by the mind and do not doubt that it is true, not merely by believing, but

³¹ Augustinus, *De videndo deo*, ed. A. Goldbacher, cit., 5, p. 279.

by clearly seeing, you should judge that I have clearly shown this. But if I do not show you something so that you hold it as seen and perceived by a sense of the body or of the mind, and if I nonetheless say something that must be either true or false but does not seem to fall into either of those two kinds, it remains for you only to believe or not to believe it. But if it is supported by the clear authority of those divine scriptures, namely, those that are called «canonical» in the Church, it must be believed without any doubt. But you may believe or not believe other witnesses or testimonies by which you might be persuaded to believe something to the extent that you consider that they have or do not have sufficient weight to produce faith³².

For example, Paulina *sees* the sun with the eyes of her body and, thanks to its light, she can read Augustine's letter, and she *sees* with the gaze of her mind her own will to know the answer to the question she posed; but she *believes* that God can be seen on the basis of the evangelical Beatitude that promises the vision of God to the pure of hearts. If what Augustine will say to Paulina will be such that it can be seen by Paulina or believed by her by the authority of the Scriptures, then she will have the evidence or the certain faith of it; all the rest she can believe or not by pondering the degree of authority of Augustine's statements. Paulina (and, with her, every other reader) is invited to evaluate Augustine's words «in accord with the interior self»; that is according to «the spirit of» her «mind»³³. As Augustine urges in § 2:

I do not want you to follow my authority so that you think that it is necessary for you to believe something because I said it. Rather, either believe the canonical scriptures if there is something that you do not as yet see is true, or believe the truth who teaches interiorly in order that you may see this clearly³⁴.

In this admonishment we can see, for now, a twofold usefulness of believing: it serves to keep something true of which there is not yet direct evidence, but also to keep to a truth already sensed, but only in part, in order to arrive at full evidence of it.

Secondly, in §§ 6–11 the preamble to *De videndo deo* aims to clarify well the difference between believing and seeing with the mind. This is the section of the letter that interests us most here. Augustine begins by stating that, according to «some», only the act of believing a true thing is an act of observing with the mind:

For some (*nonnulli*) think that what we call «believing», when something true is believed, is merely to see it with the mind (*mente contueri*). But if that is so, our introduction is mistaken

³² Ibid., 4, p. 278.

³³ Ibid., 2, p. 276.

³⁴ Ibidem.

in which we made the following distinctions. That is, it is one thing to sense something through the body, like the sun in the sky or a mountain, a tree, or any body on the earth, and it is something else to sense a thing no less evident by the look (*intuitu*) of the mind, as we see our will interiorly when we will something or our thought when we think or our memory when we recall something or anything of the sort that we see in the mind without the body. But it is still something else to believe something that is neither present nor recalled to have been present to the sight of the body or the mind, such as that Adam was created without parents and that Christ was born of a virgin, suffered, and rose³⁵.

As it is in his style (which makes scholars despair by pushing them to demanding investigations of *Quellenforschung*, which are rarely successful), Augustine does not specify who the «some» are who make mental observation coincide with faith in a true thing. Whatever their identity, their opinion contradicts what is stated in the previous section of the preamble; namely, the distinction between these three acts: (1) to perceive something through the body (e.g. the sun in the sky); (2) to perceive something through the gaze of the mind (e.g. the volitions within us); and (3) to believe that which is not present, or recalled to have been present, to our body or to our mind (e.g. the creation of Adam and the birth of Christ from a virgin). To confirm and consolidate this distinction, Augustine must now clarify more clearly the difference between believing and looking with the mind at something present:

What then shall we say? Is it enough that we say that there is this difference between seeing and believing, namely, that present things (*praesentia*) are seen while absent ones are believed? This is perhaps quite enough if we understand that those things are in this passage said to be present that are available (*praesto*) to the senses of the mind or the body for they are called “present” because the word is derived from this. For in that way I see this sunlight by the sense of the body, and in that way I clearly see my will as well, because it is available to the sense of my mind and is present to me interiorly. But if someone whose lips and voice are present to me reveals his will to me, because the will that he reveals to me is, nonetheless, hidden from the sense of my body and of my mind, I believe; I do not see. Or, if I think he is lying, I do not believe, even if things are perhaps as he says. We believe those things, then, that are not present to our senses if the testimony that is offered to them seems suitable, but we see those things which are available (*praesto*), and for this reason they are called present to the senses of either the mind or the body. [...] Nor should you understand that, because I said that things not present to our senses are believed, those things that we once saw and retain and are certain that we did see are to be counted among those things that are believed, though they are not at that moment present to us when they are recalled by us. For they are not counted among things believed but among things seen, and they are for this reason known, not because we had faith in others as witnesses but because without any doubt we recall and know that we have seen them³⁶.

³⁵ Ibid., 6, p. 280.

³⁶ Ibid., 2, 7, p. 280.

Present things are *seen*, absent things are *believed*. The word «present» (*praesentia*) means things that, etymologically, «are available» (*praesto sunt*) to the senses of the mind or of the body. The difference between things seen and things believed is therefore not a difference of nature but, rather, a difference of position towards the seer and the believer. In other words, the same thing can be both visible and believable: it is visible in its presence and believable in its absence. Augustine makes two clarifications in this regard. The first is that «visible» is to be understood as «perceptible», not only by sight but also by the other senses, although the senses of the body are not relevant with regard to the distinction between mental sight and faith. The second point is that the things that are believed are absent not only with respect to our senses, but also with respect to our memory. If something is now absent, but we remember having perceived it in the past, then it is classified among the things seen and not among the things believed. In fact, believing something is different from remembering it: if I remember that something was there, I do not need to believe it; if I do not remember it, either because I have never perceived it or because I have forgotten it, only then can I believe it.

The fact that believing is different from seeing does not mean, however, that we cannot say that we know the things we believe. «Knowledge (*scientia*)», says Augustine in § 8, «is made up of both things seen and things believed»³⁷. In the case of things seen, we ourselves are the witnesses; in the case of things believed, others are the witnesses. When other witnesses are reliable and their testimonies are credible, we can be sure of what we believe, and it is on the basis of this certainty that it is said that we see with our minds the things we believe righteously. On the one hand, this way of speaking is not wrong, and Augustine himself admits (in another letter, number 120 to Consentius) that faith has «eyes of its own by which somehow sees that what it does not yet see is true and by which it most certainly sees that it does not yet see what it believes»³⁸. On the other hand, it is wrong to think that this vision of faith exhausts all forms of mental vision and, above all, that it coincides with the possession of the evidence of the things believed.

³⁷ Ibid., 3, 8, p. 281.

³⁸ Augustinus, *Epistula* 120, 2, 8, ed. K.D. Daur, (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, vol. XXX-I/B) Brepols, Turnhout 2009, p. 149 (transl. by R. Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine*, vol. II/1, cit., p. 134).

To further clarify the difference between seeing and believing, Augustine sets the example of a person to whom someone addresses the exhortation to believe that Christ has risen from the dead. What that person sees is different from what he or she believes – of course if they accept the invitation to believe. The believer perceives the evangelizer (the witness) and their exhortation (the testimony) corporally. The believer then mentally sees the meaning of the words from which the testimony is formed; the believer mentally sees their own faith, with which they believe; their own reflection, with which they reflect on the usefulness of their faith; their own will, with which they wanted to embrace the Christian religion; and the believer also mentally sees an image of the resurrection of Christ, that they imagine without having perceived it corporally. There are some things, however, that the believer does not see, but only believes, because they are not present to their soul or body: they are the will of the evangelizing witness and the very resurrection of Christ, which in reality no one saw at the moment it happened. With this example, Augustine thinks that he has sufficiently clarified, to Paulina and other readers, the difference between seeing with the mind or with the body (an act that always has present things as its object) and believing (an act that, instead, never has present things as its object) and that therefore is different from seeing mentally, even though it is carried out with the mind and can be seen with the mind:

But you have, I think, sufficiently recognized from this introduction of mine what it is to see either with the mind or with the body and how believing differs from them. What the mind does is, of course, seen by the mind since our faith is evident (*conspicua*) to our mind. But what we believe by that faith is, nonetheless, absent both from the gaze of our body, as the body in which Christ rose is absent, and from the gaze (*aspectu*) of the mind of someone else, as your faith is absent from the gaze of my mind. And yet I believe it is in you, though I do not see it with the body, something you cannot do either, or with the mind, something you can do, just as I can see my faith, which you cannot see³⁹.

3. The role of the distinction between seeing and believing in *De videndo deo*

Here we are at the last step of our itinerary. What role does this distinction between seeing and believing, which Augustine makes clear in the preamble, play in *De videndo deo*? We have already ascertained the explicit intentions of the first part of the letter: Augustine wants to prepare Paulina and other readers to be able

³⁹ Augustinus, *De videndo deo*, ed. A. Goldbacher, cit., 4, 11, p. 284.

to judge how his letter, and any other text of the same nature – that is, any theological writing other than the Sacred Scriptures –, should be judged. Paulina and other readers should be aware that the opinion of a theologian is not binding; it is placed on a lower level than evidence and the sacred text and should be assessed on the basis of both. The credibility of a theological opinion is directly proportional to its conformity to the truth that can be clearly perceived through the soul and the body or believed with the greatest certainty thanks to the supreme authority of the Scriptures. Furthermore, Augustine wishes to warn Paulina and other readers against presuming to know what they do not see clearly or do not believe with a biblically founded certainty.

The third part of *De videndo deo* is a practical application of the criteria set out at the beginning, and it concretely shows us their function within the text. As for the things she has seen when reading the second part of the letter, Paulina is urged by Augustine to pay attention to how she saw them:

whether it was by recalling that you saw them through the body, such as heavenly and earthly bodies, or whether you never attained them by bodily seeing but, in looking with the mind alone, you saw that they were true and certain, such as your will⁴⁰.

Paying attention, moreover, to how she can see this distinction between the two types of vision, the corporal and the mental, she will notice that it is with her mind that she sees it, not with her body.

Turning then to the things she has believed, Paulina will realise that she has believed more firmly in the statements of the Scriptures than in those of Ambrose and Augustine himself, as it should be. «Certainly», writes our author in § 39:

if you are truly wise in drawing distinctions, you see that we are far below that authority and that I am indeed farther below it⁴¹. But however much you believe both of us, you by no means set us on a par with that excellence⁴².

⁴⁰ Ibid., 16, 38, p. 312. On the evolution of Augustine's thought about the purification of the «inner man» necessary to see God, from the initial closeness to Neoplatonic positions to the recognition of the role of revelation, passing through the valorization of faith and charity, cfr. J. Ratzinger, «Der Weg der religiösen Erkenntnis nach dem heiligen Augustinus», in P. Granfield – J.A. Jungmann (eds.), *Kyriakon. Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, vol. II, Aschendorff, Münster 1970, pp. 553-564.

⁴¹ Augustine's esteem for Ambrose's *auctoritas* is sincere. Not even Ambrose's *auctoritas*, however, is comparable to that of the canonical Scriptures: cfr. Augustinus, *De gratia Christi et de peccato originali*, ed. C.F. Urba – J. Zycha, (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, vol. XLII), Tempsky – Freytag, Praha – Wien – Leipzig 1902, I, 43, 47, pp. 159-160.

⁴² Augustinus, *De videndo deo*, ed. A. Goldbacher, cit., 16, 39, pp. 313-314. Cfr. *Epistula* 93, 10,

The distinction between seeing and believing is therefore functional to a hierarchical disposition of credible authorities, according to which no theologian, even one as eminent as Ambrose, can be placed on the same level as the canonical Scriptures.

Moreover, in the absence of full evidence about the visual power of the risen body and in the absence of unequivocal statements from Scripture, Paulina and other readers have every right to have doubts about the truth of Ambrose's and Augustine's views. Paulina can legitimately think to herself: «What if God is seen by a clean heart and is, nonetheless, seen in a location? Or, What if those who are clean of heart will also see God with bodily eyes when this corruptible body has put on incorruption, when we will be equal to the angels?»⁴³.

The distinction between seeing and believing, however, to the extent that it includes the distinction between seeing with the body and seeing with the mind, can help Paulina to find an answer to her doubt, or at least to recognise the plausibility of Ambrose's and Augustine's opinion. Paulina sees her doubt clearly in her own mind with the eyes of her heart, eyes which she must not hesitate to put before the bodily ones, since she judges her outer eyes precisely with her inner ones. And this judgement takes place in a light that does not diffuse into space and that is not reachable by the body's sight. If Paulina struggles to capture that incorporeal light because of the images of the bodies she has introjected, owing to the «habit of living in the flesh»⁴⁴, she should at least consider these images themselves and observe that they are resemblances of bodies, not bodies. How much less, therefore, will inner realities that «bear no likeness to bodies»⁴⁵, such as charity, be bodies! And how much less will God be a body, of whom charity is a pledge in us! God, whose peace exceeds all intellect (*Phil* 4:7), is superior to our mind, which is the best part of us:

And for this reason, since there is something of us that is visible, such as this body, and something of us that is invisible, such as our interior self, and since our best part, that is, our mind and intelligence, is invisible to the eyes of the body, how can that which is better than our best part be visible to our lesser part? ⁴⁶

35, ed. K.D. Daur, cit., p. 193; *Epistula* 148, 4, 15, ed. A. Goldbacher, cit., pp. 344-345; *De natura et gratia*, ed. C.F. Urba – J. Zycha, (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, vol. LX) Tempsky – Freytag, Wien – Leipzig 1913, 61, 71, p. 286.

⁴³ Augustinus, *De videndo deo*, ed. A. Goldbacher, cit., 16, 40, p. 314.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 17, 42, p. 316.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 17, 43, p. 317.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 18, 45, p. 320.

If for no other reasons, through these reflections on the way in which she herself sees and believes, Paulina will therefore be able to find within herself a confirmation of the superiority of mental sight over bodily sight and of the incorporeal nature of God, invisible to the eyes of this body. «The whole question, then, about the spiritual body remains»⁴⁷, that is, whether it will have access to what is precluded to the eyes of the «animal» body. With regard to this question, which he addresses starting from the last lines of § 48 but postponing the in-depth discussion of it to «some other work»⁴⁸, Augustine merely places three firm points:

1) God is not a body.

2) The power of seeing does not belong only to bodies, as can be understood from the fact that, in the Trinity, the Father sees the Son and that, at the moment of creation, God saw all creatures, individually and as a whole.

3) The spiritual body will still be a body.

Putting these three points aside, the spiritual body may also be given the power to see God if there are valid arguments to support this view. Augustine, for his part, aligns himself with Ambrose's opinion, adding to reinforce that of another great exegete, Jerome, of whom he cites a passage from the *Commentarii in Esaiam* and a phrase (*res incorporalis corporalibus oculis non videtur*, «Something non-bodily is not seen by bodily eyes») actually absent from Jerome's extant writings⁴⁹. «I wanted to insert these statements of such great men on such an important topic», Augustine concludes:

not in order that you should think that you ought to follow the mind of any human being as if it possessed the authority of the canonical scripture but in order that those who hold another view may try to see with the mind what is true and seek God in the simplicity of their heart [*Wis* 1:1], so that they do not criticize such learned commentators on the divine scriptures⁵⁰.

Thus we realise that the distinction between seeing and believing, recommended by Augustine as a criterion for evaluating the content of *De videndo deo*, performs a twofold function. On the one hand, it involves the downsizing of Ambrose's doctrine (which Augustine himself shares) to the rank of a mere theological opinion, susceptible as such to be questioned. On the other hand, the distinc-

⁴⁷ Ibid., 21, 50, p. 325.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 23, 54, p. 331.

⁴⁹ Cfr. Agostino, *Vedere Dio*, cit., p. 91, footnote 127.

⁵⁰ Augustinus, *De videndo deo*, ed. A. Goldbacher, cit., 23, 54, p. 330.

tion allows Augustine to limit the doubts to the sole case of the spiritual body, confirming the impossibility of seeing God with the eyes of the «animal» body and underlining the harmony of Ambrose's position on the future vision of God with rational evidence and biblical faith. For both these reasons, the distinction between seeing and believing is really a major key to understanding Augustine's *De videndo deo*.

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Paula Oliveira e Silva*

L'âme à l'état de béatitude connaît-elle Dieu dans le corps ou hors du corps ?

La réponse d'Augustin dans le livre XII du *De Genesi ad litteram*

Sommaire

Cet article vise à mettre en évidence l'importance de l'exégèse de 2 *Cor.* 12, 2-4 que propose Augustin dans le livre XII de son *De Genesi ad litteram*, dans l'élaboration et le développement de sa théorie de la participation du corps dans la vision béatifique. Notre analyse se déploie en trois moments : 1. une mise au point de la position d'Augustin en ce qui concerne la présence du corps dans la vision de Dieu, au début de l'année 413 (*Sermo 277*); 2. le constat de l'absence d'un fondement biblique comme obstacle à l'affirmation de la participation du corps dans la vision béatifique de Dieu; 3. le dépassement de cet obstacle par l'exégèse du récit que fait Paul de son ravissement (2 *Cor.* 12, 2-4) et la déduction de la nécessaire participation du corps dans la vision de dieu *in patria*.

Mots-clés : Augustin ; *De Genesi ad litteram* livre XII ; extase de saint Paul ; vision de Dieu ; corps spirituel.

Auteurs anciens et médiévaux étudiés: Augustin; Porphyre.

Does the Soul in the State of Beatitude Know God in the Body or Outside the Body? Augustine's Answer in Book XII of *De Genesi ad litteram*.

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Abstract

This article highlights the relevance of Augustine's exegesis of 2 Cor. 12, 2-4 in book XII of *De Genesi ad litteram*, for the development of his theory on the participation of the body in the beatific vision. Our analysis is developed in three moments : the state of Augustine's theory on the participation of the body in the vision of God at the beginning of the year 413 (*Sermo 277*); the absence of a biblical text on the topic as an obstacle to affirm the participation of the body in the beatific vision; the overcoming of this obstacle through the exegesis of Paul's narration of his ecstasy (2 Cor. 12, 2-4) and the deduction of the necessity for the human body to participate in the vision of God *in patria*.

Keywords : Augustine ; *De Genesi ad litteram* book XII ; ecstasy of saint Paul ; vision of God ; spiritual body.

Ancient and medieval authors studied : Augustine ; Porphyry.

1. Voir Dieu avec les yeux du corps ? Difficultés et impasses

La question à laquelle vise répondre la doctrine d'Augustin sur la vision de Dieu peut être ainsi formulée : « Dans l'état final de béatitude peut-on voir Dieu avec les yeux du corps ? ». L'élaboration de la réponse à cette question mérite bien de figurer parmi les sujets les plus remarquables et difficiles de l'œuvre augustinienne, et cela à plusieurs titres. D'une part, parce que dans la réponse à cette question se trouvent impliquées presque toutes les lignes de recherche philosophique et théologique qui dessinent la macrostructure de l'œuvre d'Augustin. C'est-à-dire que les réponses aux grandes questions qui l'ont toujours préoccupé – la nature de Dieu et de l'âme, l'origine du mal, le désir du bonheur – se retrouvent, d'une façon ou d'une autre, dans la réponse apportée à la question de savoir dans quel état sera vécue la béatitude finale de l'homme. D'autre part, parce que l'élaboration d'une réponse cohérente avec l'ensemble de son système est à l'évidence devenue un défi pour Augustin lui-même.

En effet, il était bien conscient des nombreuses contradictions et perplexités auxquelles mène la tentative de réponse à la question de savoir si, et comment, l'homme peut avoir connaissance de Dieu *in patria*. Sa réponse a été prudemment construite, tout au long d'un parcours qui a traversé pratiquement toute son œuvre. Refaire ce parcours revient ainsi pour nous à revisiter les thèmes essentiels de la philosophie d'Augustin, tels que les modèles psychosomatiques de la perception du monde, la nature de la connaissance de soi, la spécificité de la connaissance intellectuelle, le problème de la fin ultime de l'homme et de la participation de *l'homo totus* dans l'état de béatitude finale.

Le moment décisif du processus d'élaboration de la réponse augustinienne au problème de la vision de Dieu *in patria* s'étale, d'après la littérature, sur la période comprise entre les années 410 et 413¹. Parmi les écrits augustinien plus

importants, du point de vue de la question de la vision de Dieu, se trouve le traité *De videndo deo* (lettre 147, à Pauline), datée de 412/413². Augustin y réitère sa position selon laquelle Dieu sera perçu en esprit par les esprits qui auront atteint un haut degré de purification. C'est aussi dans ce texte qu'il laisse ouverte, en outre, la possibilité d'une réponse positive à la question de la vision de Dieu avec les yeux corporels. Comme le note Catapano, dans sa mise au point de l'évolution d'Augustin sur le problème de la vision de Dieu en ces années, au cas où l'élaboration d'une réponse affirmative cette question s'avèrera possible, trois conditions doivent être réunies : Dieu ne pourra pas être compris comme corps ; la vision de Dieu ne pourra pas être accordée au seul corps ; on ne saura admettre que le corps charnel puisse se transformer en esprit. Augustin renvoie finalement la discussion approfondie du problème à une œuvre à venir³.

Il est impossible d'identifier cette œuvre ultérieure, puisqu'il n'y en a aucune dans laquelle Augustin s'occupe explicitement du problème de la vision de Dieu. Cependant, le *De civitate dei* est souvent évoqué dans la littérature comme étant une œuvre qui répond à ces exigences, surtout si l'on tient compte du Livre XXII, où Augustin livre une interprétation achevée de ce sujet. Toutefois, plus qu'une dizaine d'années se sont écoulées entre le traité *De videndo deo* et la position finale d'Augustin, expliquée dans le *De civitate dei*, XXII. Nous pensons donc qu'il devra être possible de repérer, dans des textes antérieurs, les jalons parcourus par Augustin vers sa position finale.

Parmi les textes couramment identifiés comme faisant partie de l'ensemble d'écrits dans lesquels Augustin s'occupe de la vision de Dieu, on retrouve le *Sermo 277*⁴. Dans ce sermon, et bien que sa réponse au problème de la vision de Dieu n'ajoute pas vraiment à ce qu'Augustin avait déjà exposé dans le *De videndo deo*,

¹ L'état de la question a été récemment dressé, dans son contexte historique, par G. Catapano ; pour les principales questions en débat ainsi que pour le corpus textuel du 'dossier vision de Dieu' *uide* G. Catapano, «Introduzione», in *Agostino. Vedere Dio (lettera 147)*, Città Nuova, Roma 2019, pp. 6-8. L'édition latine du *De videndo deo liber* que nous utilisons ici est celle du CSEL 44: S. *Augustini epistula, ex recensione* A. Goldbacher, Wien – Leipzig 1904, pp. 274-331.

² La date retenue pour ce traité est la fin de l'année 412, début 413; cfr. Catapano, «Introduzione», cit., p. 6, note 4.

³ Cfr. Catapano, «Introduzione», cit., pp. 5-6: «Nella frase conclusiva del *De videndo deo* l'autore effettivamente rinvia a un'altra opera la discussione approfondita dell'arduo problema, non senza aver comunque escluso tre risposte positive al quesito, o meglio tre ragioni per rispondere positivamente, ossia la concezione di Dio stesso come un corpo, l'attribuzione della visione solamente ai corpi e la presunta trasformazione della carne in spirito».

il est néanmoins possible de constater qu'Augustin cherchait des arguments et d'autorité et de raison – les deux pierres angulaires qu'il a toujours considérées comme les voies de la connaissance – pour avancer vers une réponse affirmative à la question de la participation de la corporéité dans la vision béatifique.

Dans le développement de sa doctrine sur la vision de Dieu, et justement en ce qui concerne les deux types de fondements, biblique et rationnelle, que cherchait alors Augustin, il y a toutefois un texte qui n'a pas été, à mon avis, suffisamment pris en compte. Il s'agit du livre XII du *De Genesi ad litteram*. Le livre XII, dont la date de composition est due elle aussi à l'année 413⁵, est considéré comme un traité à part eu égard des onze autres livres qui constituent cet ouvrage augustinien. C'est notre but ici de montrer qu'il y a des raisons valables pour affirmer que la doctrine exposée dans ce livre à propos de l'expérience extatique de Paul constitue un moment décisif dans le développement de la pensée d'Augustin sur la vision de Dieu. A l'appui de notre hypothèse, nous chercherons à montrer que les deux types de fondement, biblique et rationnelle, qu'Augustin estimait indispensables dans le *Sermo 277* pour l'élaboration d'une réponse affirmative à la question de la présence du corps dans la vision de Dieu, se trouvent précisément dans le livre XII du *De Genesi ad litteram*.

En effet, dans ce large chapitre, le dernier de l'œuvre, Augustin se livre à une analyse aussi étendue que systématique du passage biblique de 2 *Cor.* 12, 2-4. Il s'interroge de façon exhaustive sur le paradoxe suivant, qu'il trouve dans le récit de l'extase de Paul : comment peut-on comprendre que Paul ait vu Dieu, suprême vérité, et puisse ignorer s'il l'a vu dans son corps ou bien en dehors de son corps? La résolution de ce paradoxe exige l'analyse préalable des différents processus de la perception visuelle – corporelle, spirituelle et mentale – lesquels, selon Au-

⁴ Ce sermon est daté de 413 et a été prononcé le jour de la fête de saint Vincent le martyr, qui se célèbre le 22 janvier. L'édition latine du *Sermo 277* que nous utilisons ici est celle de la PL 38 (1865), 1257-1268.

⁵ Pierre-Marie Hombert date la composition du *De Genesi ad litteram* [ci-après *De Gen. ad litt.*] des années 412-413 (voir P.-M. Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie augustinienne*, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, Paris 2000, pp. 186-188). Hombert a également montré la convergence de la date de composition de cet ouvrage avec celle d'un ensemble d'écrits sur la question de la vision de Dieu: la lettre 148 (*Commonitorium ad Fortunatianum*) et le *Sermo 277*. En ce qui concerne le douzième livre du *De Gen. ad litt.*, d'après Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches...*, cit, p.188, n. 379, «il convient de ne pas trop l'éloigner du *De videndo deo*. L'année 413 semble la plus probable, puisqu'en 414 l'*Epist.* 159, 2 à Evodius y renvoie explicitement».

gustin, caractérisent l'expérience cognitive humaine, dans l'état d'union de l'âme au corps. La conclusion que tire Augustin de cet examen est la suivante : Paul, dans son extase, a connu Dieu mais il s'est ignoré lui-même. Or, ce fait contredit la nature de l'expérience que l'âme peut faire de Dieu. Comment peut-on alors comprendre que quelqu'un est en face de la vérité suprême et s'ignore lui-même ? L'analyse des processus cognitifs impliqués dans le doute de Paul permettra à Augustin de conclure que pour les êtres humains la participation du corps est nécessaire à la vision de Dieu *in patria*.

Dans ce qui suit, j'examine deux textes d'Augustin – le *Sermo 277* et le livre XII du *De Genesi ad litteram* – tous les deux datés de l'année 413⁶. Dans le *Sermo 277*, Augustin explique que ses réticences tiennent au manque d'arguments – d'autorité comme de raison – pour soutenir que Dieu peut être vu par le corps dans la béatitude. Dans notre second texte, Augustin se livre à une exégèse de 2 *Cor.* 12, 2-4, au bout de laquelle il finira par conclure que la présence de la corporéité est requise pour la vision de Dieu *in patria*. C'est aussi à partir de l'exégèse de 2 *Cor.* 12, 2-4 qu'il parviendra à isoler un principe philosophique – l'esprit (*mens*) tend naturellement à régir le corps – essentiel pour expliquer rationnellement pourquoi la participation du corps est nécessaire à la vision de Dieu.

2. À défaut de fondements, *vana curiositas*

Comme nous l'avons déjà noté, le *Sermo 277* figure parmi les textes retenus comme pertinents pour la compréhension de la doctrine de la vision de Dieu d'Augustin. Plus précisément, ce sermon offre des éléments significatifs concernant la position d'Augustin au début de l'année 413. Dans ce qui suit, nous nous attacherons surtout à mettre en évidence le fait que, dans ce sermon, Augustin reconnaît que ses réticences à propos de la possibilité de la participation du corps dans la connaissance de Dieu *in patria* découlent de sa difficulté à trouver, dans l'autorité biblique comme dans celle de la raison, des éléments selon lui indispen-

⁶ *Uide* les notes 2 et 4. Le sermon fut prononcé au début d'année 413. Le livre XII, comme le reconnaît Augustin lui-même dans le *De Gen. ad litt.*, XII, 35, 6, est assez long, sa composition ayant sans doute pris plusieurs mois. Nous suivons ici le texte latin du *De Gen. ad litt.* reproduit dans Augustin, *La Genèse au sens littéral* (BA 48-49). Traduction, introduction et notes de P. Agaësse et A. Solignac, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, Paris 2000-2001 (réimp.); les citations dans le corps de notre texte sont tirées de la traduction française d'Agaësse et Solignac.

sables à l'élaboration de la bonne réponse. À défaut de ces deux fondements de toute connaissance rationnelle, la narrative sur la vision corporelle de Dieu n'est qu'un produit de la fantaisie. S'appuyant sur des représentations imaginaires qui ne sont que source d'erreur, une telle croyance est insoutenable rationnellement et, ce qui est plus, tombe dans l'affirmation de l'erreur la plus pernicieuse de toute religion – Dieu est corps et peut être vu par les yeux corporels.

Pour ce qui est de l'autorité biblique, Augustin précise qu'il ne s'est pas arrêté sur la présomption que ces textes n'existent pas : c'est tout simplement qu'il n'a toujours pas su les trouver ; soit, effectivement, parce qu'ils n'existent pas, soit parce qu'ils sont cachés, soit, enfin, parce qu'ils se cachent de lui⁷. Quant aux arguments de raison, Augustin répète ce qu'il avait déjà dit dans le *De videndo deo* : pour être en mesure de voir Dieu, le corps devrait subir une transformation et, de charnel, devenir spirituel. Or, cette transformation devrait se produire au niveau des yeux du corps matériel, pour qu'ils puissent arriver à voir une chose qui n'est pas soumise aux conditions du lieu. Car celui-ci est le cas de Dieu qui, en tant qu'être purement spirituel, est un être non-localisé. Augustin avoue ne pas réussir à trouver aucun principe philosophique lui permettant d'expliquer si et comment une transformation de ce genre peut avoir lieu dans les organes corporels de la vision, de sorte qu'ils soient capables de voir des natures non-corporelles⁸.

Dans le *Sermo 277*, Augustin retient inconditionnellement les présupposés jugés nécessaires à la vision de Dieu dans le *De videndo deo* mentionnés précédemment dans le cadre de la synthèse proposée par Catapano : on ne peut ni attribuer au seul corps la vision de Dieu, ni admettre que le corps charnel se transforme en esprit. Comment, alors, peut-on arriver à une explication rationnelle de la vision corporelle de Dieu ? À ce sujet, il n'y a ni expérience humaine, ni cause rationnelle à même de justifier cette transformation. De même que pour la recherche d'une autorité biblique, Augustin n'exclut pas la possibilité de l'existence d'une telle cause. Il affirme simplement que, si elle existe, elle demeure cachée à la raison⁹.

⁷ *Sermo 277*, 14 (PL, 38, 1265) : « (...) definitum aliquid inde in Scriptura non invenimus, aut nondum invenimus. Nam neque hoc audeo praesumere, non in ea esse quod valeat inveniri. Aut non est, aut latet, aut me latet. Si quid in alterutram partem potuerit ab aliquo inveniri, libenter accipio, et me instructum nisi gratias egero, non homini dicenti, sed ei qui per hominem docet, ingratus erro».

⁸ *Sermo 277*, 18 (PL, 38, 1268) : «Deus non videtur in loco, quia non est corpus; (...) Hoc firmissime teneamus. Si autem caro illa tantam acceperit mutationem ut possit per eam videri quod non videtur in loco; omnino ita sit. Sed quaerendum est, unde doceatur».

Or, faute d'une base rationnelle, évidente et certaine pour expliquer comment se fait-il que le corps humain puisse voir Dieu dans l'état de béatitude, et à défaut d'une autorité biblique sur laquelle fonder cette connaissance, Augustin estime que toute affirmation sur ce sujet est téméraire et même vicieuse. En effet, une telle affirmation ne s'appuierait sur une connaissance certaine, mais sur le vice de la *curiositas*. Dans cet état de choses, affirmer que Dieu sera vu corporellement *in patria* n'est qu'une grave et impie erreur, au regard de la créature humaine mais surtout du créateur. Le sermon se termine comme s'était terminé le *De videndo deo* : par l'exhortation à la purification de l'esprit, précisément cette dimension de l'âme qui est obscurcie par la *curiositas*, c'est-à-dire, par les images du monde et de Dieu, fabriquées par l'esprit (*spiritus*) humain. Étant donné la nature immatérielle de Dieu, ce que nous avons comme certain est qu'il sera vu immatériel et spirituellement. Ce qui et la Bible affirme et la raison confirme est que Dieu sera vu par les cœurs purs : c'est-à-dire par l'esprit humain, dont le rapport avec Dieu n'admet l'interposition d'aucune créature, d'aucune image ou représentation, d'aucun produit du mécanisme psychosomatique de la cognition humaine du monde matériel.

Dans le *Sermo 277*, comme dans le *De videndo deo*, Augustin affirme que la vision de Dieu est donnée aux cœurs purs et non pas à une quelconque vision corporelle. Il se dit pourtant prêt à changer d'avis au cas où des preuves d'autorité et de raison seront trouvées et le justifient. Or, c'est notre conviction que, dans le *De Genesi ad litteram*, Augustin trouvera les unes et les autres. Tout d'abord, un argument d'autorité : un passage biblique à travers l'analyse duquel il lui apparaît clairement que la vision spirituelle de Dieu ne peut se donner sans la participation du corps. Il trouve ce passage biblique précisément lorsqu'il entreprend d'interpréter littéralement l'expérience du *raptus* de Paul. Aussi, dans le *Sermo 277*, 4, Augustin avait-il affirmé que personne n'avait fait l'expérience de la vision béatifique⁹. Or, dans *De Genesi ad litteram*, livre XII, Augustin reconnaît qu'il y a quelqu'un qui a fait cette expérience et l'a racontée à la première personne : c'est Paul qui, en 2 *Cor.* 12, 2-4, raconte son ascension au troisième ciel. Augustin livre

⁹ *Sermo 277*, 14 (PL, 38, 1265): «Si ergo substantiam, quae non videtur in loco, poterunt vel tunc corporales oculi videre, cum fuerit corpus spiritale; si poterunt aliqua vi occulta, aliqua vi inexperta et prorsus incognita, nec ulla aestimatione percepta, si poterunt, possint. Oculis enim videmus, non nostris oculis invidemus».

¹⁰ *Sermo 277*, 4 (PL, 38, 1259): «Quae sit autem futura in resurrectione gloria carnis huius, quis explicet verbis ? Nemo adhuc nostrum habendo expertus est».

alors une analyse exhaustive de ce récit et, bien qu'il ne l'admette jamais explicitement, il nous semble tout à fait judicieux de considérer qu'il y trouve le support scripturaire pour affirmer que, concernant les êtres humains, la connaissance de Dieu *in patria* ne peut se produire sans la corporéité. En conséquence de cette exégèse, Augustin est amené à isoler un axiome philosophique qui justifie la nécessité de cette présence. Si la connaissance de Dieu est purement intellectuelle et si la corporéité humaine doit nécessairement participer de cette expérience, alors l'esprit (*mens*) doit avoir avec le corps un rapport lui aussi nécessaire : l'esprit (*mens*) tend naturellement à régir le corps.

3. Un fondement biblique : 2 Cor. 12, 2-4

Notre lecture du livre XII du *De Genesi ad litteram* nous amène ainsi à conclure que Augustin y franchit deux étapes importantes vers l'édification de sa doctrine de la vision de Dieu *in patria*. Dans ce livre XII il trouve un fondement biblique et un principe de raison où asseoir la nécessité de l'intervention du corps dans la connaissance de Dieu, dans l'état de béatitude. Le fondement biblique est le passage de 2 Cor. 12, 2-4 dont l'exégèse lui permet de conclure que la vision de Dieu *in patria* ne peut se produire sans la participation du corps. L'identification du principe de raison supposée dans cette conclusion lui permet de soutenir que, pour les êtres humains, la participation du corps dans la vision de Dieu *in patria* est une exigence de nature.

Dans le *Sermo 277*, Augustin affirmait que personne n'avait encore fait l'expérience de la vision de Dieu dans l'état de béatitude. Il y déclarait aussi ne pas avoir encore trouvé dans les saintes Écritures les passages à même de montrer que l'homme voie Dieu dans le corps. Dans le livre XII du *De Genesi ad litteram* il fait un recueil des passages bibliques où l'on peut trouver des récits de théophanies – et, par conséquent, d'expériences humaines de la vision de Dieu. Dans un exercice d'intelligence de la foi qui a pour but d'éclairer les énigmes impliquées dans le problème de la vision de Dieu, il soumet ces passages au crible d'une analyse fondée sur les mécanismes psychosomatiques de la vision humaine¹¹. Cependant, bien qu'il y ait dans l'Ancien Testament des récits de vision de Dieu par des mortels, aucun ne décrit cette vision dans l'état de béatitude : il s'agit

¹¹ Dans les livres II et III du *De trinitate*, Augustin analyse également des récits de théophanies, ayant pour but de montrer comment Dieu, qui est pur esprit, a pu se manifester corporellement.

de personnages telles que le roi Balthazar, l'apôtre Pierre ou même Moïse – lesquels, quoique diversement, dans leur corps mortel, ont fait expérience des manifestations de Dieu¹². Ces manifestations se sont donc produites toujours par le biais d'une médiation, c'est-à-dire par des signes, qu'ils soient des mots, des images d'objets ou des éléments naturels. Dans tous ces récits, Dieu approche les hommes dans leur condition spatiotemporelle et donc à l'aide d'une quelconque réalité créée. Or, dans le cas évoqué par Paul en 2 *Cor.* 12, 2-4, au contraire, c'est l'apôtre qui est conduit à la demeure de Dieu lui-même et amené à faire l'expérience de l'essence divine.

Dans le passage biblique examiné par Augustin, 2 *Cor.* 12, 2-4, Paul décrit en deux versets sa montée au troisième ciel. Puisque la méthode utilisée par Augustin dans le *De Genesi ad litteram* est l'exégèse littérale, il prend pour vrai le récit de Paul et ce qu'il raconte – c'est-à-dire une expérience effective ayant eu lieu dans la vie de l'apôtre (*rerum gestarum asserenda*¹³) –, et non pas pour une description allégorique à fin pédagogique. Augustin considère donc que Paul décrit un fait historique, même si subjectivement vécu. Paul déclare ne pas avoir de doutes eu égard de ce fait et de ce dont il a joui – le troisième ciel. Le doute de l'apôtre se porte, en revanche, sur le fait de la participation ou non de son corps à cette expérience. Ce doute intrigue Augustin au plus haut point. Il consacra tout le livre XII du *De Genesi ad litteram* à l'analyse de ce doute dans le but de tirer pleinement parti de ce passage, soit pour comprendre la structure cognitive humaine dans l'état d'union de l'âme avec le corps, soit pour en déduire le fonctionnement de cette structure, tant dans l'état de l'âme séparée que dans la vision des bienheureux *in patria*.

Pour expliquer les raisons de sa perplexité, Augustin analyse en détail les trois types de vision – ou modes de cognition – qu'il reconnaît dans l'appareil de l'intellection humaine. La caractérisation de ces trois types de vision se décline selon le rapport qu'entretiennent les facultés cognitives à leurs objets. Soit les objets corporels sont présents et, étant perçus, produisent sur l'âme un impact

Dans notre Livre XII, en revanche, l'analyse est centrée principalement sur les conditions de la connaissance de Dieu par les hommes auxquels Il s'est manifesté, c'est-à-dire sur la structure humaine de la connaissance. Pierre-Marie Hombert a montré que la rédaction des Livres II et III du *De trinitate* est contemporaine de la rédaction d'un certain nombre de livres du *De Gen. ad litt.* et, notamment, du Livre XII - voir Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches...*, cit., pp. 56-60 ; 62-64.

¹² Cfr. *De Gen. ad litt.*, XII, 11, 23-24, pour l'analyse des visions de Balthazar et de Pierre. Pour la spécificité de la vision de Moïse, voir *De Gen. ad litt.*, XII, 27, 55.

¹³ Cfr. *De Gen. ad litt.*, I, 1, 1.

– il s’agit alors de la vision corporelle; soit les facultés cognitives de l’homme s’appliquent aux images traitées par les sens internes à partir de cet impact des objets corporels – auquel cas il s’agit de la perception qui correspond à la vision spirituelle; soit, enfin, les facultés cognitives de l’homme se rapportent aux intelligibles qui, par leur nature, ne sont susceptibles d’être perçus par aucune des visions précédentes, et on parle alors de vision mentale ou intellectuelle. Augustin affirme que, en dehors de ces trois types de formes de perception, il n’en connaît pas d’autres. En fait, ces trois types correspondent aux trois niveaux de réalité connus : ils rendent compte de l’opération des trois puissances de l’âme dans leurs rapports avec chacun de ces niveaux¹⁴.

Le but ultime de cette révision systématique de sa doctrine de la connaissance est l’identification du type de vision ou d’expérience cognitive qui aura eu lieu lors de l’extase de l’apôtre Paul. Pour atteindre cet objectif final, Augustin entreprend une analyse minutieuse du rapport entre les types possibles d’objets de connaissance et les mécanismes physiques, psychologiques et mentaux y impliqués. Dans le cadre de cet examen, il identifie également le degré de certitude atteint par l’esprit (*mens*) à chacun de ces niveaux cognitifs. Selon Augustin, une connaissance est d’autant plus vraie que l’accès à son objet exige moins de médiations. Or, la connaissance intellectuelle, propre de la vision intellectuelle, se produit sans médiation entre l’esprit (*mens*) et l’intelligible. La connaissance qui en découle est par conséquent absolument certaine et vraie, exempte d’erreur ou de doute.

Établis les trois types de vision et le degré de certitude propre à chacun, Augustin s’attache à l’analyse des versets 2 *Cor.* 12, 2-4 sur l’expérience cognitive qui s’est produite lors de l’extase de Paul, en se centrant sur le degré de certitude subjective de l’apôtre. Paul ne doute pas de l’objet dont il a alors fait l’expérience : il a connu Dieu, en son essence. Donc, il a vu en Dieu les choses qu’il a contemplés dans cet état d’extase. Et il doute quand-même de la participation de son corps dans cette expérience : était-il alors dans ou en dehors de son corps ? En

¹⁴ Nous ne développerons pas ici l’analyse des trois types de vision et de leurs fonctions au sein de l’appareil psychosomatique de la connaissance. Pour l’analyse descriptive des trois types de vision en *De Genesi ad litteram*, XII, voir R.J. Teske, «St. Augustine on the Vision of God», in Id., *Augustine of Hippo. Philosopher, Exegete and Theologian. A Second Collection of Essays*, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee 2009, spec. pp. 155-164 ; sur le processus psychologique de perception sensible impliqué dans la vision corporelle, cfr. G. O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind*, University of California Press, Berkeley – Los Angeles 1987, spec. pp. 84-88.

distinguant les doutes des certitudes de Paul, en isolant ce que Paul déclare savoir de ce dont il affirme douter, Augustin conclut que l'expérience cognitive de Paul ne peut correspondre au type de vision spirituelle et que, de fait, il ne peut s'agir que d'une vision intellectuelle.

Cette conclusion d'Augustin à propos de la nature de la connaissance extatique de Paul est remarquable, et cela pour deux raisons. Tout d'abord, en excluant le type d'expérience intellectuelle de Paul du type des visions spirituelles, Augustin distingue l'expérience extatique de Paul d'un autre type d'expériences cognitives dans lesquelles la conscience du corps est atténuée, comme c'est le cas des rêves ou autres expériences d'extase d'origine pathologique ou même diabolique. Ce type d'extase se produit au niveau cognitif de la puissance spirituelle (*spiritus*), et exige toujours la médiation d'images. Il est donc à inclure dans le genre des visions spirituelles. Mais l'expérience cognitive de Paul fut purement mentale et, par conséquent, sans médiation par des images. Comme l'explique Augustin, Paul ne décrit pas la montée au troisième ciel comme un parcours d'ascension à travers un lieu qu'on nomme le ciel, dans lequel il y a plusieurs seuils, les uns supérieurs aux autres¹⁵. Paul ne décrit pas non plus ce lieu par des images corporelles d'objets d'une extrême beauté, dont il aurait joui dans son ravissement. Son doute ne porte pas non plus sur l'état d'éveil ou de rêve où il se serait trouvé lors de son ravissement¹⁶. En somme, l'expérience de Paul ne présente pas les caractéristiques de la vision spirituelle.

En deuxième lieu, il importe de souligner l'identification que fait ici Augustin entre le type de cognition atteint par Paul lors de la vision du troisième ciel avec la vision intellectuelle. C'est en fait l'objectif de toute cette systématisation des degrés de vision et son application à l'exégèse de 2 *Cor*: 12, 2-4 : l'expérience extatique de Paul porte la caractéristique de la vision intellectuelle. Ce type de vision se distingue de tous les autres, selon Augustin, en ce qu'elle se produit sans aucune médiation. Dans la vision intellectuelle l'esprit (*mens*) a trait à des êtres qui lui sont identiques en nature : incorporelles et immatérielles. Autrement dit, elle a trait aux intelligibles purs qui ne peuvent pas, par nature, être représentés corporellement : *in rebus incorporeis nulla corporis imagine figuratis per intellectualem visionem*¹⁷. C'est par cette vision que l'esprit (*mens*) accède à la connaissance des plus hautes réalités dans la hiérarchie ontologique, dans laquelle

¹⁵ Cfr. *De Gen. ad litt.*, XII, 4, 9.

¹⁶ Cfr. *De Gen. ad litt.*, XII, 26, 54.

se trouve, pour Augustin, l'essence même des choses, son être vrai, et non pas une image des corps produite dans l'esprit humain. Dans la connaissance de type intellectuelle les choses ne sont pas connues telles qu'elles apparaissent à l'esprit et à partir du rapport qu'elles établissent avec l'appareil cognitif humain, lequel engendre des copies ou images. Au contraire, une connaissance fondée sur des visions intellectuelles saisit les choses dans le rapport qu'elles entretiennent avec leur principe originaire, c'est-à-dire, Dieu. Dans ce type de vision l'esprit (*mens*) discerne l'essence même des choses : leur *quid est*. C'est pourquoi, en ce qui concerne la relation entre la nature de l'objet connu et sa possession par l'intellect, ce niveau de connaissance n'est pas sujet à l'erreur ou à l'incertitude : il est toujours vrai – *intellectualis visio non fallitur*¹⁸. Or, si Paul a connu les choses en Dieu lors de son extase et s'il doute encore de la participation du corps dans ce processus, il y a dans ce récit de l'apôtre une perplexité insoluble qu'Augustin articule ainsi dans un ensemble de questions :

Car si ce qui était vu était un ciel corporel, pourquoi ignorait-il s'il le voyait avec les yeux du corps ? Si, par contre, il était dans le doute, ne sachant s'il voyait avec les yeux du corps ou en esprit – et voilà pourquoi il dit : Était-ce dans son corps ? était-ce hors de son corps ? je ne sais, – comment la même incertitude ne porterait-elle pas aussi sur le point de savoir s'il voyait réellement un ciel corporel ou si ce n'était qu'une vision imaginative ? Par ailleurs, s'il voyait une substance incorporelle, non sous l'apparence d'une image corporelle, mais à la façon dont on voit la justice, la sagesse ou autres réalités de ce genre, et que ce fût là le ciel, il est également clair que rien de tel ne peut être vu avec les yeux de ce corps¹⁹.

Comme il l'a toujours souligné dans tous ses écrits et sur la nature de Dieu et sur la connaissance que l'homme peut avoir de lui, Dieu ne peut pas être vu corporellement. La connaissance qu'a eu Paul dans son ravissement ne peut donc consister que dans une vision mentale ou intellectuelle, donnée à des cœurs purs. La thèse augustinienne du *De videndo deo*, réitérée dans le *Sermo 277*, semble donc trouver ici sa confirmation. Toutefois, dans ce type de vision il y a une connaissance par évidence qui résulte de la présence de l'objet à l'esprit (*mens*) *nulla interposita creatura*. Comment expliquer alors le doute sincère de Paul ? Pourquoi doute-t-il de la manière dont sa nature humaine fut co-impliquée dans cette expérience ? Y aurait-il une pédagogie divine implicite dans cette aporie ?

¹⁷ *De Gen. ad litt.*, XII, 12, 25.

¹⁸ *De Gen. ad litt.*, XII, 14, 29.

¹⁹ *De Gen. ad litt.*, XII, 4, 12.

La conclusion que retire Augustin de cette exégèse de 2 *Cor.* 12, 2-4 consiste à dire que Paul a connu Dieu, mais il ne s'est pas connu lui-même. C'est la raison pour laquelle il a douté de l'état dans lequel il a vu Dieu, si dans son corps ou bien en dehors de son corps. Peut-on s'attendre à ce que le livre XII règle le problème de la présence de la corporéité dans la jouissance et vision de Dieu dans l'état de béatitude finale ? Augustin livre ses conclusions un peu vivement et à la fin du livre, devenu si long, dit-il, qu'il est urgent de conclure : « tandis que nous cherchons et que tantôt nous trouvons et tantôt ne trouvons pas, notre livre prend une telle longueur qu'il devient urgent de conclure »²⁰. Pourtant, si on s'était arrêté à ce chapitre 34, au lieu de suivre l'exposé d'Augustin jusqu'à la dernière ligne, on n'aurait pas atteint le cœur de sa réponse.

4. Des certitudes peu nombreuses mais fermes

Dans les trois derniers chapitres du livre XII du *De Genesi ad litteram* Augustin traite de la connaissance que peut posséder l'âme humaine en état de séparation du corps et expose ses principales convictions quant à la façon dont l'esprit (*mens*) connaît Dieu – tant dans cet état provisoire de séparation du corps, que dans l'état définitif de béatitude *in patria* lorsque, à nouveau elle se réunit au corps. Ce faisant, et en ce qui concerne la sorte de vision expérimentée par Paul au troisième ciel, Augustin réaffirme qu'il ne peut s'agir que d'une vision intellectuelle :

Sous le nom de troisième ciel, ce que l'âme intellectuelle contemple une fois qu'elle est tellement séparée, éloignée, coupée des sens charnels et tellement purifié qu'elle puisse voir et entendre, de manière ineffable, ce qui est dans ce ciel et la substance même de Dieu, ainsi que le Verbe de Dieu par qui tout a été fait, et cela dans la charité de l'Esprit-Saint : (...) il n'est pas déraisonnable de penser que c'est aussi en ce séjour que fut ravi l'Apôtre, et que peut-être là est le paradis supérieur à tous les autres et, si je puis dire, le paradis des paradis²¹.

Ce qui est ici à l'œuvre est la vision intellectuelle selon laquelle l'esprit (*mens*) s'élève à la contemplation des choses, non pas en tant que similitudes forgées sur des représentations corporelles, mais en tant que formes exemplaires, subsistant dans l'intelligence divine²². Une telle connaissance se produit sans

²⁰ *De Gen ad litt.*, XII, 34, 65.

²¹ *De Gen. ad litt.*, XII, 34, 67.

l'intervention du corps. Elle est donc du même genre de celle que les anges ont de Dieu et des créatures. Cependant, étant donné la supériorité de leur nature purement spirituelle, s'il est vrai que les anges connaissent les choses créées directement dans l'essence divine – leur vision étant donc toujours une vision intellectuelle – il est aussi vrai que la connaissance de la corporéité n'est pas dans le pouvoir des anges. Tout de même, quoique la vision intellectuelle soit la sorte de vision la plus parfaite des trois types reconnus par Augustin, faut-il admettre que ce mode de connaissance correspond au mode spécifiquement humain de connaître Dieu 'au troisième ciel', ça veut dire, dans l'état de béatitude parfaite ? Il s'agit sans doute d'un mode de connaissance propre aux esprits purs, comme l'avait affirmé Augustin tant dans le *De videndo deo* que dans le *Sermo 277*. Et c'est la raison pour laquelle, dans ces textes, Augustin exhortait ses interlocuteurs à purifier l'esprit de toute représentation corporelle : ils deviendront ainsi semblables aux anges et en mesure d'aspirer à voir Dieu – car Dieu est esprit et ne peut être vu que par l'esprit.

Toutefois, si la jouissance de Dieu qui est à la portée de l'esprit des bienheureux ne peut être atteinte que par une vision intellectuelle, des apories resurgissent aussitôt à l'intérieur de la macrostructure de la philosophie d'Augustin. Si, dans l'état de béatitude, la nature humaine devient semblable à celle des anges, au point de connaître Dieu et les créatures en Dieu comme le font les anges ; si la connaissance que, dans cet état, l'être humain aura de la totalité des choses créées est une connaissance du type de celle dont Paul a fait l'expérience dans son extase – une connaissance qui s'achève par moyen d'une vision intellectuelle directement puisée dans le Verbe créateur et sans la participation du corps ; si cette forme de connaissance correspond au bonheur le plus parfait auquel peuvent aspirer les êtres humains : quel sens aurait-il alors pour Dieu d'avoir fait la différence, dans son acte créateur, entre les anges et les hommes, en donnant à ces derniers une nature composée de matière et d'esprit ? Dieu se serait-il repenti plus tard de son

²² L'existence de formes ou raisons principielles des choses, subsistant dans l'esprit de Dieu, et dont la vision n'est donnée qu'à un esprit pur, avait déjà été avancée par Augustin dans le *De diversis quaestionibus*, q. 46, 2. Bien que la datation des questions qui le composent ne soit pas à ce jour fixée avec certitude, on sait que l'année 396 est le *terminus ad quem* pour l'ouvrage. Dès lors, au moment de rédiger le livre XII du *De Gen. ad litt.*, ces thèses sont depuis longtemps intégrées dans la conception philosophique et théologique augustiniennne du monde. Sur la date de composition du *De diversis quaestionibus* et sur la structure et l'agencement de cette oeuvre, v. D.L. Mosher, «Introduction», in *St. Augustine, Eighty-Three Different Questions*, (FC 70), The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, DC 1982, pp. 2-20.

œuvre et décidé d'effacer la corporéité de l'état dans lequel l'homme sera à même d'atteindre la suprême perfection de sa nature ? Si c'était le cas, la présence du corps dans la jouissance éternelle serait un obstacle plutôt qu'une source de béatitude. Comment comprendre alors la croyance chrétienne en la résurrection des corps ? Ces apories et d'autres qui en découlent mèneraient, finalement, à cette erreur de l'âme que, dans le *sermo* 277, Augustin désignait comme vaine curiosité. Augustin y critiquait, en effet, ceux qui continuaient d'affirmer que la vision béatifique devrait inclure la vision corporelle, puisqu'il faudrait alors admettre que Dieu est corps, ce qui nuirait sans appel à la suprême nature de Dieu. Or, tout en découlant d'une position contraire – c'est-à-dire, tout en affirmant que la vision humaine de Dieu dans la béatitude est exclusivement intellectuelle – ce sont les mêmes apories, avec les mêmes effets, que l'on retrouve encore. Elles s'opposent à la suprême perfection de Dieu, non pas en ce qu'elles supposent la nature corporelle de Dieu, mais en ce qu'elles rendent son action créatrice déraisonnable, si ce n'est contradictoire.

Dans l'exégèse de 2 *Cor.* 12, 2-4 qu'il élabore dans le *De Genesi ad litteram*, XII, Augustin réussit à dépasser ces paradoxes, lorsqu'il perçoit, dans le doute de Paul, le fondement biblique qui confirme la nécessité de la présence du corps dans la béatitude. Si le doute a pu toucher le type de connaissance dans lequel il n'y a pas de place au doute – la vision intellectuelle – c'est à cause de la présence d'un élément d'imperfection dans l'expérience intellectuelle parfaite que l'apôtre avait fait de Dieu. Paradoxalement, l'imperfection de cette connaissance était fondée sur un décalage, sur un excès. L'expérience de Paul n'était pas adaptée à sa nature humaine parce qu'elle a eu lieu selon le mode de connaissance propre des anges. La connaissance intellectuelle de Dieu dans l'extase de Paul est certaine en ce qui concerne Dieu, mais douteuse, voire fausse, en ce qui concerne l'expérience cognitive de soi-même. Or, si l'erreur de cette vision intellectuelle est imputable au sujet, il faut se demander quel défaut affectait l'esprit (*mens*) de Paul, l'empêchant d'avoir une vraie connaissance de soi, bien qu'il fût devant l'essence divine. En dépit de leur essence commune – elles sont toutes les deux spirituelles – la nature de l'âme humaine séparée n'est pas identique en perfection à celle de l'âme angélique. Contrairement à la nature des anges, « il y a dans l'âme humaine un appétit naturel à régir le corps ». Ainsi, Augustin ne doute pas que la structure ontologique humaine n'est réalisée qu'en tant que vie multiforme, âme et corps, esprit et matière réunis. Ce qu'il cherche à savoir, c'est à quel point ce fait inévitable est à l'origine du doute de Paul au sujet du déroulement de son propre ravissement. Car l'esprit (*mens*), dans un état de séparation du corps, manque de quelque chose qui

lui est connaturelle : la corporéité, précisément.

La principale conclusion qu'Augustin retire de son analyse poussée du doute de Paul est la ferme affirmation de la subsistance des trois visions de l'esprit dans l'état de béatitude finale : « même alors subsisteront ces trois sortes de vision [corporelle, spirituelle et intellectuelle] mais, nulle fausseté ne nous fera prendre une chose pour une autre »²³, étant donné que la *mens* gouvernera le corps en toute plénitude et perfection. Dans les derniers paragraphes du livre XII du *De Genesi ad litteram* Augustin admet que la vision de Dieu *in patria* doit inclure la corporéité. Dès lors, faut-il encore penser que la présence du corps dans la jouissance éternelle de Dieu est due à une quelconque cause mystérieuse, qui nous est inconnue, inaccessible soit par l'autorité de l'Écriture, soit par la raison ? Tout au long du deuxième livre du *De Genesi ad litteram*, la cause du doute de Paul a été comprise au travers d'un exercice d'intelligence de la foi sur le passage biblique de 2 *Cor.*, 12, 2-4. Tout en clarifiant ce passage biblique Augustin conclut que, en ce qui concerne la nature humaine, l'expérience de la jouissance de Dieu dans l'état d'âme séparée – comme fut celle du ravissement de Paul – est imparfaite, provisoire et insuffisante pour le bonheur parfait. De cette analyse, Augustin extrait un principe philosophique fondamental que la raison doit admettre, du fait que la vision intellectuelle de Paul lui a amenée à un état de doute, ce qui contredit la nature même de cette sorte de vision. Augustin énonce ce principe philosophique de la façon suivante : *inest ei [menti] quidam adpetitus corpus administrandi*²⁴.

Cet appétit, poursuit Augustin, « la retarde et d'une certaine manière l'empêche d'atteindre de toutes ces forces le ciel suprême ». L'obstacle ne dérive pas du fait de la liaison de l'esprit (*mens*) avec le 'corps de plombs' – dont, en réalité, dans l'extase comme dans l'état de l'âme séparée du corps, elle est libérée. L'obstacle, l'empêchement, le retard dérive du fait que, en dehors de son corps, l'être humain n'est pas en possession de son identité et de sa forme naturelle. L'esprit (*mens*) séparé n'est pas en attente de la dissolution définitive du corps mortel, ni ne subit une quelconque purification de toute représentation ou mémoire. Il n'attend que la fin des temps, dans laquelle aura lieu la réunion définitive de l'esprit (*mens*) avec le corps. Sans cette réunion, l'homme ne peut atteindre sa perfection parce que ce qu'il a de plus propre, son esprit (*mens*), n'aura pu accomplir sa finalité naturelle, l'*adpetitus corpus administrandi*. Une fois que la *mens* « pourra le

²³ *De Gen. ad litt.*, XII, 36, 69.

²⁴ *De Gen. ad litt.*, XII, 35, 68.

régir, cet appétit trouvera son apaisement »²⁵ .

Cependant, et quoiqu'il ait trouvé les fondements d'autorité et de raison pour l'affirmation de la participation du corps dans la vision de Dieu *in patria*, Augustin ne renonce pas à l'affirmer, au sujet de cette union finale, que ce n'est pas le corps de plomb, corruptible, qui s'unit à l'esprit (*mens*); tout en supposant un nouvel état de la matière (la transformation du corps animal en corps spirituel), ce perfectionnement n'est tout de même pas un aboutissement d'une évolution ou ascèse de la matière jusqu'à un état supérieur à celui de sa condition. De cette gouvernance et de cette béatitude, ajoute Augustin, fait partie le triple mode de vision – corporel, spirituel, intellectuel – qui se déploiera désormais de manière adéquate et ordonnée. Comme le précise Augustin, lorsque cette transformation du corps charnel en corps spirituel aura eu lieu, l'esprit (*mens*) humain, « égale aux anges, acquerra le mode de perfection propre à sa nature, obéissant et commandant, vivifiée et vivifiante, avec une si ineffable aisance que ce qui lui était un fardeau deviendra pour elle un surcroît de gloire »²⁶ .

Paul a douté parce que son expérience fut excessive, c'est-à-dire, extatique. Dans cette expérience, Paul a vu Dieu tel qu'Il est, mais il s'est vu lui-même tel qu'il ne l'est pas : comme une nature purement spirituelle. Sa vision de Dieu est correcte, celle de lui-même, fautive. Comme le dit Augustin,

(...) bien que l'Apôtre soustrait aux sens corporels ait été ravi au troisième ciel et au paradis, il lui a certainement manqué une chose pour avoir cette pleine et parfaite connaissance, telle qu'elle se trouve chez les anges : c'est de ne pas savoir s'il était avec ou sans le corps. Mais cette connaissance ne lui fera plus défaut lorsque, une fois les corps recouverts à la résurrection des morts, ce corps corruptible sera revêtu d'incorruptibilité et ce corps mortel revêtu d'immortalité. Car toutes choses seront évidentes et, sans fausseté, sans ignorance, seront distribuées dans son ordre – et corporelles et spirituelles et intellectuelles – dans une nature qui aura recouvré son intégrité et sera dans une béatitude parfaite²⁷.

Le doute de Paul est pour Augustin un mystère dont la longue méditation l'a finalement mené à l'élaboration d'un raisonnement, appuyé par la sainte Écriture, à même de rendre compte de la présence du corps dans l'état de béatitude finale.

²⁵ *De Gen. ad litt.*, XII, 35, 68.

²⁶ *De Gen. ad litt.* XII, 35, 68.

²⁷ *De Gen. ad litt.*, XII, 36, 69. Sur ce sujet, voir E. Bermon, *Le Cogito dans la pensée de saint Augustin*, Vrin, Paris 2001, pp. 172-173. Dans son explication dense et soutenue de ce passage du *De Gen. ad litt.*, Bermon montre que, si d'une part le rapport cognitif spécifique de la vision béatifique ne se passe pas du corps ressuscité, ce sera néanmoins sans les ressemblances du corps qu'elle s'accomplira.

Dans le *Sermo* 277, le manque de fondement scripturaire représentait encore un obstacle à cette déduction. Méditant sur le doute de l'apôtre et sur la nature de la vision intellectuelle, Augustin parvient à poser avec certitude que, sans le corps, la connaissance de Dieu tel qu'Il est reste impossible à l'homme. Dans le livre XII du *De Genesi ad litteram* Augustin ne tire que peu de conclusions sur la vision de Dieu avec les yeux du corps, mais elles sont fermement établies, car appuyées sur l'autorité et sur la raison. Une fois acquises, les certitudes auxquelles il parvient sont assimilées et demeurent jusqu'à la fin au sein de sa doctrine, même dans le cas de nouvelles et ultérieures avancées. Les conclusions ici acquises feront désormais partie du système philosophique et théologique d'Augustin.

En effet, des années plus tard, dans le *De civitate dei*, Augustin développa précisément cette perspective au sujet de l'expérience des bienheureux *in patria*. Elle est définie comme l'expérience d'une vie de paix éternelle, dans laquelle toutes les puissances humaines, tant du corps que de l'esprit, sont ordonnées et vivifiées par une vie pleine qui, de l'esprit coule jusqu'au corps. De fait, dans le dernier livre du *De civitate dei*, dans son exposé sur l'état de béatitude, Augustin s'en sert comme de doctrine acquise. Si, dans l'état de béatitude, la jouissance de Dieu est appropriée à la nature humaine – on ne peut admettre qu'il en soit autrement sans remettre en cause la suprême perfection de Dieu – elle ne peut exclure la corporéité.

5. Conclusion

Dans la vaste littérature sur l'Augustin, le douzième livre du *De Genesi ad litteram* passe un peu inaperçu. Il est vrai que le thème de l'extase, dont s'occupe aussi Augustin dans ce livre, fait l'objet de nombreuses études. Il suffirait d'évoquer ici l'étude classique de Pierre Courcelle²⁸, qui a montré l'influence des modèles néoplatoniciens d'ascèse de l'esprit surtout dans les *Confessions*, et celle, plus récente, de Richard Sorabji²⁹, mettant en évidence surtout les éléments divergents, dans les positions de Plotin et d'Augustin, au sujet de l'union de l'esprit avec l'Un suprême. Dans la même approche de recherche archéologique

²⁸ P. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, E. de Boccard, Paris 1968.

²⁹ R. Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum. Theories in Antiquity and in Early Middle Ages*, Duckworth, London 1983, pp. 157-173.

des sources de la théorie augustinienne de la vision, mais en se centrant sur le douzième livre du *De Genesi*, Stéphane Toulouse soulignait, dans le contexte des influences platoniciennes, l'importance de la notion porphyrienne de *spiritus*³⁰. En dehors de la littérature spécialisée, notre douzième livre n'éveille pas plus l'intérêt. Dans le *The Companion to St. Paul in the Middle Ages*, par exemple, dans le chapitre d'Aaron Canty sur Augustin d'Hippone, ce dernier livre du *De Genesi ad litteram* passe inaperçu³¹. Ce qui plus est, lorsqu'on fait référence à l'influence de Paul, et même dans les cas rares où cette œuvre est citée, c'est dans le contexte de l'interprétation du sixième livre, donc à propos de la doctrine augustinienne de la chute et du péché original.

Or, c'est précisément dans le douzième livre qu'Augustin commente le passage de 2 *Cor.* 12, 2-4, pour en tirer deux conclusions. Une première, concernant la relation de l'esprit (*mens*) humain avec le corps – en tant que faculté de l'intelligible, l'esprit tend naturellement à la régence du corps. Une seconde conclusion, qui en découle, concerne la participation connaturelle du corps humain dans la vision de Dieu propre à l'éternelle béatitude. Dans la littérature, c'est chez Emmanuel Bermon que nous avons pu trouver une interprétation plutôt convergente avec celle que nous avons proposé ici sur le rôle de l'analyse d'Augustin du doute de Paul³².

Comme nous avons essayé de le montrer, ce chapitre nous semble de grande importance pour le développement de la doctrine augustinienne de la vision de Dieu. Toutefois, comme il arrive souvent à l'intérieur de l'œuvre d'Augustin, les conclusions obtenues à chaque moment de son itinéraire intellectuel ne sont que des nouveaux pas dans un très long chemin de recherche auquel seule la mort de l'évêque d'Hippone mettra fin. Des approfondissements et des compléments des conclusions jusqu'ici retenues peuvent être perçues dans des écrits postérieurs. Ainsi, du doute de Paul semble émerger notamment la nécessité d'une réflexion sur la connaissance de soi. Celle-ci est désormais considérée comme indissociable

³⁰ Stéphane Toulouse, « Influences néoplatoniciennes et *visio* augustinienne », *Archives de Philosophie* 72-2 (2009) 225-247, spec. 226-228.

³¹ Dans son étude sur la présence et influence de saint Paul sur Saint Augustin, Aaron Canty retrace surtout la réception de cette théorie au Moyen Âge et son rôle dans la mystique médiévale : A. Canty, « Saint Paul in Augustine », in S. Cartwright (ed.), *A Companion to St. Paul in the Middle Ages*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 1983, pp. 115-142.

³² E. Bermon, *Le Cogito dans la pensée de saint Augustin*, Vrin, Paris 2001, pp. 170-173. L'étude de Bermon sur certains passages du *De Gen. ad litt.* s'inscrit dans le contexte de sa fine analyse de la représentation et fonctions du corps, du *spiritus* et de la *mens* que l'on peut y trouver.

de l'appréhension de la vérité, l'identité propre se présentant comme inhérente à la connaissance de Dieu. Comme le montre Sorabji, contrairement à ce qu'arrive dans la mystique de Plotin, la connaissance de l'identité personnelle accompagne chez Augustin l'union de l'esprit avec le divin. Cette conclusion, obtenue à la fin du *De Genesi ad litteram*, permet de mieux comprendre la structure de l'esprit humain et les rapports entre l'esprit (*mens*) et cette autre puissance qu'est le *spiritus*³³.

C'est à condition d'avoir purifié et maîtrisé le *spiritus* que l'esprit (*mens*) peut exercer son rôle de régent du corps, car c'est par le *spiritus* que la *mens* se rapporte au monde des corps. C'est ainsi qu'Augustin peut conclure le livre XII du *De Genesi ad litteram* par une critique de ceux qui fondent leur conception de l'esprit humain sur la distinction, elle aussi souvent utilisée par l'apôtre Paul, entre l'homme charnel et l'homme spirituel. Lui, il déclare préférer la distinction entre l'activité du *spiritus* et celle de la *mens*, et renvoie pour ses raisons à la longue analyse menée tout au long de son Livre XII. En dernière instance, en effet, la régence de la *mens* sur le corps s'exerce par la maîtrise qu'elle doit exercer sur le *spiritus* bien plus que par le combat contre la condition matérielle et corporelle de l'homme. L'approfondissement de cette réflexion dans le cadre plus large de l'œuvre d'Augustin contribuera sans doute à une interprétation plus raisonnable de ses affirmations, formulées surtout dans des contextes polémiques, sur le désordre du corps et son poids dans l'exercice de la liberté et dans la pratique du bien.

Outre les aspects déjà mentionnés, la théorie augustinienne de la vision de Dieu demandera le développement d'une théologie de la déification centrée sur l'incarnation du Verbe, ce que fera aussi Augustin dans des écrits ultérieurs. Dans le *Sermo 277* il évoquait déjà et la nature du corps ressuscité du Christ et la présence du Verbe incarné dans la vie des bienheureux. En réalité, tous ces aspects – la connaissance de soi ; la nature et fonction du *spiritus* et son rapport avec le

³³ Pour les diverses significations de « *spiritus* » dans le *De Gen. ad litt.*, voir la note complémentaire 49 de P. Agäesse et A. Solignac, « 'Spiritus', dans le livre XII du *De Genesi* » in *Augustin, La Genèse au sens littéral*, cit, pp. 559-566. A propos du sens propre de *spiritus* en tant qu'il cause une sorte de 'vision', Toulouse écrit: « [*spiritus*] désigne spécifiquement, dans l'exposé du *De Genesi ad litteram*, une sorte de puissance intermédiaire, inférieure à l'intelligence » – Toulouse, « Influences néoplatoniciennes... », cit., p. 226. Cette étude de Toulouse est une importante contribution pour comprendre la fonction du *spiritus* dans la structure interne de l'esprit (*mens*) humain, chez Augustin.

corps, d'une part, et la *mens*, de l'autre ; la nature trinitaire de la *mens* humaine ; la fonction du Christ médiateur dans la création, dans l'économie du salut et dans la Cité de Dieu – tous ces aspects sont abordés par Augustin au fur et à mesure, dans la période comprise entre 413 et 425. Ses conclusions sur chacun de ses points, tant sur le plan philosophique que sur le plan théologique, sont mises à l'œuvre dans le *De civitate dei*. Elles forment un ensemble aussi large que complexe d'éléments théoriques qui permettra à Augustin de déployer, dans cette œuvre de maturité, une compréhension globale et consistante de la vie des bienheureux *in patria*.

Dans la présente étude nous nous sommes proposée d'explorer l'hypothèse selon laquelle Augustin aurait trouvé dans le récit de Paul, dans le douzième livre du *De Genesi ad litteram*, un témoignage biblique à même de fonder sa conception de la participation du corps dans la vision de Dieu : celle-ci se fait par les yeux du corps, entièrement transformés par la pleine régence de la *mens* sur les instances inférieures. Or, Augustin ne le dit pas explicitement et notre interprétation pourrait sembler osée. Toutefois, on pourrait penser aussi que l'audace est dans l'exégèse d'Augustin elle-même qui, en étant conscient, évite de la proposer comme interprétation de la foi divine et catholique. À la fin du livre XII du *De Genesi ad litteram* c'est en tant qu'interprétation possible et narrative ouverte qu'il la présente : « Si, dans la mesure de nos forces, nous avons exposé des interprétations légitimes ou bien le lecteur spirituel les approuvera ou bien, avec l'aide de l'Esprit saint il tirera quelque profit de cette lecture pour devenir spirituel »³⁴.

Ce qu'on peut affirmer, c'est qu'Augustin tient désormais pour certain que la vision de Dieu *in patria* implique l'homme tout entier et non pas uniquement son esprit. Et que cela est ainsi non seulement parce que l'esprit (*mens*) humain tend naturellement vers la connaissance du monde intelligible, auquel il cherche à se joindre par la voie de la connaissance – comme le proposaient les philosophies néoplatonicienes, eu égard desquelles Augustin restera critique jusqu'à la fin. Il faut reconnaître que l'esprit (*mens*) humain a une appétence naturelle pour le gouvernement du corps – *inest ei [menti] quidam adpetitus corpus administrandi* – et donc qu'il n'est vraiment humain que lorsque cette union avec le corps se réalise dans une *ordinata concordia*. Cependant, l'incertitude demeure au sujet de la manière dont se produira, *in patria*, la transformation du corps corruptible en corps spirituelle. Augustin refusera toujours que la connaissance de Dieu, dans laquelle participe le corps, résulte d'un processus de perfectionnement de la matière à la

³⁴ *De Gen. ad litt.*, XII, 37, 70.

fin duquel la nature de celle-ci ressemblerait à celle de la *mens*. Sur cette hypothèse, dit Augustin dans le *De civitate dei*, XXII, 29, qu'«il est difficile et même impossible de trouver quoi que ce soit dans l'Écriture»³⁵. Cependant, aucun doute ne subsiste sur la participation du corps dans la connaissance et la jouissance de Dieu *in patria* à la fin du *De Genesi ad litteram*. Et c'est cette même affirmation qui est réitérée à la fin du *De civitate dei*.

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³⁵ *De civitate dei*, XXII, 29, CCL 48, p. 861-862 « Aut ergo sic per illos oculos uidebitur Deus, ut aliquid habeant in tanta excellentia menti simile, quo et incorporea natura cernatur, quod ullis exemplis siue scripturarum testimoniis diuinarum uel difficile est uel impossibile ostendere ; aut, quod est ad intellegendum facilius, ita Deus nobis erit notus atque conspicuus, ut uideatur spiritu a singulis nobis in singulis nobis (...) ».

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Traces of Augustine of Hippo in Hildegard of Bingen's Visual Thoughts on Eternity and Time

Abstract

Geometry has proven to be a valuable resource in the history of philosophy for representing a range of concepts in the semantic domain of time. A series of segments, lines, circles, polygons and other figures have been used to translate visually and symbolically the ideas of time and eternity for the purposes of understanding them better, fostering reflection, and explaining them in a didactic manner. Time is central to Augustine of Hippo's thought, and Book XI of the *Confessiones* is the main vehicle for its transmission. While it is not known whether Hildegard of Bingen read these pages, the Rhenish *magistra's* vision of eternity and time shows a notable affinity with aspects of Augustinian thought. The visual representations in Hildegard's *Liber diuinorum operum* (I, 2-3; III, 5) are used here to illustrate this possible influence (or confluence). In the visions and the miniatures that accompany them, the circle represents eternity, the diameter represents time, and the dot represents the present instant that connects both.

Keywords: time; eternity; visual translation; *Confessiones*; *Liber diuinorum operum*.

Ancient and medieval authors: Augustine of Hippo; Hildegard of Bingen.

Vestígios de Agostinho de Hipona nos pensamentos visuais de Hildegarda de Bingen sobre a eternidade e o tempo

Resumo

A geometria provou ser um recurso valioso na história da filosofia por representar uma gama de con-

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ceitos no domínio semântico do tempo. Uma série de segmentos, linhas, círculos, polígonos e outras figuras têm sido usadas para traduzir visual e simbolicamente as ideias do tempo e da eternidade com o objectivo de as compreender melhor, promovendo a reflexão e explicando-as de uma forma didáctica. O tempo é central ao pensamento de Agostinho de Hipona, e o Livro XI das *Confessiones* é o principal veículo para a sua transmissão. Embora não se saiba se Hildegarda de Bingen leu estas páginas, a visão da eternidade e do tempo da *magistra* Renana mostra uma notável afinidade com aspectos do pensamento agostiniano. As representações visuais no *Liber diuinorum operum* (I, 2-3; III, 5) de Hildegarda são aqui usadas para ilustrar esta possível influência (ou confluência). Nas visões e nas miniaturas que as acompanham, o círculo representa a eternidade, o diâmetro representa o tempo, e o ponto representa o instante presente que liga ambos.

Palavras chave: tempo; eternidade; tradução visual; *Confessiones*, *Liber diuinorum operum*.

Autores antigos e medievais: Agostinho de Hipona; Hildegarda de Bingen.

El tiempo se toma su tiempo y a veces ni eso.

1. Augustine, Hildegard's explicit and implicit source

The *auctoritates* that Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) makes explicit in her work are scarce and, although the richness of her thought suggests possible inspiration from very diverse sources, this question has been more discussed than agreed upon in the critical literature, and we can rarely reach firm conclusions about it. Moreover, it is very difficult to trace the textual and conceptual parallels in her writings, since she not only neglects to cite her possible models, but also transforms them into the framework of her own imaginary. Consequently, it seems that we can only speak of «traces» of certain authors in Hildegard's thought: traces as erased lines that maintain a certain presence, like furrows; traces as echoes of other texts that the Hildegardian corpus might imperceptibly incorporate in its construction; and these metaphors can serve as an introduction to the issue of her «uncertain readings», to borrow Sylvain Gouguenheim's expression¹.

¹ S. Gouguenheim, *La Sibylle du Rhin: Hildegarde de Bingen, abbesse et prophétesse rhénane*, Publications de la Sorbonne, Paris 1996, p. 56. There is an abundant bibliography, and different positions within it, on the possible sources of Hildegard's inspiration. See, among other studies: V. Ranff, «Haben Hildegards Visionen Quellen?», in Ä. Bäumer-Schleinkofer (ed.), *Hildegard von Bingen in ihrem Umfeld - Mystik und Visionsformen in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit. Katholizismus und Protestantismus im Dialog*, Religion & Kultur-Verlag, Würzburg 2001, pp. 105-121; P. Donke, «Platonic-Christian Allegories in the Homilies of Hildegard of Bingen», in H.J. Westra (ed.), *From Athens to Chartres. Neoplatonism and Medieval Thought. Studies in Honour of Édouard Jeuneau*, Brill, Leiden – New York – Cologne 1992, pp. 382-396.

Accounting for the influence of the North African philosopher Augustine of Hippo (354-430) on Hildegard presents an additional obstacle: Augustinian thought is so thoroughly diffused in medieval texts that it is almost impossible to argue rigorously that through a direct reading of his texts, and not through indirect sources, his ideas arrived at the *scriptorium* of the monastery of Rupertsberg in Bingen, the catalogue of whose library has not survived. However, a careful reading of Hildegard's corpus shows that Augustine was not just one amongst many sources of inspiration, but one of her favourite authors. This position is shared by more than a few scholars, although I would like to offer a personal, concrete testimony so that a valuable but evanescent oral transmission may go on record here.

Following in the steps of my mentor Rosa Rius Gatell, who preceded me in July 1998, in June 2011 I found myself in a small room at the Abtei St. Hildegard in Eibingen with the Benedictine scholar Angela Carlevaris, pioneer in the recovery of Hildegard's thought and legacy, collaborator on Adelgundis Führkötter's critical edition of the *Sciuias*, editor of the *Liber uite meritorum (LVM)* and tireless tracer of primary sources, as the profuse critical apparatus of the *LVM* testifies². In one of our several fruitful meetings Carlevaris remarked that, if I was interested in the philosophical background of Hildegard's thought³, I should investigate Augustine's influence. In the end I did not address this in my doctoral thesis⁴ (discussing the Platonic background instead), and thus it remained as research to be undertaken in the form of a monograph, since for the time being, while there was no exhaustive investigation of this broad topic, there were references to it both in the critical literature and in the critical apparatus of the canonical editions. A project of such scope certainly exceeds the limits of an article, hence here I focus on a more limited theme: the possible Augustinian background of Hildegard's visualisation of the concepts of time and eternity in three visions in the *LDO* (I, 2-3; III, 5).

² Hildegardis Bingensis, *Liber uite meritorum*, ed. A. Carlevaris, (CCCM, 90) Brepols, Turnhout 1995.

³ G. Rabassó, «*Sapientia docet me: Hildegard of Bingen and philosophy*», *Mediaevalia. Textos e estudos* 35 (2016) 7-50. <http://ojs.letras.up.pt/index.php/mediaevalia/article/view/2769>

⁴ G. Rabassó, «*Subtilitates naturae. Continuïtats i ruptures a la cosmologia d'Hildegarda de Bingen (1098-1179)*», doctoral thesis, Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona 2015. <http://hdl.handle.net/2445/96660>; Id., *L'univers vivent d'Hildegarda de Bingen: perspectives filosòfiques*, prologue by R. Rius Gatell, Diputació de Barcelona - Institut d'Estudis Catalans, Barcelona 2018.

Returning to the question of sources of inspiration, I would like to cite Barbara Newman here: «The paradox of Hildegard's *docta ignorantia* must be resolved not in terms of how much she knew, but of how she knew»⁵, drawing attention to its final phrase: what is important is *how she knew*. The gnoseological dimension in which the author moves is the *uisio*: the vision captured by the inner senses in the soul and which interprets a *uox de caelo*⁶. If we are attentive to Hildegard's words, it is the visual and the auditory that constitute her cognitive process. This phenomenon has always aroused enormous interest: in the 1920s Charles Singer, for example, analysed the illustrations in the *Sciuias* and concluded that Hildegard suffered from scintillating scotoma, which he argued represented an important element in her creative and intellectual process⁷. For his part, Jeffrey Hamburger, in his well-known volume *The Visual and the Visionary* (1998) proposed an innovative (and controversial) method of interdisciplinary analysis of the visual component of female spirituality in medieval Germanic manuscripts⁸.

The main hypothesis of this article is that Hildegard often transforms and introduces her textual sources of inspiration into her own imagination through images or visual representation. In particular, in my view the image of the wheel of eternity in the vision that closes the *LDO* is an attempt (or might function as an attempt) to translate Augustine's reflection on time and eternity in the *Confessiones* into visual form. Before proceeding with this analysis, however, we must first provide some relevant information on Hildegard's references to Augustine in order to demonstrate the probability of his being one of her sources.

⁵ B. Newman, «Hildegard of Bingen: Visions and Validation», *Church History* 54, 2 (1985) p. 170.

⁶ At the same time, Augustine receives the revelation of a *cloud uox*. Sancti Augustini, *Confessionum Libri XIII [Confessiones]*, XI, vi (8), ed. L. Verheijen, (CCSL) Brepols, Turnhout 1981, p. 198, l. 24.

⁷ Ch. Singer, «The Scientific Views and Visions of St. Hildegard of Bingen», in Ch. Singer (ed.), *Studies in the History and Method of Science*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1917, pp. 1-55; Id., «The Visions of Hildegard of Bingen», in Ch. Singer, *From Magic to Science. Essays on the Scientific Twilight*, Ernest Benn Ltd, London 1928, pp. 199-239. Oliver Sacks popularised Singer's interpretation in «The Visions of Hildegard», in O. Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and other clinical tales*, Perennial Library, New York 1985.

⁸ J.F. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany*, Zone Books, New York 1998. From a different perspective, but emphasising Hildegard's visual representation and, above all, her circular thinking, see: E. Gössmann, «Zirkuläres Denken und kosmische Spekulationen im 12. Erläutert an Hildegard von Bingen und Alanus von Lille», in *Fernöstische Weisheit und christlicher Glaube. Festgabe für Heinrich Dumoulin SJ zur Vollendung des 80. Lebensjahres*, Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, Mainz 1985, pp. 147-159.

The Bible and her own revelations in the *uisio* and *auditio* are almost the only explicit sources for Hildegard. We know, however, that reading patristic texts was a significant part of a nun's training in the twelfth century⁹. Therefore, the omission of *auctoritates* would not be an absence due to ignorance but instead an authorial decision, probably meant to show that true authority comes only from God. Nevertheless, in her *Expositiones euangeliorum*, the first known work of systematic exegesis written by a woman, Hildegard refers to the *doctrine* of the *doctors noui testamenti* and mentions Augustine. This is in homily 47:

When Jesus, the Son of God, drew near to Jerusalem, clearly, when the fullness of time came, in which God sent his Son so that human beings would see him incarnate, he saw the city, every edifice of the Old Law from Abel all the way to himself, and he wept over it, so that he might draw forth the fountain of wisdom over all its writings and institutions. [He was] saying: 'If only you knew on this your day the things that bring you peace: in other words, the things I know. You are under the devil's shadowy influence; you do not recognize me because you have never seen me. Now you have the law in the fullness of your will, as it pleases you. But now the things that bring you peace are hidden from your eyes, that is, they are concealed from your knowledge.

Indeed, the days will come upon you, and surround you, and hem you in on all sides, and cast you to the ground, and your children who are within you. Clearly others will come in transformation and clarity, the doctors of the New Testament with their teaching: Gregory, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and others like them. They will return to the spiritual meaning and will cleanse from pride your worship with the sacrifice of rams and bulls and cast it down toward humility; by spiritual understanding they will lead carnal institutions toward humility. And they will not leave a stone upon a stone, that is, they will leave no letter-not one iota, and no worship of yours, unless it is changed. Because you have not known the time of your visitation, that is, because you have refused to know the first day on which all creatures will be resplendent, so that another light would shine on your children¹⁰.

⁹ A. Carlevaris, «Hildegarda e la Patristica», in C. Burnett – P. Dronke (eds.), *Hildegard of Bingen. The Context of her Thought and Art*, The Warburg Institute, London 1998, pp. 65-80.

¹⁰ Hildegardis Bingensis, *Expositiones euangeliorum [EE]*, '47', ed. B.M. Kienzle – C.A. Muessig, in *Opera minora*, eds. P. Dronke – C.P. Evans – H. Feiss – B. M. Kienzle – C.A. Muessig – B. Newman, (CCCM, 226) Brepols, Turnhout 2007, pp. 185-333; 312-313, l. 1-19: «Cum appropinquaret, id est cum uenit plenitudo temporis in quo misit Deus filium suum, Iesus, scilicet filius Dei, Ierusalem, ita ut homines eum uiderent incarnatum, uidens ciuitatem, uidelicet omnem edificationem ueteris legis ab Abel usque ad se, fleuit, ita ut educeret fontem sapientiae, super illam, scilicet super omnes litteras et institutiones eius, dicens: Quia si cognouisses et tu quae ego, quia tu quae es in tenebrosa suasionem diaboli non cognoscis me, quia nunquam uidisti me. Et quidem in hac die tua, quoniam nunc habes legem in plenitudine uoluntatis tuae, quae ad pacem tibi, id est ut tibi placet, nunc autem abscondita sunt, ita ut lateant, ab oculis tuis, scilicet scientiam tuam. Quia uenient dies in te, uidelicet alii in transmutatione et claritate, et circumdabunt te doctores noui testamenti doctrina sua, ut Gregorius, Ambrosius, Augustinus, Ieronimus,

With regard to the *plenitudo temporis* and the Second Coming, Hildegard conveys a message of salvation: both humans and institutions tend to forget that what is essential is invisible, immaterial. She adds that the devil must be kept at bay by drinking from the fountain of wisdom, that is, by cultivating the «spiritual understanding» (*in spiritale intellectu*) promoted by the doctors of the Church, who, with their reflections on sacrifice and humility, guide Christians on the way to salvation. They, according to Beverly M. Kienzle, «carry out the change: once the Word-human brings the Word-text, they endue it with the new spiritual meaning»¹¹. Thus the explicit connection to Augustine in these lines is materialised in the kind of knowledge that should prepare human beings for the approaching end of time.

At the beginning of the homily, there also appears the image of Jerusalem and «every edifice of the Old Law», which Jesus contemplates when he becomes incarnate. Certainly, the reflection on cities can have a scriptural basis (Jerusalem, Babel, etc.) and not necessarily an Augustinian one. The city as a symbol of the Christian community, however, is a markedly Augustinian theme and is also the protagonist of the five visions in the third part of the *LDO*¹², in which the temporal development of the history of Christianity is explained up to the Last Judgement, when all that exists is integrated into the eternal dimension of life in God. Secondly, although Hildegard refers to Augustine's doctrine as a useful teaching to guide the believer in worldly life and before the Last Judgement, she did not necessarily use Augustine's doctrines to explain the concept of *plenitudo temporis*. Hildegard's reflection on Creation as the transition from the eternal to the temporal and the end of time as the transition from the temporal to the eternal may be based on biblical passages and not on the *Confessiones*. Finally, it could

et alii similes, *et coangustabunt te undique*, scilicet reuertendo in spiritalem significationem, *et ad terram posternent te*, id est culturam tuam in sacrificio arietum et taurorum abstergent ab elatione et ad humilitatem posternent, *et filios tuos qui in te sunt*, scilicet carnales institutiones in spiritale intellectu ad humilitatem ducent. *Et non relinquent lapidem*, id est nullam litteram, nec iota unum, nec ulla culturam tuam, *super lapidem*, nisi mutetur; *eo quod cognoueris tempus uisitacionis tuae*, quia scire noluisti primum diem in quo omnes creaturae fulminabunt, ita ut aliud lumen in filiis tuis fulgeat». Hildegard of Bingen, *Homilies on the Gospels*, B.M. Kienzle (tr.), Cistercian Publications – Liturgical Press, Collegeville 2011, p. 178.

¹¹ B.M. Kienzle, *Hildegard of Bingen and her Gospel Homilies. Speaking New Mysteries*, Brepols, Turnhout 2009, p. 81.

¹² P. Dronke, «The Symbolic Cities of Hildegard of Bingen», *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 1 (1991) 168-183; V. Cirlot, «La ciudad celeste de Hildegard von Bingen», *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 44, 1 (2014) 505-541.

be objected that one would have to analyse in detail these different themes in the patristic authors she mentions in the quoted passage. Nevertheless, the existence of homily 47 objectively proves the basis of the present analysis: that Augustine is one of the few specific authors that Hildegard explicitly acknowledges.

Regarding the passage from the eternal to the temporal, or the Creation of the world, José Carlos Santos Paz points out that, if we take into account the 12th-century interest in the commentaries on Genesis and in particular the conceptual and textual parallels indicated in the critical apparatus of the *LDO* and the *Cause et cure*, Hildegard may have known Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram*¹³. Therefore, there is evidence to argue that her reflection on the transition eternity-time-eternity is significantly based on Augustine. In the following sections of this paper, I analyse Hildegard's visual and auditory representation¹⁴ of the transition from eternity to time (*LDO*, I, 2-3) and from time to eternity (*LDO*, III, 5), alongside the Augustinian traces we find in them. My hypothesis, however, does not focus on the question of the *textual* or *conceptual* source of the vision, but instead aims to analyse the phenomenon of the *visual translation* of ideas.

Hildegard states that vision is the only source of her knowledge, and perhaps this can also be understood in the sense that *visualisation* is the main source of her thinking. The *uisio*, an allegorical and sometimes symbolic image, is deciphered through the commentary which, according to the author, she hears uttered by the *uox de caelo*. In this way, she reflects on the image contemplated for a long time in her soul¹⁵, and this image constitutes a visual synthesis of the narrated content. These images could be inspired by multiple sources: other iconographies, her

¹³ J.C. Santos Paz, «Hildegard's conscious vision and Adam's dream according to Eriugena», in C. Pisano – D. Solvi (eds.), *Stati alterati di coscienza come pratica rituale. Documenti, testimonianze e rappresentazioni*, Agorà & Co., Lugano 2018, pp. 99-129; 102, n. 15. See also the comparative analysis of the explanation of the visionary phenomenon according to Hildegard and Augustine (ibid., 102-107).

¹⁴ Augustine's influence on Hildegard's musical theory and emotions is examined by Cecilia Panti in «*Verbum cordis e ministerium vocis*: il canto emozionale di Agostino e le visioni sonore di Ildegarda di Bingen», in M. Cristiani – C. Panti – G. Perillo (eds.), «*Harmonia mundi*». *Musica mondana e musica celeste fra Antichità e Medioevo. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi (Roma, 14-15 dicembre 2005)*, SISMEL - Edizioni del Galluzzo, Florence 2007, pp. 167-199.

¹⁵ Hildegardis Bingensis, *Epistolarium. Pars secunda XCI-CCLR*, 103R, ed. L. van Acker, (CCCM, 91a) Brepols, Turnhout 1993, p. 261, l. 70-75: «Ista autem nec corporeis auribus audio nec cogitationibus cordis mei, nec ulla collatione sensuum meorum quinque percipio, sed tantum in anima mea, apertis exterioribus oculis, ita ut numquam in eis defectum extasis patiar; sed uigilanter die ac nocte illa uideo».

own imagination, her own or other people's ideas, oral or textual sources, and so on; materials that Hildegard could somehow transfer to the visualised image. The author's creative process is rooted in vision, and the images contemplated are subsequently translated and adapted into texts that describe what appears in them and how the divine voice interprets them. In addition to using a fundamentally visual language – an original approach for a thinker – Hildegard's images are endowed with great originality, probably because they are not formalised directly from previous iconographic models. In the following section I examine some ideas on time and eternity from Book XI of the *Confessiones* which seem to have been translated into images in the *LDO*'s visions.

2. The wheel of eternity and the diameter of time

In the first part of her third book of visions, Hildegard explains the generation of the multiplicity of the created world from God (*LDO*, I, 2), and in the last vision she explains how the return of the worldly multiplicity to the divine unity takes place (*LDO*, III, 5). These two visions have elements in common both in their description and in their visual representation. Here I focus on one fundamental aspect: the structure of the circle and its diameter as a geometrically-based allegorical figuration of the concepts of eternity (circle) and time (diameter). Due to the *visual* component of the *vision*, the textual analysis is also supported by the illustrations from the illuminated manuscript of the *LDO* produced in Rupertsberg in 1220/1230 – not supervised by Hildegard, but very close to her writing – and preserved in the Biblioteca Statale at Lucca in Italy (codex 1942).

¹⁶ *LDO*, I, 2, I, p. 65, l. 180-181: «predictę imaginis, in cuius pectore rota apparebat».

¹⁷ *LDO*, I, 1, II, pp. 47-48, l. 1-8.

¹⁸ Ez 1, 15-28; 10, 6; 10, 9; 10, 10. Hildegard quotes this book (Ez 1, 15-28) in her *EE*: in one passage she compares these wheels to the virtues as «forces of the soul» (*uires animae*) (*EE*, <56>, p. 328, l. 11-14) and in another the wheel symbolises life in motion: «nisi rota quae vita est eam circumducatur, non vivit» (*EE*, <35>, p. 284, l. 28-29).

¹⁹ The Visigothic king Sisebutus (612-621) addressed an epistle to Isidore in which he designated the *De natura rerum* as *Liber rotarum*, due to the numerous diagrams that appear in it. He uses the image of the *rota* above all graphically; on the other hand, to describe the universe he refers to the *quinque circuli mundi* of elementary composition that make it up (*De natura rerum*, X, 1). Boethius (*De consolatione philosophiae*, II, 2) points out that the wheel is the symbol of inconstancy, one of the attributes of the goddess Fortuna, who, by turning it, observes how what was below rises and what was above falls.



Fig. 1. Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber diuinarum operum* (I, 2), 9r. 13th Century, Biblioteca Statale di Lucca, ms. 1942, fol. 9r.

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In the second vision of the *LDO* Hildegard describes the *rota mirificę* from which the world arises in the breast¹⁶ of the personification of the *igneis uis*, also called divine love, spirit and invisible life that sustains all (Fig. 1)¹⁷. The image of the cosmic wheel encircled by a winged figure refers to Ezekiel's celestial vision of four intertwined wheels, shining like topaz and accompanied by cherubim¹⁸. Unlike the prophet, however, Hildegard describes a single celestial wheel and with this represents the material universe. Her implicit models, then, could also have been the encyclopaedic philosophical tradition (Isidore of Seville, Boethius)¹⁹, but more probably the *rote pennate* of Dionysius Areopagite.²⁰ In Hildegard's imagination the circle represents a mathematical-visual metaphor for the connection between divinity and the created world.

Indeed, in its foreknowledge and operation, divinity is like a wheel, whole and utterly undivided, for it has neither beginning nor ending, nor can anything grasp or surround it, for it is outside of time. And as a circle surrounds and contains all that lies inside of it, so holy divinity contains and exceeds all things infinitely, for no one can divide or overcome it in its power, or bring it to an end²¹.

The wheel represents here the unity, integrity and indivisibility of God not only *in prescientia* but also *in opere*. The divinity manifests itself as a wheel that holds everything within it, in both physical and intellectual senses: the infinitely most perfect of all circles. This circle is not the locus of the contents of the created world; rather, it is beyond the idea of concrete space in that it is all-encompassing, indivisible and unending. God's coeternal wheel surrounds the universe; thus in the circular form this double and yet at the same time single reality are interrelated: God and his creation. By creation we do not mean here the actual universe, since «the form of the world exists, indissolubly whirling» (*forma mundi existit insolubiliter uolubilis*)²² and any representation of it «holds a complete likeness

²⁰ *De coelesti Hierarchia*, I, XV. See A. Derolez – P. Dronke, «Introduction» to *LDO*, p. XXVII. Augustine uses the expression *rota figuli* to refer to the heavens in *Confessiones*, XI, xxiii (29), p. 208, l. 4.

²¹ *LDO*, I, 2, II, p. 66, l. 17-23: «Diuinitas etenim in prescientia et in opere suo uelut rota integra est et nullo modo diuisa, quoniam nec initium nec finem habet nec ab ullo comprehendi potest, quia sine tempore est. Et sicut circulus ea quę intra ipsum latent comprehendit, ita sancta diuinitas infinite omnia comprehendit et supraexcellit, quia ipsam in potentia sua nullus diuidere nec superare nec ad finem perducere poterit», Hildegard of Bingen, *The Book of Divine Works*, N.M. Campbell (tr.), The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 2018, pp. 54-55.

²² *LDO*, I, 2, II, p. 66, l. 14; tr. p. 54.

of the figure of the world in every detail, because it exists everywhere whole, round, and whirling. Rather, a globe that is whole and whirling better imitates the form of the world in its every part»²³. God alone knows the exact shape of the world, and this knowledge is beyond the rational scope of human understanding.

The second noteworthy aspect of this and the following vision (*LDO*, I, 3) is their visual representation of the diameter of the eternal wheel. In both miniatures a golden line crosses the circle horizontally, passing in one case in front of the globe and the human being (*LDO*, I, 2) and in the other behind both (*LDO*, I, 3; Fig. 2). A further difference between these miniatures is that while the first image shows a network of golden lines connecting various parts of the universe, in the second only the single horizontal line spans the circle from one side to the other. The multiple rays do not emanate from the fixed stars located in the bright fire, but from the main winds, represented as beasts. Specifically, in the first of these visions, one ray unites the jaws of the bear (northern wind, emanating from the area of the black fire) and the lion (southern wind, emanating from the area of the bright fire), together with the breaths that energise the elements and which, by exerting their influence on the organs of the body, affect the human being's state of health. The meaning Hildegard attaches to this north-south line²⁴ is the transition from life to death, and thus it has to do with the expiration of the mundane. At the end of the passage, however, the emphasis is on the balance of forces and the restraint that the southern wind must exert in order to moderate the negative influence of the northern wind.

This signifies that a ray that comes from the firm course of that brilliance and is led to the course of another collateral wind that goes out from the major north wind. It resists that wind with its moderation, so that it emits its blasts with equal measure²⁵.

²³ *LDO*, I, 2, III, p. 66, l. 7-11; tr. p. 55; I quote a longer fragment: «[...] cum neutrum ipsorum similitudinem figurę mundi per omnia teneat, quoniam illa undique integra, rotunda et uolubili existente globus aliquis, qui integer et uolubilis existit, formam ipsius in omni parte potius imitatur».

²⁴ *LDO*, I, 2, XXXII, p. 94, l. 35-41: «*Et alius at predictam lineam, quę in firmamento a principio orientalis partis prefatę rotę uelut ad finem occidentalis partis ipsius uersus septentrionalem eius plagam extenditur, capite agni illic superius posito, quod a signo capitis ursi exit, dirigitur*».

²⁵ *LDO*, I, 2, XXXII, p. 94, l. 41-45; tr. p. 85: «Significans etiam quod a robusto splendoris illius tenore radius ueniens ad excursum alterius collateralis uenti, qui de supradicto maiore uento septentrionalis partis exit, ducitur, temperamento suo illi resistens, quatinus equali modo flatus suos emittat».



Fig. 2. Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber diuinorum operum* (I, 3), 13th Century, Biblioteca Statale di Lucca, ms. 1942, fol. 28v.

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In the following vision (*LDO*, I, 3), Hildegard's commentary relates the horizontal line with this last idea: the opposition between the light of the soul, of good works and the virtues as against the darkness of the flesh and the Devil's wiles²⁶. Neither of the two visions discussed above deals extensively with the question of time and eternity, but this theme does appear in the vision that opens the book, where Hildegard has the divine *ignea uis* speak these words:

But I also fulfill my function, since all living things are set ablaze from me; and I am uniform life in eternity, which neither begins nor ends. God is this life, self-moving and active, yet one life in three energies. Therefore, Eternity is called the Father, the Word is called the Son, and the breath connecting these two is called the Holy Spirit²⁷.

In this life that works in eternity (the Father), the Son is the «Word» from which the world is created, and the Holy Spirit is the «breath» that unites them. Augustine of Hippo discusses these ideas, based on various biblical passages, when he reflects on the Word and the Voice, which are coeternal to God, in Book XI of the *Confessiones*²⁸.

3. Time, a linear vibration in the eternal circle

In his exegesis of the Bible verses, Augustine reflects on creation and the essence of time in an inner dialogue with God: «Therefore you spoke and they were made, and by your Word you made them (Ps. 32: 9, 6)»²⁹. God creates through his Word everything that exists, every object in the world, but before giving life to each particular thing he creates heaven and earth. Augustine endows the Word,

²⁶ *LDO*, I, 3, III, pp. 120-121, l. 1-26.

²⁷ *LDO*, I, 1, II, p. 49, l. 39-43; tr. p. 35: «Sed et officialis sum, quoniam omnia uitalia de me ardent, et igitalis uita in eternitate sum, que nec orta est nec finietur; eademque uita se mouens et operans Deus est, et tamen hec uita una in tribus uiribus est. Eternitas itaque Pater, uerbum Filius, spiramen hec duo connectens Spiritus Sanctus dicitur».

²⁸ In speaking about the influence of the Augustinian doctrine of time, Conti situates the extensive reception of book XI from the middle of the 13th century and affirms that previously only the relationship between time and the soul was commented upon. A. Conti, «Introducción», in Agustín de Hipona, *Qué es el tiempo*, A. Conti (ed.), Trotta, Madrid 2011, p. 28.

²⁹ *Confessiones*, XI, v (7), p. 198, l. 20-22: «Quid enim est, nisi quia tu es? Ergo dixisti et facta sunt atque in uerbo tuo fecisti ea». Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, H. Chadwick (ed.), Oxford University Press, New York 2008, p. 25.

coeternal to God, with agency: the *Fiat* is not only a linguistic manifestation; its pronunciation alone constitutes the world through the divine will. There is, therefore, performativity in the creative act, since the Word is action:

And so by the Word coeternal with yourself, you say all that you say in simultaneity and eternity, and whatever you say will come about does come about. You do not cause it to exist other than by speaking. Yet not all that you cause to exist by speaking is made in simultaneity and eternity³⁰.

The Word is the intermediate instance of creation, distinct from the actual creation of objects, as God «made it without using a transient utterance» (*sine transitoria uoce*)³¹. And it is distinct from that voice which, in transiting the air in the form of sound, creates time.

Augustine's text resonates with some ideas found in the passage from Hildegard quoted above: the Word is a doer and is associated with the Word or Son of God, who creates the world. Moreover, this Word is coeternal with God and is not exactly identified with the created world, but is that which connects Creator and Creation. Augustine says that

a created entity belonging to the physical realm existed prior to heaven and earth; and that utterance took time to deliver, and involved temporal changes. However, no physical entity existed before heaven and earth³².

This creature in motion – what Plato would call the soul of the world – Hildegard calls the wheel of eternity and is the circle that conceptually connects the infinity of God with the finite periphery of the cosmos. Another aspect in common is that Hildegard gives the name of *spiramen* (associated with the Holy Spirit) and Augustine that of *uox* to the medium constituted by the air in which the Word acquires its materiality. A little further on in the text, Augustine asks how God spoke:

³⁰ *Confessiones*, XI, vii (9), p. 199, l. 11-14; tr. p. 226: «Et ideo uerbo tibi coaeterno simul et sempiternae dicis omnia, quae dicis, et fit, quidquid dicis ut fiat; nec aliter quam dicendo facis: nec tamen simul et sempiterna fiunt omnia, quae dicendo facis».

³¹ *Confessiones*, XI, vi (8), p. 198, l. 18; tr. p. 226.

³² *Confessiones*, XI, vi (8), p. 198, l. 13-17; tr. pp. 225-226. I quote the full passage: «Si ergo uerbis sonantibus et praeteruntibus dixisti, ut fieret caelum et terra, atque ita fecisti caelum et terram, erat iam creatura corporalis ante caelum et terram, cuius motibus temporalibus temporaliter uox illa percurreret».

That voice is past and done with; it began and is ended. The syllables sounded and have passed away, the second after the first, the third after the second, and so on in order until, after all the others, the last one came, and after the last silence followed. Therefore it is clear and evident that the utterance came through the movement of some created thing, serving your eternal will but itself temporal³³.

When God speaks, his word is also a voice³⁴. When He speaks, the sound transpires and therefore, as we have said, time appears. In the beginning – not in a temporal but in an ontological sense – there is eternity, which Augustine compares to silence, and from which arises the coeternal Word (*Verbum*) and from this in turn, time and the «transient utterance» (*Fiat*) with which every worldly object is created. Thus, silence is to eternity what sound is to time. God's Word tears eternity apart, and what for eternal God is only a sound is equivalent to all that exists for humans: the universe and the history of humanity are contained in that *Fiat*. Although they are disproportionate and even incommensurable, Augustine tries to understand and clarify the concepts of time and eternity, which will be linked by the notion of the «present».

As for time, he wonders whether it can have an objective measure: for instance, the revolutions of the stars. And he concludes that time cannot be identified, as some believe, with the movement of celestial bodies, because, although «no body can be moved except in time», this does not mean that «the actual movement of a body constitutes time»³⁵. It is interesting to note a parallel between Augustine's reflection and the *Timaeus* (36bc) with regard to Plato's description of the divisions of the body and soul of the world by means of the letter χ (and the sound associated with it). He explains that the four extremities of the sign were extended to form two homocentric circles in motion which, in turn, were cut by the demiurge to form the seven orbits on which the planets began to revolve. This sign and its sound, together with its transformation into the circles of the revolutions, form

³³ *Confessiones*, XI, vi (8), p. 198, l. 24-29; tr. p. 225: «Illa enim uox acta atque transacta est, coepta et finita. Sonuerunt syllabae atque transierunt, secunda post primam, tertia post secundam atque inde ex ordine, donec ultima post ceteras silentiumque post ultimam. Vnde claret atque eminet, quod creaturae motus expressit eam seruiens aeternae uoluntati tuae ipse temporalis».

³⁴ Hildegard mentions a similar idea in *LDO*, III, 5, viii, p. 418, l. 30-31: «claritasque flammę Spiritus Sancti sonus uerbi est, quod omnia creauit». In the prologue of the Gospel according to John we find no such emphasis on the question of the sound of the Word.

³⁵ *Confessiones*, XI, xxiv (31), p. 210, l. 2-4; tr. p. 238; I quote the full passage: «Nam corpus nulum nisi in tempore moueri audio; tu dicis. Ipsum autem corporis motum tempus esse non audio: non tu dicis».

both a sonic and visual representation of the creation of matter and time. Therefore, although Augustine does not mention it here, in addition to the Bible he has the *Timaeus* as the basis of his enquiry and, moreover, an implicit visual reference in which the generation of the world and time is represented by geometrical forms.

Continuing his argument, after refuting that time is determined by the movement of the heavenly bodies, Augustine affirms that time is a subjective reality (*In te, anime meus, tempora metior*)³⁶, and that past (*praesens de praeteritis*), present (*praesens de praesentibus*) and future (*praesens de futuris*) are the extension of time and exist in the soul in the form of *memoria*, *contuitus* and *expectatio*³⁷. Therefore, the core of the question is the present:

Yet if the present were always present, it would not pass into the past: it would not be time but eternity. If then, in order to be time at all, the present is so made that it passes into the past, how can we say that this present also 'is'? The cause of its being is that it will cease to be. So indeed we cannot truly say that time exists except in the sense that it tends towards non-existence³⁸.

The time that really exists is the present, but it tends to non-existence and is both without extension and indivisible (*praesens autem nullum habet spatium*)³⁹, since if it were extensive or long it would cease to be present and would be divided into past and future. At this point of the book an important aspect of Augustine's thought appears: if the present is always present, it is no longer time but eternity. This, then, is the definition that, with respect to time and, therefore, the world, Augustine offers of the transcendent reality which is eternity and God.

Although Augustine does not explicitly refer to an image or visual metaphor for his reflection on these concepts, it is possible to deduce one (or many) from it. The present, indivisible and without extension, would be a point. Time, which has a beginning and an end (the Creation and Last Judgement), would be a line segment. Finally, eternity, without beginning or end, would be a circle, the first figure, the simplest and most perfect of all. In combining these forms we can obtain a possible representation. The diameter of the circle represents time, a line whose

³⁶ *Confessiones*, XI, xxvii (36), p. 213, l. 46.

³⁷ *Confessiones*, XI, xx (26), pp. 206-207, l. 1-7.

³⁸ *Confessiones*, XI, xiv (17), p. 203, l. 14-19; tr. p. 231: «Praesens autem si semper esset praesens nec in praeteritum transiret, non iam esset tempus, sed aeternitas. Si ergo praesens, ut tempus sit, ideo fit, quia in praeteritum transit, quomodo et hoc esse dicimus, cui causa, ut sit, illa est, quia non erit, ut scilicet non vere dicamus tempus esse, nisi quia tendit non esse?».

³⁹ *Confessiones*, XI, xv (20), p. 204, l. 53.

beginning and end are joined by its ends to the eternal circle and whose centre is a point: the present, or rather, the instant. This point is the centre of both the circumference (eternity) and the diameter (time), as well as the constituent of any line by definition, since a line is a continuous, indefinite succession of points. The diameter is only apparently proportional to the circle, since it is twice its radius – for Hildegard, the *recta mensura* of the world⁴⁰. In reality, however, the circle, which is infinite, lacks proportion compared to the diameter, which is finite. A representation of this kind, which we can extract (or extrapolate) from Augustine's text, is precisely what we find at the beginning of the *LDO* and especially in the vision that closes the work. Due to the absence of objective evidence, we cannot state with certainty that Hildegard's source was book XI of the *Confessiones*. Nevertheless, it seems to me a significant finding to connect Hildegard's image with Augustine's text and to reflect on the idea of the visual translation of ideas, either by way of direct or indirect influence or due to a confluence between the two thinkers⁴¹.

4. Axis of time and eternal circle

The second key moment in which the image of the wheel of eternity appears is the last vision in the *LDO* (III, 5), where the transition from time and matter to eternity in God is allegorically explained. Hildegard again illustrates the connection between Creator and Creation through the figure of the circle, but this time from the perspective of the end of time and the Last Judgement. The personification of *Caritas* (the term for Divine Love or Spirit) is shown as a female figure seated on «a wheel of wondrous size»⁴², which is endowed with movement (towards the east) and has various geometrical and allegorical divisions within it. In the previously discussed visions (*LDO*, I, 2-3) the structure of the wheel was at the same time connected with the divine, formed by elemental matter, probably because it referred to the passage from the divine to the temporal and material. In

⁴⁰ On the idea of proportion in the cosmology of the *LDO*: G. Rabassó, «*Subtilitates naturae...*», cit. pp. 400-405.

⁴¹ My reflection on the distinction between influence and confluence is inspired by R. Rius Gatell, «À la recherche des savoirs anciens. Simone Weil dans l'air du temps», *Cahiers Simone Weil* 37/3 (2014) 223-238; esp. 229-230.

⁴² *LDO*, III, 5, l. p. 405, l. 3-4; tr. p. 416: «quasi rotam mirę amplitudinis».

the last vision, on the other hand, when describing the passage from the material and temporal to the immaterial and eternal, the circle is presented with purified contents, represented by simple geometries and colours with hardly any figurative forms (Fig. 3). Moreover, here the author places greater emphasis on the category of time:

*For near the mountain that you spy as if amid the eastern stretch, [...] you see as if a wheel of wondrous size, in the likeness of a shining cloud and turned toward the east. This shows that God has neither beginning nor end, but exists gently within his works, prepared for all good things. Stretching across its middle from the left side all the way to the right, a line can be seen, its color clouded like human breath. For God's will appears perfectly in the beginning of the fallen world and through to its end stretching into eternity, because he has separated the temporal from the eternal*⁴³.

This geometrical allegory of the wheel or circle is an allusion to God in eternity: «God's power indeed is rounded by balanced equality, because it lacks beginning and end»⁴⁴. The circle connects the transcendent and the immanent, and in this sense we understand why, according to Hildegard, God's power «reveals things eternal and temporal as if in a circle that has neither beginning nor end»⁴⁵, since the diameter of the temporal begins and ends in the circle of the eternal. The *uox de caelo* says that God is he «who was and who is, unbound by the terms of time's mutability»⁴⁶ and «who was before the beginning and exists too as the beginning and entire course of time»⁴⁷. In dealing with the question of God and eternity as the beginning of time, there is an ambiguity in Hildegard's approach as to whether this beginning has both an ontological and a chronological sense. By

⁴³ *LDO*, III, 5, II, p. 407, l. 19-28; tr. pp. 418-419: «*Nam iuxta montem, quem uelut in medio orientalis plagæ conspicis, [...] quasi rotam miræ amplitudinis similitudinem candidæ nubis habentem et ad orientem uersam uides; quæ Deum inicio et fine carentem, sed mitem in operibus suis existentem et ad omnia bona paratum ostendit. Quam in medio in transuersum, scilicet a sinistro latere usque ad dextrum latus suum, linea obscuri coloris uelut halitus hominis est distinguit; quia perfecte per principium caduci mundi et per finem eius ad eternitatem tendentem uoluntas Dei apparet, cum temporalia ab his quæ eterna sunt sequestrauit.*

⁴⁴ *LDO*, III, 5, II, p. 408, l. 62-63; tr. p. 420: «*Potestas quidem Dei rotunda equalitate temperantie est, quia inicio caret et fine.*

⁴⁵ *LDO*, III, 5, II, p. 408, l. 72-73; tr. p. 420: «*eterna et temporalia quasi in circulo nec initium nec finem habente demonstrat.*

⁴⁶ *LDO*, III, 5, II, p. 406, l. 1-2, tr. p. 418: «*illius qui erat et qui est absque officio mutabilitatis temporum.*

⁴⁷ *LDO*, III, 5, II, p. 407, l. 17-18, tr. p. 419: «*ante initium fuit et etiam initium et tempus temporum existit.*



Fig. 3. Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber diuinorum operum* (III, 5), 13th Century, Biblioteca Statale di Lucca, ms. 1942, fol. 143r.

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using expressions such as *ante incium fuit et etiam incium et tempus temporum existit*, already quoted, and *ante principium mundi et post finem eius*⁴⁸, amongst others, Hildegard dissociates herself from the Augustinian position, according to which it is nonsense to speak of time having a before and after, since these terms are inseparable from temporality and cannot be applied to eternity⁴⁹. In contrast, Hildegard does ascribe temporal notions to eternity, not only in the *LDO*, but also in other writings. In her homily 47, mentioned above, she even refers to the first day of eternity: «the first day on which all creatures will be resplendent»⁵⁰, an idea that does not fit into Augustine's theoretical framework.

Returning to the analysis of the final vision of the *LDO*, the transverse line (*linea iterum*) of the circle represents the temporal order, that is, the worldly time in which human history takes place and which the author identifies with the Judeo-Christian tradition. Hildegard states that this line separates the temporal from the eternal and that God's will is manifested throughout the ages of the world by its greenness⁵¹. In the vision, this line on which *Caritas* sits begins to move, the contents that allegorically occupy the surface of the circle undergo some modifications and some colours are transformed, as an allusion to the purification of all that exists in the created world. This purification (which also appears at the end of the *Sciuias* in the form of a *conflagratio* or *ekpyrosis*) takes place in the *plenitudo temporis*, with the coming of the Son of God, «whom I send mightily under *the silence of my will*, when the strength of each time period [has] passed away, [and] the judgements of my power [come] to pass in the redness of justice»⁵². Hildegard writes that God's will is silent (which reminds us of the silence of eternity in Augustine) and will welcome in its eternal bosom all of the blessed in «the heavenly city, which is the dwelling place of God's children»⁵³, when the world reaches the *aureus numerus*.⁵⁴ With this arithmetical and symbolic reference Hildegard refers

⁴⁸ *LDO*, III, 5, II, p. 407, l. 34-35.

⁴⁹ *Confessiones*, XI, XII (14), p. 201; XI, XIV (17), pp. 202-203.

⁵⁰ *EE*, <47>, p. 313, l. 22-23; tr. p. 178: «primum diem in quo omnes creaturae fulminabunt».

⁵¹ *LDO*, III, 5, II, p. 409, l. 79-83.

⁵² *LDO*, III, 5, V, p. 412, l. 17-19; tr. p. 424: «quem transacta fortitudine temporum in fine eorum potenter sub *silentio uoluntatis meę* misi, iudicia potestatis meę in ruborem iusticie transierunt» italics mine in both cases.

⁵³ *LDO*, III, 5, VI, p. 413, l. 16; tr. p. 425: «Celestis etiam illa ciuitas, quę Dei filiorum habitaculum est». This image appears in all the visions in the third part of the work, as I said, and constitutes a reflection that echoes Augustine's ideas of the earthly city and the heavenly city.

⁵⁴ *LDO*, III, 5, XII, p. 429, l. 10.

both to the end of time, which was foreseen from its beginning⁵⁵, and to each of its intermediate stages.

But the half of this wheel that stretches all the way across beneath the aforesaid line shows a pale color intermingled with blackness. This indicates that the fallen time spans of worldly things have a beginning and an end, and over them rules unending eternity, unbounded by any end⁵⁶.

In her vision Hildegard describes other divisions of this wheel of eternity, and the essential message she wishes to convey to the faithful is the need to reflect on their journey along the diameter that also represents, on a small scale, their own lives. In an earlier vision Hildegard had reflected on the place in which the human being is situated: the centre of both creation and the universe. This location is also a crossroads (*homo quasi in biuio est*): the centre is the present, the point of junction between the temporal and the eternal (according to Augustine, eternity is a continuous present), the point of union between divinity and the human being, and the possibility of choice by which human beings constantly have the opportunity, if they care for their own good, to freely accept God's will and save their soul. The present is therefore the time of virtue which will lead the believer to eternal salvation.

Conclusion

Although Augustine of Hippo is one of the few explicit *auctoritates* in Hildegard of Bingen's work, the author's reception of his writings and, in particular, of Book XI of the *Confessiones*, cannot be proven either by documentary evidence (as the Rupertsberg library holdings are not preserved) or textual evidence (as Hildegard does not cite her sources). Moreover, due to the visual factor in Hilde-

⁵⁵ *LDO*, III, 5, xxiii, p. 444, l. 17-18: «plenitudo, quę in primo facta est», «in principio mundi finem mundi inspexisti».

⁵⁶ *LDO*, III, 5, ii, p. 408, l. 51-55; tr. p. 419: «Medietas uero eiusdem rotę quę sub predicta linea in transuersum ducitur, colorem pallidum quadam nigredine intermixtum demonstrat; quia caduca tempora mundialium rerum incium et finem habentia, quibus indeficiens eternitas nullo fine conclusa dominatur, designat».

gard's visionary corpus, ideas from possible sources of reference are transformed through visual representation and allegory. Since moving images together with audition (both of these in a revealed sense) are the starting point for her writing, both description and commentary, we must see Hildegard's thought as having a visual root: it is a way of thinking radically with and from images – and also sounds. Whether by way of influence (direct or indirect) or confluence, Hildegard translates the ideas of time and eternity into visual representation with a remarkable affinity to Augustine's text. The images of the *LDO* can be seen as visualisations of fundamental concepts from the *Confessiones* mainly in the form of two idea-figures: the circle representing eternity and the diameter symbolising time. *Caritas*, the substance of divinity, is located at the centre of the wheel (the place where in previous visions the human being had been located): that point which symbolises the present and which connects, despite its lack of proportion, time and eternity, both in Augustine's formulation and in Hildegard's vision.

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Lydia Schumacher*

The *De Anima* Tradition In Early Franciscan Thought: A Case Study In Avicenna's Reception

Abstract

In the 12th and early 13th centuries, we witness a steady rise in the level of sophistication with which scholars analysed the nature of the rational soul. This increase was undoubtedly attributable to the translation movement of the period, which made many Greek and Arabic philosophical texts available in Latin for the first time. This paper will show how the introduction of Avicenna's *De anima* in particular mediated readings of Aristotle as well as Augustine in the period of the *Summa's* authorship, specifically, as regards its account of the soul, its relationship to the body, and its cognitive operations. In this way, I will illuminate the extent to which the reading of Avicenna shaped fundamentally the ways in which the Franciscan tradition came to construe human nature.

Keywords: psychology, *Summa Halensis*, Franciscan, soul, body, angel, illumination, senses, intellect.

Ancient and medieval studied Authors: Alexander of Aphrodisias, Alexander of Hales, Aristotle, Augustine, Avicenna, Averroes, Avicbron, Bonaventure, Costa Ben Luca, Dominicus Gundissalinus, Hugh of St Cher, James of Venice, John Blund, John of Damascus, John of Spain, John of La Rochelle, Michael Scotus, Philip the Chancellor, Roger Bacon, Roger Marston, William of Auvergne, Thomas Aquinas.

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A tradição do *De anima* nos primórdios do pensamento franciscano. Um estudo de caso na receção de Avicena.

Resumo

No século XII e início do século XIII, assistimos a uma subida constante do nível de sofisticação da análise da natureza da alma racional. Esta subida deve-se inequivocamente ao movimento de traduções desse período, que pela primeira vez disponibilizou em latim um grande número de textos filosóficos árabes e gregos. Este artigo pretende mostrar de que modo a introdução do *De anima* de Avicena, em particular, mediou tanto as leituras de Aristóteles como as de Agostinho, no período dos *summulistae*, particularmente no que diz respeito à concepção da alma, à sua relação com o corpo e às suas operações cognitivas. Procurarei assim esclarecer a que ponto a leitura de Avicena modelou, de maneira decisiva, o modo como, na tradição Franciscana, se veio a conceber a natureza humana.

Palavras-chave: Psicologia, *Summa Halensis*, Franciscanos, alma, corpo, anjo, iluminação, sentidos, intelecto.

Autores antigos e medievais estudados: Alexandre de Afrodísias, Alexandre de Hales, Aristóteles, Agostinho, Avicena, Averróis, Avicebron, Boaventura, Costa Ben Luca, Dominicus Gundissalinus, Hugo de St Cher, Jaime de Veneza, João Blund, João Damasceno, João Hispano, João da Rochelle, Miguel Escoto Escoto, Filipe Chanceler, Rogério Bacon, Rogério Marston, Guilherme de Auvergne, Tomás de Aquino.

Throughout history, the soul has remained a topic of perennial interest and debate. In the 12th and early 13th centuries, we witness a steady rise in the level of sophistication with which scholars analysed the nature of the rational soul. This increase was undoubtedly attributable to the translation movement of the period, which made many Greek and Arabic philosophical texts available in Latin for the first time. The most significant of these texts were the works of Aristotle and the Islamic philosopher Avicenna, who dominated the reception of Aristotle until nearly the mid 13th century. At this point, better translations of Aristotle were produced which enabled the study of his thought in its own right.

The reasons for the focus on Avicenna over or with Aristotle until this time are many, but among them, there is the fact that the translations of Aristotle that were produced in the mid-to-late 12th century were in some cases only partial and in many cases, supposedly, riddled with inaccuracies. For this reason, Latin thinkers were more inclined to rely on the superior and more complete translations of Avicenna, who was in fact a very different thinker to Aristotle with a system and views all his own. Although Avicenna was clearly the main resource for reading Aristotle before, say, the 1250s and 60s, his own reception was mediated and mitigated by numerous other figures, such as Dominicus Gundissalinus, the translator of Avicenna, as well as the Spanish Jew Avicebron and the Syrian Christian Costa Ben Luca, whose works were translated by Gundissalinus and John of Spain, respectively.

Furthermore, the reception of Aristotle was complicated by the wide circulation of works like the Neo-Platonic *Liber de causis* which was believed before 1268 to offer a genuine representation of Aristotle's theological views; and by the so-called *De spiritu et anima*, a 12th-century work that was attributed to Augustine despite evidence to the contrary. These works generated widespread confusion about what Aristotle and Augustine really said, slanting readings of them in favour of Avicenna. What I would like to do in this paper is to give a window into the complex reception of Avicenna in this period by looking at how he was interpreted by some of those who appropriated his work most extensively and enthusiastically, especially in dealing with questions about the soul.

The thinkers I have in mind are the founders of the Franciscan intellectual tradition, who worked together between 1236 and 1245 to author one of the first great theological Summae of a period that became famous for its vast intellectual syntheses. In particular, I refer to John of La Rochelle, whose works on the soul, in particular, his *Summa de anima* (*SDA*; 1235-6) formed the basis for the section on the rational soul in the *Summa Halensis*¹. These works by John were the first sustained effort to take advantage of the new material on natural philosophy that scholars in Paris had been banned from lecturing and publishing upon until around 1231. The only earlier attempt of a similar nature was the *De anima* of John Blund, who was the first university master of arts to write a treatise on the soul, and who managed to do so just before the first condemnation of Aristotle came into effect in 1210.

In the years between Blund and Rochelle, the topic of the soul was obviously not neglected, nor were the Greco-Arabic sources. Nevertheless, theologians approached the topic in a way that was clearly circumscribed by what might be described as their theological or indeed «Augustinian inheritance». Although they dealt with newer questions, for instance, about the body-soul relationship, so far as they felt Augustine's works spurious or otherwise justified it, they did not explore «nitty gritty» questions about the mechanics of sensation and cognition which are only treated before John by Blund and a couple anonymous authors, and then in a very cursory way that was not entirely faithful to Avicenna's original.

The analysis of such topics that John of La Rochelle gives in his *Summa de anima* later formed the basis for a section on the rational soul in the *Summa*

¹ John of La Rochelle, *Summa de anima*, ed. J.-G. Bougerol, Vrin, Paris 1995. See also Rochelle's work dating around 1232, the *Tractatus de divisione multiplici potentiarum animae*, ed. P. Michaud-Quantin, Vrin, Paris 1964.

Halensis, which thus became the first theological Summa to deal with the cognitive mechanisms that lay beyond the scope of authors like Augustine and John of Damascus, who otherwise loom large in Rochelle's account. Although the *Summa de anima* and *De anima rationali* (*DAR*) section of the *Summa Halensis* follow almost the exact same line of questioning, and the latter repeats much of the material of the former, there are some differences that may reflect differences in dating. While John probably wrote his Summa between 1235 and 1236, in the heyday of Avicenna's Latin reception, the *De anima rationali* makes a more concerted—though no more informed—effort to interact with Aristotle on some issues. This seems to suggest a possible date around or after 1240, when the Averroes commentaries on Aristotle were beginning to garner interest and draw more attention towards Aristotle in his own right.

Throughout my discussion, I will refer to both of the aforementioned Franciscan texts, tracing some developments between them. The «way in» I will invoke for exploring the nature and extent of Avicenna's influence in these works is a list the *Summa* provides of the basic differences between human souls and angels. While this comparison might seem like an unusual springboard for exploring key aspects of human psychology, David Keck has aptly observed that it was as normal for medievals to take angels as their point of departure for studying human nature as it currently is for modern scientists to compare humans with animals². The differences in question pertain to what the *Summa* calls the *esse naturale*, *esse rationale*, and *esse metaphysico* of the rational beings in question.

As Theo Kobusch has shown, this three-fold way of categorizing modes of *esse* is unique to the *Summa Halensis* and as we will see, it has far-reaching implications for the doctrines formulated within it³. When it comes to angels and rational souls, the category of *esse naturale* distinguishes between beings which are either «separate according to substance» (*separatum secundum substantiam*) from the body or «unitable according to substance» (*unibile secundum substantiam*)⁴. As far as *esse rationale* or *esse logicum* is concerned, rational souls differ

² D. Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1998, p. 16.

³ Th. Kobusch, «The *Summa Halensis*: Towards a New Concept of Person», in L. Schumacher (ed.), *The Summa Halensis: Doctrines and Debates*, De Gruyter, Berlin (forthcoming)..

⁴ Alexander of Hales, *Doctoris irrefragabilis Alexandri de Hales Ordinis minorum Summa theologica* (*SH*), 4 vols (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1924-48), Vol II, In2, Tr2, Q1, C5 (n. 112), Solutio, p. 150.

from angels because they engage in discursive reasoning where angels know simply. Put differently, human beings pursue knowledge and make discoveries while angels «just know» what is true⁵. That said, both can be described as images of God in virtue of the rational power⁶.

In terms of *esse metaphysicum*, angels and rational souls differ in their way of being receptive or in a state of potentiality with respect to knowing the natural world. Although angels are certainly capable of knowing things that are inferior to themselves, they do not receive phantasms or images of things from those things themselves, as if from below. Rather, they receive the forms of things through illumination from above⁷. As we will discover, human beings also receive forms from above by illumination, but in a different way⁸. These forms do not represent the objects of knowledge as they seemingly do for angels, but the means of abstracting species from phantasms. Ultimately, then, the illuminated forms in humans are only triggered as a result of receiving those phantasms from below, after which they can be rendered intelligible through the forms acquired from above.

These distinctions, while not elaborate in their detail, provide a useful basis for examining more closely some of the key areas in which early Franciscans adopted ideas from Avicenna, among other new sources. In what follows, I will take these issues one-by-one, starting with the question of embodiment encapsulated by the mode of *esse naturale* before turning to the rational soul's cognitive operations as reflected in *esse rationale* and *esse metaphysico*. As we have seen, the essential difference between angels and the rational human soul with regard to *esse naturale* is that «an angel is a substance separate from the body but the soul is unitable to the body»⁹.

⁵ *SH II*, In2, Tr2, Q1, C5 (n. 112), Solutio, p. 151: «Dico autem intellectum cum ratione intellectum componentem et dividendum et ab extremo ad extremum per medium decurrentem, quo modo non est in intelligentia angelica: intelligit enim modo simplici sine decursu rationis».

⁶ *SH II*, In2, Tr2, Q1, C5 (n. 112), Ad obiecta 6.b, p. 152: both angels and humans are the image of God by virtue of rational power.

⁷ *SH II*, In2, Tr2, Q1, C5 (n. 112), Solutio, p. 151: «Secundum esse vero metaphysicum differunt essentialiter per intellectum possibilem ad species in phantasmatibus et intellectum abstractum ab hac possibilitate; intelligentia enim angelica habet intellectum abstractum ab hac possibilitate».

⁸ *SH II*, In2, Tr2, Q1, C5 (n. 112), Ad obiecta 6.a, p. 152: «Angelus substantia intellectualis, illuminationum, quae sunt a Primo, prima relatione perceptiva, anima vero, ultima relatione perceptiva».

⁹ *SH II*, In2, Tr2, Q1, C5 (n. 112), p. 149: «Angelus est substantia separata a corpore, anima vero est unibilis corpori.»

Following Avicenna, early Franciscans hold that the soul can be considered in two ways, either in its own right, independently of the body, and in this way, they describe it as a «spirit»¹⁰. Alternatively, it can be considered in relation to the body, and in this sense, it is properly called a soul¹¹. Corresponding to this two-fold account of the soul, the *Summa* argues that there are two ways to describe something as corporeal, either absolutely, or by reason of some conditions. If we think of the soul absolutely, then the human soul is not corporeal but incorporeal and therefore separate from the body.

To establish this point, the *Summa* presents a number of arguments. The first, drawn from Avicenna, states that one thing that moves another is distinct from the essence of what it moves; since the soul moves the body, it must therefore be distinct from the essence of the body and is a substance in its own right¹². Another argument, which invokes an analogy found in Aristotle's *De anima*, states that the soul has a body as a sailor a ship; a sailor is divided according to substance from the ship, as he moves the ship and is thereby moved by it accidentally. Therefore, the soul is a substance divided from the body and a substance beyond the body¹³. In his own work, John of La Rochelle establishes the soul as a separable substance through explicit invocation of Avicenna's «flying man» argument, which notes that a human being deprived of all their senses would still be able to reason and therefore would not be able to doubt the independent existence of the rational soul¹⁴.

What makes the soul a substance, on the *Summa*'s understanding, is that it is comprised not only of form but also of matter—not physical matter, of course, but a sort of intellectual matter¹⁵. This application of the doctrine of universal hylo-

¹⁰ *SH II*, In4, Tr1, S1, Q1, C2 (n. 321), Respondeo 2, p. 385.

¹¹ R.C. Dales, *The Problem of the Rational Soul in the Thirteenth Century*, Brill, Leiden 1995, p. 8: «The human soul may be considered from two points of view: as it is related to the body, and as it is in itself».

¹² *SH II*, In4, Tr1, S1, Q1, C2 (n. 321), Respondeo 2.a, p. 386a: «Quod movens per se est distinctum per essentiam a mobili; sed anima movet corpus; ergo est distincta per essentiam a corpore; ergo est substantia praeter substantiam corporis».

¹³ *SH II*, In4, Tr1, S1, Q1, C2 (n. 321), Respondeo 2.b, p. 386, citing Aristotle, *De anima* 2.1: «Anima se habet ad corpus sicut nauta ad navim; sed nauta secundum substantiam dividitur a navi, cum movet navim et secundum accidens movetur; ergo anima secundum substantiam dividitur a corpore, et, si movetur, secundum accidens movetur; ergo, anima est substantia praeter corpus».

¹⁴ John of La Rochelle, *Summa de anima*, 51.

¹⁵ *SH II*, In4, Tr1, S1, Q2, Ti2, C1 (n. 328), Solutio, p. 399: «Ad quod dicendum quod anima humana dicitur composita ex forma et materia intellectuali».

morphism, or the idea that all substances, including rational souls and angels, are comprised of matter and form, is not actually found in Avicenna but in Avicbron, whose theories were encountered by Latin thinkers largely through the mediation of Gundissalinus. Although the soul so construed is an independent entity, it can also be considered a «perfection» in relation to the body, or that which animates the body in the first instance.

For Avicenna, the soul has a natural inclination not just to any body but to one in particular. This inclination sets one soul apart from another, establishing the soul rather than the body or matter as the principle of individuation. Although the soul needs the body in order to enact its individuality, that is, to distinguish itself from other souls, the soul remains a substance in its own right, which does not require the body to complete its essence. On this showing, rather, soul and body are united accidentally. At death, consequently, the soul goes on being the substance that it is¹⁶. By the same token, however, the body is a substance in its own right, which can exist independently of the soul, albeit not as a living body. This is because it too is comprised not only of matter but also its own specific «form of corporeity»¹⁷, which in turn predisposes the body to be united to the soul.

This view is one early Franciscans found attractive because it allowed them to affirm that a dead body is in fact the body of the soul departed from it. Furthermore, it enabled them to account for the resurrection of the body, that is, the possibility of the body of a particular soul to be reconstituted at the end of time. In the years just before the *Summa* was composed, most notably in the work of Philip the Chancellor, Avicenna's idea of an accidental relationship between the body and the soul, mediated by the form of corporeity, was a prevalent view at Paris. Although this view continued to be held in the next generation by the likes of William of Auvergne and others, the situation changed significantly with the early Dominican Hugh of St Cher, who ventured to insist that the body is in fact

¹⁶ B. Carlos Bazán, «The Human Soul: Form and Substance? Thomas Aquinas' Critique of Eclectic Aristotelianism», *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 64 (1997) 104. For Avicenna, as Bazán writes, citing Avicenna's *De anima* 5.7, «the relationship between soul and body ceases to have any meaning after death, once the goals that were sought with the union are achieved the soul continues to live its substantial self-sufficient existence in the company of the superior intelligences that are its true realm. The spiritual substance is the real self of a human being: we are our soul».

¹⁷ M. Bieniak, *The Soul-Body Problem at Paris, ca. 1200–1250: Hugh of St. Cher and His Contemporaries*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 2010, p. 12.

intrinsic to the substance of the soul, which exhibits the quality of *unibilitas substantialis* or unitability to the body¹⁸.

Although Hugh's *Sentences* Commentary represents an important turning point for this doctrine, its relatively early dating — between 1229 and 1231 — left much room for development. Ironically, this happened more than anywhere in the hands of his later Franciscan contemporaries, above all, John and the authors of the *Summa Halensis*. As this suggests, there was not so much of the division between Franciscan and Dominican schools that would come to characterize the next generation of Bonaventure and Aquinas. Although Franciscans and Dominicans did differ on certain points in this period, there was more that they had in common as inheritors of a certain set of sources and questions than there was that divided them.

In the wake of Hugh, and in the work of John of La Rochelle particularly, the notion of *unibilitas* became the key feature that set the rational soul apart from the angel. While angels can be united to bodies in a merely instrumental sense, it is not natural for them to take a body¹⁹. When they do so, consequently, it is not as a «perfection to perfectible» as in the case of humans who are naturally inclined to the body, but merely as a «motor to a moved», as Avicenna put it, or in Aristotle's terms, as a sailor to a ship that he navigates but does not obviously merge with in his essence²⁰. In consequence, angels cannot really be said to perform the bodily functions they might seem to perform. For example, they might appear to eat and digest food, but this is not necessary to keep them alive but only to show familiarity with beings that eat²¹.

Since their knowledge is purely intellectual, moreover, angels do not require the senses to know sense objects, even when they inhabit a body that has sense faculties. The reason that human beings possess both sense and intellectual fac-

¹⁸ Bieniak, *The Soul-Body Problem at Paris*, 26, on William of Auvergne, 33.

¹⁹ *SH II*, In2, Tr2, Q1, C5 (n. 112), Ad obiecta 7, p. 152: «Angelus (...) non sit unius corpori sicut forma vel perfectio cum perfectibili»; cfr. *SH II*, In2, Tr3, S2, Q2, Ti2, M2, C1, Ar1 (n. 183), 1, p. 238: «Videtur quod angelus de natura sua sit substantia a corpore separata».

²⁰ *SH II*, In2, Tr3, S2, Q2, Ti2, M2, C1, Ar3 (n. 185), a, p. 240: «Constat enim quod, quando spiritus angelicus assumit corpus, quod ei unitur; sed spiritus non videtur posse uniri corpori nisi aut sicut perfectio perfectibili aut sicut motor mobili: iis enim duobus modis unitur corpori; sed constat quod primo modo non unitur corpori; ergo secundo; et ita videtur quod pro tanto debeat dici quod angelus assumit corpus, quoniam unitur ei sicut motor mobili».

²¹ *SH II*, In2, Tr3, S2, Q2, Ti2, M2, C2, Ar1-2 (nn. 191-2), pp. 245-6. F.T. Harkins, «The Embodiment of Angels: A Debate in Mid-Thirteenth Century Theology», *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 78 (2011) 25-58.

ulties is precisely that they mediate between creatures and God, knowing one in relation to the other²². Because angels only mediate between intellectual creatures and God, however, they do not need sense faculties by nature. The only reason they have them and the body more generally is that this is the sole means by which angels can imprint ideas on the human intellect, namely, by imprinting them on the senses, which are visual and auditory²³. Although angels therefore need a body in order to accomplish aspects of God's mission amongst human beings, they remain separate from the body even when they assume one²⁴.

As we have established, this is not the case for humans, in whom the soul is naturally unitable to the body as its perfection. In support of this claim, John and the *Summa* like so many other contemporary texts cite Aristotle's *De anima* 2.1²⁵. At the time, this text circulated in a couple of main translations, namely, the Greco-Latin translation of James of Venice, which stated that «the soul as the soul is the form», or elsewhere, the first act «of the natural organic body having the potential for life» (*anima est forma corporis physici organici potentia vitam habentis*); and the Arabo-Latin translation of Michael Scotus, which reads that *anima est prima perfectio corporis naturalis habentis vitam in potentia* («the soul is the first perfection of the natural body having life in potency»)²⁶. At the time a number of variations circulated of the Scotus translation particularly, which was popular not least among John and the authors of the *Summa Halensis*, who invoke his definition explicitly²⁷.

Although the difference between the translations might seem minimal, it was actually monumental. For to say that the soul is the «form» of the body is to say

²² *SH* II, In2, Tr3, S2, Q2, Ti1, C2, Ar1 (n. 160), Solutio, p. 211.

²³ *SH* II, In2, Tr3, S2, Q2, Ti2, M2, C1, Ar3 (n. 184), Respondeo 1, p. 240.

²⁴ *SH* II, In2, Tr3, S2, Q2, Ti2, M2, C1, Ar3 (n. 184), Respondeo 1, p. 240: Angels take on a body «ad manifestationem ipsius creaturae spiritualis vel ad demonstrationem divinam (. . .) quoniam angeli ad suum corpus non est unio sicut perfectionis ad suum perfectibile, sed sicut motoris ad mobile».

²⁵ Aristotle, *De anima* 2.1, 412a18-19.

²⁶ S. de Boer, *The Science of the Soul: The Commentary Tradition on Aristotle's De anima, c. 1260-1360*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 2017, p. 123. The slightly later Greco-Latin translation of William of Moerbeke read: «anima est primus actus corporis physici potentia vitam habentis». D.A. Callus, «The Treatise of John Blund on the Soul», in A. Mansion (ed.), *Autour d'Aristote: Recueil d'études de philosophie ancienne et médiévale offert à Monseigneur A. Mansion*, Publications Universitaires de Louvain, Louvain 1955, p. 491, lists several variants of the definition that were used in the early 13th century, all of which contain the term «perfectio».

²⁷ *SH* II, In4, Tr1, S1, Q3, Ti2, C1, Ar1 (n. 344), Contra c, p. 418: «Anima est perfectio corporis physici, organici».

that having a body is part of what it means to be a soul²⁸: that the soul cannot therefore exist without the body, and the body cannot be enlivened without the soul, which is precisely what the soul does as its «first act»²⁹. This, ironically, is precisely what Aristotle's sailor/boatman analogy in *De anima* 2.1 is presumably meant to convey: not that the sailor and shipman are fundamentally separate entities as the *Summa* suggests, but that the soul activates the potential of the body to live in the way the sailor activates the potential of the ship to sail.

The reference to the soul as the perfection of the body, by contrast, represents the means by which Avicenna posited an independent existence for the soul, which comprises a separate substance from the body³⁰. For him, we have seen, the soul does not constitute the body qua body. This is the job of the form of corporeity; it only establishes the body as living. This incidentally is what is implied in Avicenna's idea of the soul as the «motor» of what it moves, namely, that the soul is a sort of engine for the body that can keep on running even without it. The popularity of Avicenna's work during the period in question meant that his understanding of the body-soul relationship was preferred, whether scholastics referred to the soul as a form or as a perfection, or both³¹.

In his *Summa de anima*, John provides an excellent example of a thinker from this period who employs the terms «form» and «perfection» interchangeably³². In most cases, he freely conflates the terms, for instance, when he affirms that «the soul is united to the body as its form and perfection»³³. In another place, he says that the soul «is united as form or as a perfection to a perfectible»³⁴. When

28 Aristotle, *De anima*, 412a27.

29 Bieniak, *The Soul-Body Problem at Paris*, 13.

30 Bieniak, *The Soul-Body Problem at Paris*, 15.

31 Bieniak, *The Soul-Body Problem at Paris*, 17: «The Arabic definition of the soul as perfection of the body enters the Latin West not only through Avicenna, but also thanks to Costa Ben Luca's treatise *De differentia spiritus et animae*. It is through the latter that the definition is assimilated into the first Latin work influenced by Avicenna, i.e. the *De anima* by Dominicus Gundissalinus».

32 Bieniak, *The Soul-Body Problem at Paris*, 35: «like Philip the Chancellor, John uses the terms «perfection» and «form» interchangeably».

33 John of La Rochelle, *Summa de anima*, 115: «Item cum anima uniatur corpori ut forma et perfectio eius».

34 John of La Rochelle, *Summa de anima*, 116: «Respondeo: anima rationalis unitur corpori secundum duplicem modum: unitur enim ut forma sue materie sive ut perfectio suo perfectibili; unitur etiam ei ut suo organo sive instrumento per quod operatur duplex est ergo ratio unionis. Secundum primum modum unitur anima corpori sine medio».

he is explicating Aristotle's definition of the soul, however, he states that «the soul is the perfection and form and first act of the body»³⁵. Similarly, the *Summa Halensis* refers to the soul not only as the form of the body, using Aristotle's term, but also employs the Avicennian terms not only of what is moved in relation to what moves it, or is perfectible in relation to that which perfects it³⁶. In fact the *Summa* conflates the terms, stating that a «form is defined insofar as it perfects being»³⁷.

As such examples illustrate, there is almost total fluidity in the use of terms that are technically contradictory. On this basis, scholars like Bazàn have accused early scholastics, including John, of exhibiting deep confusion about the true meaning of a form and the fact that it cannot, like a perfection, exist independently of the body. Of course, Franciscans avoided Avicenna's extreme dualism through the doctrine of *unibilitas substantialis*, which while defining body and soul as separate substances ultimately established them as one nature³⁸. However, Theodore Crowley concluded that they show no awareness of the «metaphysical problems and indeed the contradiction inherent in simultaneously affirming that the soul is at once a form and an independent substance in its own right»³⁹.

As plausible as this criticism may seem at first glance, a further study of John's text and the *Summa Halensis* proves that early Franciscans were not ignorant of the deep differences between a form and a perfection⁴⁰. Their strategy for resolving the tension—which scholars like Bazàn and Crowley completely neglect to take into account—involves showing that in the exceptional case of the soul, there can be a form which by contrast to the norm can also be separable

³⁵ John of La Rochelle, *Summa de anima*, 58: «Anima sit perfectio et forma et actus corporis, est actus primus, non secundus».

³⁶ *SH* II, In4, Tr1, S1, Q3, Ti2, C1, Ar1 (n. 344), Ad obiecta 3, p. 419: «Corpus vero humanum indigent anima non tantum ut moveatur sed etiam ut in esse in quo est subsistat et permaneat, et ideo duplicem habet comparationem: ut mobilis ut motorem et perfectibilis ad perfectionem suam, unde unum in natura constituunt, scilicet hominem».

³⁷ *SH* II, In4, Tr1, S2, Q1, C2, Ar1 (n. 350), 1, p. 425: «Forma autem dicitur in quantum perficit esse».

³⁸ *SH* II, In4, Tr1, S1, Q3, Ti2, C1, Ar1 (n. 344), Solutio, p. 418: «Coniungibilia sunt anima et corpus et uniuntur in unum ut fiat una natura».

³⁹ Th. Crowley, *Roger Bacon*, Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, Louvain 1950, p. 122: «For these men, the soul was no less essentially form than it was substance (...) the metaphysical problems arising out of this combination may not have been clearly perceived».

⁴⁰ *SH* II, In4, Tr1, S1, Q3, Ti2, C1, Ar4 (n. 347), 1, p. 421: «Forma non habet esse praeter materiam; sed anima habet esse praeter corpus; ergo non dicuntur unum illo modo».

from matter⁴¹. The detailed reasoning that underlies their claims in this regard lies beyond the scope of the current discussion.

At this point, I simply wish to summarize briefly the ground covered so far. The Summists transform Avicenna's description of the soul as the «perfection» of the body into code language to describe their understanding of the soul as naturally and essentially unitable to a body. They also employ Avicenna's language that the soul serves as a motor to a moved, but since this analogy implies a fundamental dualism or separability of soul from body, it is not sufficient to capture the full way in which the soul relates to the body. This analogy does however serve adequately to describe the relationship, if any, that an angel may have to a body, that is, a purely instrumental or accidental one, which involves something like putting on a garment temporarily.

As we have seen, the substance dualism that underlies the Franciscan vision entered the theological scene in the years before the Franciscans, for example, in the work of Philip the Chancellor, whose *Summa de bono* probably dates to around 1230. This was still a period of some timidity with regard to embracing the full scale of philosophical sources such as Aristotle and Avicenna. Nevertheless, the period does testify to a certain level of engagement, to the extent that this was perceived as compatible with the tradition of Augustine. Whether Augustine himself was a dualist along the lines of Avicenna is certainly up for debate. While it is a common opinion that he inherits dualistic tendencies from Platonism, the case for his dualism in the Middle Ages was made almost exclusively on the basis of spurious works like the *De spiritu et anima* and *De fide ad Petrum*, in the face of evidence that undermined the authenticity of such works.

The result was a reading of Augustine — not to mention Aristotle — which had more in common with Avicenna than any authentic idea of Aristotle or Augustine themselves. Such a tendency to read both figures in line with Avicenna was characteristic and indeed endemic for a period in which the Aristotelian and Platonic traditions were still fundamentally regarded as consistent and the distinctive features of Aristotle's thought were still not fully understood.

The confusion seeps into yet another area in which the *Summa* has noted that angels and humans differ, namely, regarding *esse rationale*, or the way they acquire knowledge, that is, discursively or not. This mode of being is closely related

⁴¹ *SH* II, In4, Tr1, S1, Q3, Ti2, C1, Ar4 (n. 347), Solutio, p. 422: «Haec unio, quae est animae et corporis, (...) dicitur nativa et se habet ad modum formae cum materia».

to the *esse metaphysicum*, whereby angels and rational souls are said to differ in terms of the way they receive data from the outside world. In order to see what is at stake in these differences, we must explore in more detail the early Franciscan psychology which deals with both matters at once. As I have hinted already, this is the main area in which John of La Rochelle in particular boldly breaks new ground that was never traveled by a theologian or thinker before him.

The interesting thing — and the one major structural difference — between the *SDA* and the *DAR* is that the latter text changes the order in which it treats the main psychological schema that the author wants to consider. In the *SDA*, John deals first with Augustine, albeit the Augustine exclusively of the *De spiritu et anima*, then with Damascus, then with Avicenna by name. In the *DAR*, by contrast, the order is Aristotle — who was not mentioned in John's psychology at all — Augustine, and Damascus. This is one slight change that suggests perhaps a later date for the *DAR*; a growing awareness of Aristotle's authority as distinct from Avicenna's may have encouraged this re-ordering of priorities, even though it does not alter in any major way the actual substance of the views that the Franciscan authors want to present.

While these are presented partly in conversation with Augustine and Damascus, I am not going to discuss the way the Franciscan texts deal with these authors. Basically, such patristic authors make an appearance here because they are the main authorities in the Christian tradition to date who provided psychological schema, and as Dag Hasse has noted, Latin thinkers at this time were somewhat constrained to find a way to reconcile the new philosophical resources with their indigenous tradition. This tradition was in no way as sophisticated as Avicenna's when it came to describing the work of the senses and the intellect. In that sense, the patristic material is there basically to suggest or even to show that Christian thinkers provide a broad framework for thinking about human psychology into which Avicenna's account of the various faculties can justifiably be inserted.

These thinkers for instance acknowledge the existence of three tiers of something like external and internal senses, as well as the intellect, even though they do not go much into the details of these faculties' operations. For this very reason, Hasse has noted, Latin thinkers at this time—and Rochelle above all—were inclined basically to adopt wholesale Avicenna's account of internal sensation, even while they looked for ways to reconcile his doctrine of the intellect with those that pre-existed in Augustine and Damascus.

In his *SDA*, John delineates quite straightforwardly an Avicennian account of the five internal senses. The common sense is that which receives forms imprinted

by the five external senses and gives us a unified picture of their different aspects. What John calls the imagination retains those forms after they are no longer directly accessible by experience. The excogitative sense is able to compose and divide the different accidents attached to a given form. Estimation registers what is beneficial or harmful in the forms perceived, while the fifth internal sense of the memory apprehends and retains the product of estimation, that is, the intentions of sensible things, the images of things with their connotational attributes or positive or negative connotations.

Instead of detailing the way the *DAR* basically repeats this account of the internal senses, I will simply give its summary of their functions:

As regards sensible forms, there are faculties that apprehend, and those that preserve or transform. The first one apprehending the forms is called the common sense; the one preserving them the imagination or phantasia; the one transforming and comparing in the absence of matter is called the imaginative sense; the one that concerns intentions of good or evil or harmfulness or helpfulness, as a lamb with respect to a sheep or a wolf is either apprehending or preserving; if it is apprehending, it is called estimation, if preserving, memory⁴².

In transitioning from the discussion of the internal senses to the intellect in the *SDA*, John invokes a three-fold distinction between the passive or material intellect, which is necessarily united to the body, and then the separable intellect, which includes the possible and the agent intellects. This particular way of describing the intellects cannot be traced exactly to the available philosophical sources at the time — Aristotle, Avicenna, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and Averroes — but only to an anonymous theological text from around 1230 which construes their relationship in this way⁴³.

According to John, the material intellect is what receives the forms or intelligible species in the phantasms; that is to say, it knows forms abstracted from

⁴² *SH II*, In4, Tr1, S2, Q1, M2, C4, Ar2, (n. 361), I, p. 438: «Quae vero est circa formas sensibiles aut est apprehendens aut custodiens aut transformans sive conferens absente materia. Si vero est apprehendens, dicitur sensus communis; si vero custodiens, dicitur imaginatio vel alio modo phantasia; si vero est transformans vel conferens absente materia, dicitur imaginativa. Si vero est circa intentiones, ut bonitatem et malitiam, sive nocumentum et iuvamentum, prout accidit de agno respectu ovis aut lupi, aut est apprehendens aut custodiens. Si apprehendens, dicitur aestimativa; si custodiens, dicitur memorativa».

⁴³ D.A. Callus, «The Powers of the Soul: An Early Unpublished Text», *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 19 (1952) 131-70.

matter in the mode of particulars⁴⁴. The possible and agent intellects know the forms abstracted from matter, as universals. The possible intellect does so only potentially: it is a *tabula nuda*⁴⁵ or blank slate which is receptive to all kinds of forms but has none of them in act. The agent intellect is what makes the forms known, insofar as it is the source of an intelligible light of the first truth that is naturally impressed upon us.

In the first volume of the *Summa Halensis*, John goes into considerable detail as to what this light entails, developing his own version of Avicenna's doctrine of the transcendentals which are the «first known» of all things. Following Avicenna, John says that «being is the first object of the intellect». In his account, however, being is qualified by three further concepts which respectively render the human mind an image of the Trinity. These include unity, which enables us to know one thing as distinct from another; truth, which renders a being intelligible as such; and goodness, which reveals the purpose of the being in question.

Thanks to these transcendentals or the image of God, the human mind has the conceptual resources to comprehend actual beings. It has a light by which to grasp whatever form may find itself in the possible intellect, which cannot itself render the forms it contains intelligible. When it comes to explaining how the agent and possible intellects work together, John invokes Avicenna's doctrine of the four intellects explicitly, along with his illustration of the stages in which a young boy learns to write⁴⁶.

The first stage concerns the material intellect which has the capacity for all forms but is not yet subject to any form, as a young child has the capacity to learn to write before actually having learned to do so. The second is the intellect *dispositionem habens* or *in habitu*, which has the principles or skills needed to cognize forms before having done so. This is the stage at which the transcendentals would be acquired. The third is the *intellectus perfectus* or *in effectum conclusionem*, which has actually drawn conclusions from those principles but is not in the act of considering them at present. The fourth is the intellect *in usu* or «in act». This corresponds to the active intellect strictly speaking while the previous three correspond to the possible.

As previously suggested, the angels only have what could be described as the agent intellect and not the possible, because they exist separately from the

44 John of La Rochelle, *Summa de anima*, 274.

45 John of La Rochelle, *Summa de anima*, 275.

46 John of La Rochelle, *Summa de anima*, 276.

body and do not need to receive sense data, which is then subject to the analysis of the agent intellect. The only sense in which they might be regarded as possible is with respect to the forms of things they receive from God above, not through a discursive process, but directly or immediately⁴⁷.

Whereas Avicenna had denied any intellectual memory of abstracted concepts, the Halensian Summists insist upon it, distinguishing between an innate memory, which holds the transcendental concepts, and acquired memory, which holds the concepts abstracted with the help of the transcendentals⁴⁸. On the matter of the active intellect, there is the further question that famously exercised Latin thinkers after Gundissalinus as to whether the agent intellect is in fact God in the case of human beings. In this regard, John invokes a distinction from the *De spiritu et anima* between things that are above, next to, and below the self.

In order to know what is above the self, namely, God, the mind needs God to act as Agent Intellect. In order to know what is next to the self, namely, angels, the mind needs angels to serve as the agent intellect. In order to know itself or inferior creatures, however, the aforementioned transcendentals are sufficient for human knowledge. This is a rather more conservative and perhaps plausible view than the one famously advocated by Roger Bacon, Roger Marston, and other Francis-

47 *SH II*, In4, Tr1, S2, Q3, Ti1, C2, Ar2 (n. 372), Ad objecta 2, p. 452: «Haec enim quae est in angelo, separata est a parte sensibili: unde non habet possibilem nisi dicatur possibilis, id est receptibilis illuminationum a Summo, sed habet partem sibi sufficientem ad cognoscendum ea quae nondum sunt cognita ab ea».

48 *SH II*, In4, Tr1, S1, Q3, C5, Ar7 (n. 342), Respondeo, p. 415: «Est memoria innata et acquisita. Memoria veritatis innata est principium intelligentiae et voluntatis: est enim, sicut dictum est, vis conservativa similitudinis primae veritatis impressae a creatione, et secundum hoc memoria attribuitur Patri, intelligentia Filio, voluntas Spiritui Sancto. Memoria vero acquisita primae veritatis potest considerari duobus modis, quia quantum ad fieri aut quantum ad esse. Quantum ad fieri naturaliter procedit acquisita memoria ex intellectu et voluntate: et secundum hoc intellectus, qui est generans veritatem, attribuitur Patri, voluntas, quae est genita, Filio, memoria, ex utroque procedens, Spiritui Sancto. Quantum ad esse vero, memoria veritatis acquisita potest esse principium veritatis intelligentiae et voluntatis» [The innate memory of the truth is the principle of understanding and will: for as is said, it is the power that conserves the likeness of the first truth that is impressed from creation. And in this way, memory is attributed to the Father, intelligence to the Son, and will to the Holy Spirit. The acquired memory of the first truth can be considered in two ways, insofar as it acts or insofar as it exists. Insofar as it acts, acquired memory naturally proceeds from the [operation] of the intellect and will. Thus, the intellect, which is what generates truth, is attributed to the Father, will, which is the cause of what is generated, to the Son, and memory, which proceeds from both, to the Holy Spirit. As regards its essence, the acquired memory of truth is the principle of truth of understanding and will].

cans that God is the Agent Intellect in all respects. The *Summa Halensis* advocated the same position as John⁴⁹. It is not the case in the *Summa*, as in Avicenna and Gundissalinus, that the possible intellect alone belongs to the human.

Nevertheless, the *Summa*'s account of the material, possible and agent intellects differs somewhat from that of John's original, not in its substance but in the fact that the substance is assigned to Aristotle rather than Avicenna, at least by the editors of the text. Another notable difference is the absence of the doctrine of four intellects in this context. However, the Summist finds a way to affirm this still by concluding that Avicenna's signature doctrine is basically compatible with John of Damascus' account of the intellect, which of course bears no resemblance to it at all. This massive stretch of an argument goes to show just how hard early Franciscans would work to salvage the major aspects of Avicenna's psychology, even while trying to keep abreast of current trends by paying lip service to Aristotle and patristic authorities.

Further support for the argument that the Summists maintain an Avicennian rather than Aristotelian account of abstraction can be found in the *Summa*'s account of the internal senses, which virtually pastes its content from John's *SDA*, which itself lifts almost verbatim from Avicenna's *De anima*. If we assume as Hasse and Alpina have argued that much of the work of abstraction takes place at the level of producing an intention by the internal senses, then it follows that the *DAR* presupposes Avicenna's idea of how the four intellects finish the job⁵⁰. So far as I can tell, there is no sign that the Summists understand the differences between Aristotle and Avicenna on abstraction, which are considerable but lie beyond the scope of the current paper.

In this connection, it is worth noting that the *Summa Halensis* constantly uses the term *Philosophus* interchangeably for both Aristotle and Avicenna, sometimes even exhibiting the cheeky tendency to pretend as if there was no difference between them, *i.e. secundum autem Avicennam, qui sequitur Aristotelm*⁵¹ or in attributing a quotation from Avicenna to Aristotle. All of this suggests that we are still in the phase spanning into the 1240s that Amos Bertolacci has described

49 *SH* II, In4, Tr1, S2, Q3, Ti1, C2, Ar2 (n. 372), III.2, p. 452.

50 T. Alpina, «Intellectual Knowledge, Active Intellect, and Intellectual Memory in Avicenna's *Kitab al-Nafs* and Its Aristotelian Background», *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 25 (2014) 131-83.

51 *SH* I, P1, In1, T3, Q1, M1, C3 (n. 74), III, p. 119: «Secundum autem Avicennam, qui sequitur Aristotelem (...)»

as one of «reading Aristotle with Avicenna»⁵². As noted, this was a time when interest in Aristotle was increasing, partly under the impetus of Averroes' recently translated commentaries, but the habit of reading Aristotle in terms of Avicenna was proving difficult to discard, and resources for doing otherwise were still thin on the ground.

What I have tried to do in this paper is give a taste of Avicenna's reception in the school of thought that interpreted him most enthusiastically and most faithfully in this period. Obviously, others of the generation most notably Albert the Great interacted with Avicenna extensively. But they seemingly did so in a slightly more sophisticated and sometimes even critical fashion. That is not to say that the Franciscan reception of Avicenna was altogether pure. As we have seen, it was mediated by the likes of Gundissalinus and mitigated by many others, such as Costa Ben Luca and Avicbron.

Above all, it was undertaken in many cases under the guise of reading Aristotle and Augustine, although we have seen that the operative understanding of both authors was somewhat distorted not least by the wide circulation of spurious texts. That is not to say that the Franciscan philosophy of the soul was confused. Notwithstanding the liberties taken with Aristotle's idea of the soul as the form of the body, and just about every idea that could be linked to Augustine, the Franciscans of the early scholastic period, and John first and foremost, knew what they thought about human psychology. And the ideas they developed would continue to form Franciscan ideas on this subject for generations, long after the links to Avicenna or anyone else had been forgotten.

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Yael Barash*

Seeing the Invisible Theory of Vision in Hildegard of Bingen's *Scivias* II.6

Abstract

Augustine's followers – Hildegard of Bingen, among them – inherited an unclarity about the possibility of knowing the invisible God through the visible nature. On the one hand, Augustine discussed how the physical visible world points to God as its creator. On the other hand, he demonstrated that knowledge derived from sensory perceptions of the visible is limited and inferior to inner learning. Although Hildegard embraced Augustine's opinion that sensory perceptions are limited, she still considered them important for believers. Vision 6 in *Scivias* II depicts a complex relationship between the visible and the invisible with regard to the Eucharist: Christ's blood and body are not only superior to the wine and the bread, but are also identical to the latter and complete it. Thus, visible objects are not mere creations of the invisible but also reflect the invisible reality. In the first two sections of this article, I examine these theological dissimilarities. The last sections of the article suggest that the importance of the visible affected the structure of Vision II.6. Moreover, the illustrations of Vision II.6 present the complex relationship between the visible and the invisible. These illustrations display how an invisible concept may be reflected in a visible depiction.

Keywords: Eucharist, inner seeing, physical world, image-text relationship, *Scivias*.

Medieval studied Authors: Hildegard of Bingen, Augustine of Hippo.

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Vendo o invisível. Teoria da Visão em Hildegarda de Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6

Resumo

Os seguidores de Agostinho – Hildegarda de Bingen, entre eles – herdaram uma falta de clareza sobre a possibilidade de conhecer o Deus invisível através da natureza visível. Por um lado, Agostinho discutiu como o mundo físico visível aponta para Deus como seu criador. Por outro lado, demonstrou que o conhecimento derivado das percepções sensoriais do visível é limitado e inferior à aprendizagem interior. Embora Hildegarda tenha abraçado a opinião de Agostinho de que as percepções sensoriais são limitadas, ela ainda as considerava importantes para os crentes. A Visão 6 em *Scivias* II descreve uma relação complexa entre o visível e o invisível no que diz respeito à Eucaristia: O sangue e o corpo de Cristo não só são superiores ao vinho e ao pão, como também são idênticos a este último e completam-no. Assim, os objetos visíveis não são meras criações do invisível, mas refletem também a realidade invisível. Nas duas primeiras secções deste artigo, examino estas dissimilaridades teológicas. As últimas secções do artigo sugerem que a importância do visível afetou a estrutura da Visão II.6. Além disso, as ilustrações da Visão II.6 apresentam a complexa relação entre o visível e o invisível. Estas ilustrações mostram como um conceito invisível pode ser refletido numa representação visível.

Palavras chave: Eucaristia, visão interior, mundo físico, relação imagem-texto, *Scivias*.

Autores medievais estudados: Hildegarda de Bingen, Agostinho de Hipona.

A body and mind have been granted to me, one outer, the other inner. But by which of these should I have sought my God, Whom I had already sought through the body from earth to heaven as far as I could send the beams of my eyes as messengers? Seeing Him through the mind is the better way. To the mind, as to a presiding judge, all the messengers of the body have reported the answers of heaven and earth and all that is within them, all saying, «We are not God, but He made us». The inner man knows this through the ministry of the outer man: I, the inner I, received these answers: I, the inner mind, through the senses of my body asked the entire mass of the World about my God, and it replied, «I am not He, but He made me»¹.

In this passage, Augustine raised essential questions about Christianity: How do the senses of the outer man inform the inner mind? Which information does the world hold about the divine? In this paper, I discuss Hildegard of Bingen's (1098-1179) answers to these questions. Hildegard outlined a complex relation-

¹ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessiones* X.6: «Et ecce corpus et anima in me mihi praesto sunt, unum exterius et alterum interius. Quid horum est, unde quaerere debui Deum meum, quem iam quae-siveram per corpus a terra usque ad caelum, quousque potui mittere nuntios radios oculorum meorum? Sed melius quod interius. Ei quippe renuntiabant omnes nuntii corporales praesidenti et iudicanti de responsionibus caeli et terrae et omnium, quae in eis sunt, dicentium: 'Non sumus Deus', et: 'Ipse fecit nos'. Homo interior cognovit haec per exterioris ministerium; ego interior cognovi haec, ego, ego animus per sensum corporis mei. Interrogavi mundi molem de Deo meo, et respondit mihi: 'Non ego sum, sed ipse me fecit'». Ed. Lucas Verheijen, in *MCCC (Corpus Christianorum - Continuatio Mediaevalis, 27 – Confessionvm)*, Brepols Publishers, Turnhout 1981, p. 159-60, l. 33-43.

ship between the visible and the invisible; even her writing process demonstrates this complex relationship. Hildegard wrote on abstract subjects as she had miraculously perceived with her «inner eye» and with her «inner ear». However, this paper does not focus on Hildegard's mystic experiences, but on the theory of perceiving the invisible, as described in her visionary text. For this purpose, I focus on a vision Hildegard had of the Eucharist (*Liber Scivias* II, Vision 6). As argued in Vision II.6, the Eucharist is the most miraculous encounter between the visible and the invisible: God, the highest essence, takes the form of simple bread and wine². The commentary of Vision II.6 elaborates on the visible and the invisible oblation, their relationship and how each of them affect the receiver. According to Vision II.6, the invisible is superior to the visible, yet simultaneously completes it and identical to it. Hence, the visible is also important for receiving the sacrament. The first two sections of this article present this complex relationship and how it relates to Augustine's views.

The third and fourth sections discuss how the relationship between the visible and the invisible shape the presentation of Vision II.6. While the third section elaborates on visible elements in the text, the fourth section is dedicated to the only medieval illustrations of Vision II.6 – a pair of illustrations from Rupertsberg Codex³. I will try to demonstrate that these illustrations visibly convey that the invisible is superior to the visible, yet also completes it and is identical to it.

1. Abstract Perceptions

The essence of the Eucharist's oblation – God's flesh and blood – is inconsistent with its appearance as bread and wine. In the 11th century, in response to

² Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II.6.11, ed. A. Führkötter, in MCCC (Corpus Christianorum - Continuatio Mediaevalis, 43 – *Liber Scivias* 1-2), Brepols Publishers, Turnhout 1978.

³ Formely, Wisbaden, Nassauische Landbibliothek, MS 1. In World War II, this manuscript was lost from Dresden. Luckily, the nuns of Eibingen had created two copies of the codex in the 1920s: by hand in color by Josepha Knips and photographed in black and white (the negatives are in the Rheinische Bildarchiv in Cologne). For more on these copies, see: M. Caviness, «Gender Symbolism and Text Image Relationship: Hildegard of Bingen's *Scivias*», in J. Beer (ed.), *Translation Theory and Practice in the Middle Ages*, Medieval Institute Publications, Kalamazoo 1997, pp. 73-75; and M. Embach, *Die Schriften Hildegards von Bingen: Studien zu ihrer Überlieferung und Rezeption im Mittelalter und in Frühen Neuzeit*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2003, pp. 95-6. There is a second illustrated MS of *Scivias* (Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Sal. X, 16), but without any illustration in the *Scivias* second book.

Berengar of Tours' attack on the Eucharist, Lanfranc of Bec explained how and why the oblation is inconsistent. Likewise, Vision II.6 broadly discusses this inconsistency⁴. Hildegard heard the divine voice declaring that what seems to us humans as bread and wine is actually flesh and blood⁵. The voice explained to her how God miraculously changes the bread and wine to blood and flesh⁶, and that this miracle repeats the greater miracle of the incarnation⁷. It also clarified why wine and bread were chosen⁸. In addition, the divine voice noted that the Eucharist is invisible only because of our limited abilities⁹; if we would receive real flesh and blood, we would shrink back in disgust (*abhorreo*)¹⁰. Many of these arguments are similar to those of Lanfranc. After explaining the inconsistency, the divine voice scolds us for questioning the existence of the miracle¹¹.

Despite the inconsistency of the Eucharist, the divine voice asserts that with faith, people will be able to perceive the true essence of the Eucharist:

And so, O human, I give you His body and blood in the oblation of bread and wine, so that in

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- ⁴ For more connections between Vision II.6 to other contemporary theology see H. Feiss, «Hildegard's Vision of the Eucharist (*Scivias* 2.6): Theology and Personal Practice», *The American Benedictine Review* 49 (1998) 172-3, 194.
- ⁵ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, cit. 2, 6.8; 6.12; 6.18; 6.29; 6.43. Lanfranc of Bec made similar claims: Lanfranc, «On the Body and Blood», ch. 2, 410c-412a, ch. 8, 419a-b, ch. 12, 422c-d.
- ⁶ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, cit. 2, 6.13, 6.36, see similarly in Lanfranc: Lanfranc, «On the Body and Blood», ch. 14, 423c-d and ch. 20, 436b-d.
- ⁷ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, cit. 2, 6.14, 6.15, 6.29, 6.36; The divine voice also compares the Eucharist to the miraculous resurrection: 6.13; and to the creation of man: 6.24, 6.43. Lanfranc also compared the Eucharist to the incarnation: Lanfranc, «On the Body and Blood», ch. 15, 425c, ch. 18, 430c.
- ⁸ According to the divine voice, wine and bread were chosen because Jesus was sustained by them in his earthly life: Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, cit. 2, 6.18; on the advantages of wheat over other fruits: 6.26; and on the benefits of wine: 6.18. Ortúzar Escudero discusses the flavor of the oblation as a connection between the believers and the Son: M. J. Ortúzar Escudero, *Die Sinne in den Schriften Hildegards von Bingen*, Hiersemann, Stuttgart 2016, pp. 239-244.
- ⁹ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, cit. 2, 6.14, 6.16, 6.19, 6.36, 6.43.
- ¹⁰ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, cit. 2, 6.19. See similarly in Lanfranc: Lanfranc, «On the Body and Blood», ch. 18, 430c.
- ¹¹ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6.60: «sed si tu, homo, in instabilitate cordis tui in temetipso dixeris, quomodo oblatio ista in altari corpus et sanguis Filii mei efficiatur, tunc et ego tibi respondebo: 'Cur hoc, o homo, interrogas, et quare haec sciscitaris? Num haec a te requiro? Quid scrutaris secreta mea de corpore et sanguine Filii mei? Nec ista a te requirenda sunt, sed tantum in magno timore et ueneratione ea suscipiens diligentur custodi, et amplius de hoc mysterio noli haesitare'», Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II.6.60, cit. 2, pp. 278-9. Also Lanfranc asserts that humans must not doubt the sacrament: Lanfranc, «On the Body and Blood», ch. 9, 420a, ch. 17, 426d-7a.

true faith you may perceive what is visible and what is invisible. And you receive this sacrament with true certainty by the divine power, yet so that it is not visible to you, [...] ¹². [The body and blood of the Son] cannot be seen by a carnal eye, as long as it is ashes, except by the perception of humble devotion. How? As a bird sees that an egg has been laid in the nest; it eagerly flies to cover it and nurtures it with its warmth until the chick emerges; and then the shell remains, and the chick flies away ¹³.

The receiver perceives the essence of oblation despite its invisibility, the way a bird perceives the chick inside the egg despite the shell. Here, perceiving means grasping the presence of an invisible entity in the same way that sensory perception informs us of the presence of corporal entities. Hence, we can conclude that the invisible essence of the oblation can be perceived abstractly. The abstract perception helps believers to understand the invisible and feel close to it.

In order to abstractly perceive the Eucharist, one needs to receive it with faith. Consequently, receiving the communion is not a passive act, but depends on the receiver's state of mind and mental preparation ¹⁴. The Eucharist is intended for believers who have reached the appropriate state of mind ¹⁵. The strength of the receiver's faith determines how effective the Eucharist will be:

But this sacrament will not be holier for the one who receives more of it, nor of lesser effect for one who receives less of it; but it will illumine the recipient according to his faith. Therefore, O human, it does not need to be taken in great quantity, for the mighty God is in a small oblation of this mystery, as it is in a great one, [...], those who have God, the three and the one, in their hearts with firm and whole faith ¹⁶.

¹² Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6.19, cit.2, p. 247, l. 757-61: «Quapropter, et ego, o homo, carnem et sanguinem, eius in oblatione panis et uini trado, quatenus per illud quod uisibile est illud quod inuisibile est in uera fide percipias. Et idem sacramentum in uera certitudine per diuinam potentiam suscipis, ita tamen quod tibi uisibile non apparet, [...]». All translations to English in this article follow Hart and Bishop with small changes: Columba Hart and Jane Bishop, trans. *Scivias* (Paulist Press, New York 1990). Lanfranc said that faith may grow from the inconsistency of the Eucharist, but he did not mention faith as a key to perceiving it: Lanfranc, «On the Body and Blood», ch. 18, 434a-b.

¹³ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6.36, cit. 2, p. 264, l. 1336-40: «[Corpus et sanguinis Filii] quod carnalis oculus, quamdiu cinis est, uidere non poterit nisi in fide illud humili deuotione perspiciat. Quomodo? Cum ales ouum sibi in nidum suum poni uiderit, ardens super illud uolat et calore suo illud fouens pullum educit, ita quod testa oui remanet et quod pullus ille euolat».

¹⁴ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6.14, 6.16, 6.21, 6.22, 6.26, 6.27, 6.42, 6.50, 6.51, 6.57, cit. 2. On this point see also: Ortúzar Escudero, *Die Sinne in den Schriften Hildegards von Bingen*, cit. 8, pp. 216-220.

¹⁵ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6.20, 6.22, 6.23, cit. 2.

¹⁶ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6.42, cit. 2, p. 267, l. 1435-42: «Sed idem sacramentum non erit huic sanctius qui plus ex eo perceperit, nec illi contractius qui minus ex eo sumpsit, sed

The concept that the receiver's state of mind influences the reception of the Eucharist is consistent with Augustine's *Confessions*¹⁷. According to Augustine, God is revealed as the creator of the visible nature only to those who connect to their invisible inner-self: «[nature] speaks to all, but only those will understand who compare its voice that comes from outside with the truth within themselves»¹⁸. Both Augustine and Hildegard argued that only those with the appropriate state of mind will abstractly perceive the invisible in the visible. The next section discusses a difference between Augustine and Hildegard in how they valued these abstract perceptions.

2. The Importance of the Visible

Augustine argued that sensory perceptions help us when we commence our quest for God. However, one must rise beyond the senses and physical nature for the remainder of the quest¹⁹. Reception of the Eucharist is only complete when accompanied by spiritual understanding: «Although it is needful that this be visibly celebrated, yet, it must be spiritually understood»²⁰. Likewise, Lanfranc did not elaborate on the corporal elements of the receiving of the Eucharist²¹. In contrast, Hildegard's text clarifies that the visible experiences are important for the receiver²².

secundum fidem suam qui illud percipit, ita et eum illuminabit. Quapropter, o homo, in magnitudine percipiendum non est, quia fortissimus Deus tam in parua quam in magna oblatione huius mysterii est, [...], quod trinum et unum Deum firma et integra fide in corde suo habeant».

¹⁷ On Hildegard and Augustine see: Ortúzar Escudero, *Die Sinne in den Schriften Hildegards von Bingen*, cit. 8, p. 214; N.M. Campbell, «*Imago expandit splendorem suum: Hildegard of Bingen's Visio-Theological Designs in the Rupertsberg Scivias Manuscript*», *Eikón / Imago* 4 (2013) 27-28.

¹⁸ Augustine, *Confesiones*, X.6.10, p. 60, l. 54-55«[natura] omnibus loquitur, sed illi intellegunt, qui ei us vocem acceptam foris intus cum veritate conferunt».

¹⁹ Cfr. Augustine, *Confesiones* X.7.11.

²⁰ «Etsi necesse est, illud uisibiliter celebrari oportet tamen inuisibiliter intelligi», Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, PL XCVIII.8, eds. Eligius Dekkers and Johannes Fraipont, in CCSL (Corpus Christianorum – Series Latina, 39 – *Enarrationes in Psalmos* LI-C), Brepols Publishers, Turnhout 1956, p. 1386, l. 61-62.

²¹ Lanfranc did not broadly refer to the visibility of the Eucharist, nor to sensory experiences of the divine (except the revelations of the Son after His death: Lanfranc, «On the Body and Blood», ch. 17, 427a-b). Lanfranc discussed the visible element of the oblation only in relation to God's human nature, without relating to the receiver's nature: Lanfranc, «On the Body and Blood», ch. 10, 421b-d, and ch. 17, 429b-c.

²² The difference between Hildegard and her previews can be explained by her *Geist Zeit*: Physical nature was a main issue in the renewal of the 12th century, also before the texts of Aristotle were

Although the invisible is superior, the visible aspect of the Eucharist is essential to ensure its proper reception:

The human soul that exists invisibly, receives the sacrament invisibly, which is invisible in the oblation, as the human body, which is visible, visibly accepts the oblation that exists visibly in that sacrament; the two exist as one, just as Christ is God and man, and the rational soul and the mortal flesh make up one human being; and so a person who examine Me in right faith, and so accepts the sacrament, receives holiness faithfully²³.

The visible reception of the communion is just as essential as the abstract reception; the visible is not a mere starting point, it physically completes the invisible process²⁴.

Since the invisible soul completes the visible body, one must clean their senses from sins before taking the Eucharist:

But you [Hildegard], O human, as other people approach the priest to receive the sacrament, notice five modes of being in them: For those who wish to receive the divine mystery from their priest should cleanse the five senses of their body from the dregs of their sins and worthily and laudably keep themselves from furtive uncleanness, that they may healthfully receive the sacrament²⁵.

translated: A. Speer, *Die entdeckte Natur*, Brill, Leiden, New York, and Köln 1995, pp. 8-11. Constant Mews suggests that the interest in nature was mainly strong among German writers: C. Mews, «Hildegard and the Schools», in C. Burnett and P. Dronke (eds.), *Hildegard of Bingen: The Context of her Thought and Art*, The Warburg Institute, London 1998, p. 99; C. Mews, «Hildegard of Bingen and the Hirsau Reform in Germany 1080-1180», in B.M. Kienzle, D.L. Stoudt, and G. Ferzoco (eds.), *A Companion to Hildegard of Bingen*, Brill, Leiden and Boston 2014, p. 74.

- ²³ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6.14, cit. 2, p. 243, l. 628-37: «Nam spiritus hominis qui inuisibilis existit, sacramentum hoc, quod in oblatione ista inuisibile est, inuisibiliter suscipit, corpore hominis, quod uisibile est, oblationem istam quae in eodem sacramento uisibilis existit, uisibiliter accipiente, ita tamen unum existentibus sicut Deus et homo unus Christus est, et ut anima rationalis et caro mortalis in homine unus homo existit; quoniam homo qui recta fide me inspicit, cum sacramentum istud accipit, ad sanctificationem sui illud fideliter suscipit».
- ²⁴ See also Campbell and Ortúzar Escudero has suggested similar conclusions: N. Campbell, «*Imago expandit splendorem suum*», cit. 17, pp. 29-30. Ortúzar Escudero, *Die Sinne in den Schriften Hildegards von Bingen*, cit. 8, pp. 209-210. However, Caroline Bynum claims that Hildegard represented the soul with living organic images and the body mostly as ashes: C.W. Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336*, Columbia University Press, New York 1995, pp. 159-161.
- ²⁵ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6.52, cit. 2, pp. 272-73, l. 1603-1609: «Sed tu [Hildegard], o homo, dum ceteri homines ad percipiendum idem sacramentum accedunt, quinque modos in eis consideras: quia illi qui perceptionem diuini mysterii a sacerdote suo accipere desiderant, quinque sensus corporis sui a faece peccatorum suorum emundent et eos a surripiente immunditia dinge et laudabiliter custodiant, ut tantum salubrious idem percipiant».

Most sins are a visible and tangible action and so they are reflected in the bodies of the sinners. The moral level of the body is equivalent to the level of the soul. Thus, the invisible is not simply superior to the visible; they are identical and complete each other. Based on Vision II.6, we might conclude that this complex relationship allows us to understand the spiritual world through the corporal world.

3. Visible Elements in the Text of Vision II.6

In *Scivias*, the visible is important on a theoretical and on a practical level. Each chapter starts with a description of the vision that Hildegard saw, followed by a commentary that Hildegard heard. Thus, all the theological argumentations are based on visual descriptions²⁶, which the reader can imagine. This is especially true for Vision II.6, which describes a celebration of the Eucharist, which readers recognize from their own life.

The vision starts with the sight of Ecclesia moving towards Christ on the cross. Christ's blood flows out of him, touches Ecclesia (*fluo se*), uniting and betrothing them (*desponsatione associata*)²⁷. Afterwards, Ecclesia approaches an altar²⁸. Hildegard also mentions a priest who approaches the altar for the celebration of the Eucharist:

Hence when a priest clad in sacred vestments approached that altar to celebrate the divine mysteries, I saw that a great calm light was brought to it from heaven by angels and shone around the altar until the sacred rite was ended and the priest had withdrawn from it²⁹.

The aforementioned quote describes how the visible and the invisible come together in the Eucharist³⁰; the Divine and the priest approach the altar for the

²⁶ See also recent studies: M. Zátanyi, *Vidi et intellexi: die Schrifthermeneutik in der Visionstrilogie Hildegards von Bingen*, Aschendorff Verlag, Münster 2012; M. Jose Ortúzar Escudero, *Die Sinne in den Schriften Hildegards von Bingen*, cit. 8, pp. 220-222.

²⁷ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6. vision's description, cit. 2, p. 230, l. 190-97.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, l. 202-206.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, l. 206-13: «Vnde etiam cum sacerdos sacris uestibus indutus ad celebranda diuina sacramenta ad idem altare accederet, uidi quod subito magna serenitas lucis cum obsequio angelorum de caelo ueniens totum illud altare circumfulsit, et ibi tamdiu permansit quousque post completionem eiusdem sacramenti idem sacerdos ab altari secederet».

³⁰ Zöllner states that the discussion about the Eucharist includes various layers of meaning: M. Zöllner, «Aufschein des Neuen im Alten. Das Buch der Hildegard von Bingen im geistesgeschichtlichen Kontext des zwölften Jahrhunderts – eine gattungsspezifische Einordnung», in A. Haverkamp

celebrations. Vision II.6 describes the visible and the invisible and thus connects the spiritual and the corporal.

The familiar visible and audible events of the Eucharist continue to appear alongside invisible mysterious phenomena: the reading from the Gospel³¹, the placing of the bread and the wine on the altar³², and the priest singing *sanc-tus sanctus sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth*³³ are followed by visions of events from the Son's time on earth. These events appeared to Hildegard as in mirrors (*uelut in speculo apparuerunt*)³⁴. Then the ceremony continues with the singing of *agne Dei qui tollis peccata mundi*³⁵, after which Hildegard heard the Divine voice command to eat and drink the communion (*«Manducate et bibite corpora et sanguinem Filii mei ad abolendum praeuaricationem Euae, quatenus in rectam hereditatem restauremini»*)³⁶. As the audience approach the altar to receive the communion³⁷, Hildegard notices that they are divided into five groups based on their moral level³⁸. Throughout Vision II.6 the spiritual and the corporal are continuously connected and appear alongside each other.

In addition to the visual descriptions, the commentary of Vision II.6 also includes explanations of invisible concepts by drawing analogies to visible objects³⁹. In these analogies, the visible is identical to the invisible. The analogies make abstract concepts more familiar and understandable for the reader. Through deeper examination of the analogies readers can recognize some differences between the visible and the invisible, including the superiority of the invisible. Thus, the effect of these analogies is similar to abstract perception.

(ed.), *Hildegard von Bingen in ihrem historischen Umfeld*, Verlag Philipp von Zabern, Mainz 2000, p. 290.

³¹ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6. vision's description, cit. 2, l. 213-14.

³² *Ibid.*, l. 214-15.

³³ *Ibid.*, l. 215-17.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, l. 230-35.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, l. 235-37.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, l. 240-43.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, l. 243-46.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, l. 246-57.

³⁹ A few examples: an analogy between God and the communion and gold and a goldsmith: Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6.5, cit. 2; an analogy between the changing of the essence of bread and wine and ointment and sapphire in bread and wine: 6.13; an analogy between the invisible and a chick in an egg or a butterfly in a cocoon: 6.16; between the gifts of God in the Eucharist and the believers and earthly fruits: 6.22; between the fire that bakes breads and the holy spirit that incarnates in the virgin: 6.32.

4. Invisible Elements in the Illustrations of Vision II.6

Rupertsberg Codex, which includes two illustrations of Vision II.6, was created in Hildegard's cloister during her lifetime⁴⁰. However, scholars disagree on the involvement of Hildegard in the creation of the miniatures⁴¹. These discussions are less relevant here as this paper focuses on the experience of the viewer. This section analyzes the two illustrations based on the assumption that the visible is important for human understanding, as the commentary demonstrates. The illustrations visually convey the complex relationship between the visible and the invisible.

The first illustration of Vision II.6 (figure 1) was placed after the table of contents, on the right side of the right folio; the second illustration (figure 2) was placed on the left side of the left folio, before the description of the vision. Thus, the two illustrations are placed back to back to each other on the same parchment⁴². Both illustrations have a narrow format that is horizontally divided

⁴⁰ M. Schrader and A. Führkötter, *Die Echtheit des Schrifttums der heiligen Hildegard von Bingen*, Böhlau Verlag, Köln – Graz 1956, p. 44; A. Derolez, «The Manuscript Transmission of Hildegard's Writings: The State of the Problem», in C. Burnet and P. Dronke (eds.), *Hildegard of Bingen: The Context of Her Thought and Art*, The Warburg Institute, London 1998, p. 24; M. Embach and M. Wallner, *Conspectus der Handschriften Hildegards von Bingen*, Aschendorff Verlag, Münster 2013, p. 307.

⁴¹ For interpretations asserting that Hildegard took part in the creation of the illustrations see: A. Führkötter and A. Carlevaris, Einleitung zu *Scivias*, von Hildegard von Bingen, in MCCC (Corpus Christianorum - Continuatio Mediaevalis, 43 – *Liber Scivias* 1-2), Brepols Publishers, Turnhout 1978, pp. xxxii-xxxv; M. Caviness, «Anchoress, Abbess, and Queen: Donors and Patrons or Intercessors and Matrons?», in J. Hall McCash (ed.), *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, University of Georgia Press, Athens and London 1996, pp. 113-7; R.K. Emmerson, «The Representation of Antichrist in Hildegard of Bingen's *Scivias*: Image, Word, Commentary, and Visionary Experience», *Gesta* 41 (2002) 105. For interpretations rebutting Hildegard's participation see: C. Meier, «Zum Verhältnis von Text und Illustration im überlieferten Werk Hildegards von Bingen», in A. P. Brück (ed.), *Hildegard von Bingen 1098-1179: Festschrift zum 800. Todtag der Heiligen*, Selbstverlag der Gesellschaft für Mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte, Mainz 1979, p. 160; L. E. Saurma-Jeltsch, *Die Miniaturen im «Liber scivias» der Hildegard von Bingen*, Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, Wiesbaden 1998, pp. 5-11. However, Sauma-Jeltsch also suggested that Hildegard planned the illustrations: L. E. Saurma-Jeltsch, «Die Rupertsberger *Scivias* – Handschrift Überlegungen zu ihrer Entstehung», in E. Forster (ed.), *Hildegard von Bingen: Prophetin durch die Zeiten. Zum 900. Geburtstag*, Herder, Freiburg, Basel und Wien 1997, p. 353. For a comprehensive review of the discussion see N. Campbell, «*Imago expandit splendorem suum*», cit. 17, pp. 10-19.

⁴² The frame of the second illustration can even be seen above the first illustration, as depicted in the facsimilia. See Tablet 16 in cit. 2.



fig. 2

into two scenes. Hence, the vision is depicted in four scenes in total, which all depict the sacrifice of God to mankind. The relationship between these scenes presents the complex relationship between the visible and the invisible, as I will now elaborate.

The upper scene of figure 1 depicts the crucifixion, the historic event of the sacrifice and its meaning. Fluids flow from Christ's fifth wound to Ecclesia, who stands under the cross⁴³. Christ's sacrifice flows and connects to Ecclesia and its members. Some of the fluid is collected in Ecclesia's cup and some of the fluid enters her directly. In the upper right corner, a hand extends out of a cloud holding a parchment, on which is written a sentence that Hildegard heard in her vision (*Haec, Fili, sit tibi sponsa in restaurationem populi mei, cui ipsa mater sit, animas per saluationem spiritus et aquae regenerans*)⁴⁴.

The bottom scene in figure 1 depicts Ecclesia approaching an altar with the oblation (a cup and a piece of bread). The altar is illuminated by a golden light from a cloud above⁴⁵. The light is surrounded by four small scenes, framed in small circles – in her vision, Hildegard saw these scenes portrayed in a mirror – depicting events from Christ's earthly life: nativity, burial, resurrection and ascension. These events summarize the history of God's body, as it arrived and left the world.

The scenes in figure 2 emphasize the ritualistic aspect of the Eucharist. The upper scene of figure 2 depicts a priest celebrating the Eucharist in front of angels. On the altar are the prayer book Missal and the oblation covered by a corporal (the cloth that cover the oblation). On the folios of the Missal we can find the words that start the pray of Eucharist: *Te igitur clem[entissime] p[ater]*.

The bottom scene depicts the audience of the Eucharist as they approach the altar for the sacrament. The audience includes sinners, as not all the members

⁴³ According to the commentary, these fluids free the believers: Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6.28, cit. 2. The fluids are illustrated as three red lines separated by two white lines. One interpretation is that the white lines symbolize water. According to the commentary, the wine of the obelion symbolizes Jesus' divine part, which blends with water that symbolizes His human part: *Scivias* II, 6.30. Sara Salvadori interprets the three red lines as symbolizing the trinity: S. Salvadori, *Hildegard von Bingen: A Journey into the Images*, Skira, Milano 2019, p. 128. According to Salvadori, the figure of Ecclesia refers to Mary, who usually stands under the cross. Thus, she becomes the Bride of Christ and the mother of the living: S. Salvadori, *A Journey into the Images*, p. 158.

⁴⁴ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6. vision description, cit., p. 230, l. 198-201.

⁴⁵ Saurma-Jeltsch demonstrates that this is a common iconography: L.E. Saurma-Jeltsch, *Die Miniaturen im «Liber scivias» der Hildegard von Bingen*, cit., p. 116.

of the church are free from sin, but all are allowed to receive the communion⁴⁶. The audience is divided into five groups – as in Hildegard’s vision – presented in three lines. The upper line consists of a group of men and women, lay people and religious figures. Some of the group members have gold skin, the others have pale skin. The middle line is divided into two groups: the members on the left are colored red and the members on the right are colored in a dark shade. The members of the two groups in the bottom line are a mix: the ones on the left are half pale-skinned, half gold-skinned; the ones on the right are half red-skinned and half dark-skinned. This visual depiction of the groups is not entirely consistent with Hildegard’s textual description of the vision. According to Hildegard’s description⁴⁷, the first group had bright body and fiery soul; the people in the second group had a pale-skinned body and shadowed soul; the third group were hairy in body and dirty in soul; the bodies of the fourth group were covered with sharp thorns and their souls with leprous; the people in the last group had blood-covered bodies. Although some characteristics in the visual representation also appear in the textual description, the two do not match perfectly.

The subject of all four scenes in the two illustrations is identical and interchangeable; they all depict the sacrifice of God. However, the scenes also complete each other by emphasizing a different aspect of the oblation. Figure 1 depicts the historical and allegorical sacrifice, while figure 2 completes it by presenting a ritual celebration of the same sacrifice. Moreover, the pair of scenes in each of the illustrations also complete each other. The upper scene in figure 2 depicts the priest performing the sacrament, the bottom scene the community arriving to receive it; the celebration would not be complete without the presence of both parties.

In figure 1, this complementary relationship is more complex. The upper scene in figure 1 emphasizes the liquids of the Eucharist by showing the fluids flowing out of Christ to Ecclesia. The bottom scene emphasizes the flesh by depicting the four smaller scenes in the same shape of the bread on the altar. As mentioned before, the scenes present the history of God’s body, i.e. God’s flesh⁴⁸.

⁴⁶ The commentary acknowledges that not all the church members are without fault and that many had sinned, however all of them receive the communion. Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6.98, cit. 2.

⁴⁷ Salvadori has suggested an identification of the different groups based on their order: S. Salvadori, *A Journey into the Images*, cit., p. 70.

⁴⁸ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6.17, cit. 2. Salvadori rightly connects the shape of the cradle to the tomb, referring to the end of Jesus: S. Salvadori, *A Journey into the Images*, cit., p. 155. I sug-

Both parts of the obelion appear in both scenes, while each scene emphasizes a different part of the obelion. According to the commentary, the Eucharist is only complete when it includes wine, bread and water, signifying the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit⁴⁹. The two scenes in figure 1 also complete each other by presenting Christ's life and death. The light that shines from the cloud in the bottom scene is a continuation of the cross of crucifixion in the scene above⁵⁰. The scenes of nativity and burial on the left side of the light and the scenes of resurrection and ascension on the right side of the light together represent all the main events of Christ's body.

Lastly, there is a hierarchical relationship between the illustrations and the scenes. Figure 1 with its allegorical meaning is superior to figure 2 and at the same time, the two illustrations are identical and complete each other. As mentioned before, the illustrations are on different sides of the same parchment; one cannot view both illustrations at once. The viewer first views the allegorical meaning and then turns the page to view the representation of the ritual. While viewing figure 2, the allegorical representation of figure 1 is invisible, but present in the viewer's mind. Figure 1 and its meaning is perceived abstractly while viewing figure 2.

The most superior scene is the upper one in figure 1, which depicts the original sacrifice with the blood flowing into Ecclesia⁵¹. Light descends from the crucifixion in the upper scene and illuminates the altar in the bottom scene; on an abstract level, this sacrifice illuminates the ritual and gives it meaning. Ecclesia appears in both scenes, but even in the bottom scene, her gaze is directed at Christ in the upper scene. In addition, Christ's life is the main subject of the upper scene,

gest an additional connection, to the shape of a tabernacle, which contains God's flesh. The light shining above the altar continues the emphasize on God's body, as the commentary compares it to the light that shined over the body of Christ during His burial and resurrection: Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6.12, cit. 2.

⁴⁹ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6.44, cit., p. 269, l. 1483-87: «Hoc autem idem sacramentum in tribus causis mihi offerendum est. Quomodo? In pane, et uino et aqua, ob honorem Trinitatis. Vnde si de his tribus aliquid defuerit, tunc ibi Trinitas ueraciter non colitur; quoniam in uino intellegitur Pater, in pane Filius et in aqua Spirtus Sanctus».

⁵⁰ According to Salvadori, this is a sign of God's help to us. The same descending of light and the shape of the cloud also appear in other illustrations, representing God's help: S, Salvadori, *A Journey into the Images*, cit., pp. 122, 129. Campbell interprets the green color as a symbol of the life that the obelion gives its receivers: N. Campbell, «*Imago expandit splendorem suum*», cit., p. 45.

⁵¹ Fleiss also explains that the crucifixion in the centre of Vision II.6: H. Feiss, «Hildegard's Vision of the Eucharist (*Scivias* 2.6)», cit., p. 183.

while in the lower scene, it is a secondary subject depicted in framed ‘mirrors’. Sara Salvadori claims that the different background colors in figure 1 present a hierarchy: the superior gold background signifies the space in which God acts, while the blue signifies the spaces of man and the celestial spirits⁵². I would like to suggest another hierarchy related to the gold color, a hierarchy between the two illustrations.

The background of figure 2 is completely gold, the same color as Ecclesia in figure 1. This might suggest that the second illustration takes place inside Ecclesia, which is consistent with the meaning of the illustrations. The celebrations of the Eucharist in figure 2 take place in churches – in Ecclesia – with the members of the church. Consequently, figure 1 presents the general context of the events in figure 2. The upper scene in figure 2 is superior to the bottom one, which is the inferior scene of the four scenes in these illustrations. The moral superiority of the priest over the community is explained repeatedly in the commentary⁵³. The two scenes are completely separated by two thick lines, emphasizing the distinction of the priest.

There is also a hierarchical relationship within each of the scenes. In the upper scene of figure 1, between Ecclesia and the divine hand; in the bottom scene, between Ecclesia and the events from Christ’s life. In the upper scene of figure 2, there is a hierarchical relationship between the priest and the angels, while the bottom scene depicts a hierarchy between believers based on their moral level. With the exception of the bottom scene in figure 2, all the hierarchical elements are connected to God’s sacrifice, depicted as a cross or an altar⁵⁴. In addition, several details in the scenes cross over into the frame, indicating that they are of a higher hierarchical level: the altar at the bottom of figure 1, the shoes of Ecclesia in the upper scene and those of the priest in figure 2, and the hand of one of the gold-colored believers. The cross, the most superior detail, even exceeds the boundaries of the frame⁵⁵.

⁵² S. Salvadori, *A Journey into the Images*, cit., pp. 132-136. Campbell interprets the colors of the upper scene (silver, gold and blue) as a symbol of the Trinity by comparing it to other illustrations in the codex: N. Campbell, «*Imago expandit splendorem suum*», cit., p. 48.

⁵³ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* II, 6.66, pp. 283-84, l. 1975-88; see also 6.62-75: «illi qui idem sacrificum oblaturi sunt sine spurcitia pollutionum esse debent, se etiam continentes ab epulatione et ebrietate, a ioco et a risu atque a leuibus et incompositis moribus, [...]».

⁵⁴ I want to thank Yosef Schwartz for this comment.

⁵⁵ See also N. Campbell, «*Imago expandit splendorem suum*», cit., p. 48.

In addition to the visible elements that are depicted, other invisible elements are also present in the illustrations on an abstract level. God's sacrifice, in all its abstract meaning, is present, too invisible to be depicted. Likewise, the ritual of the Sacrament that viewers know from their life is also present; perhaps the illustrations and commentary of Vision II.6 will continue to be present in the viewers' mind as they attend their next Eucharist. Then, they would be reminded of the meaning of the sacrament and the importance of receiving it with pure faith. Lastly, perhaps Hildegard's vision is an invisible element that is present on an abstract level in the illustrations. Hildegard saw this invisible vision, as Ecclesia in the bottom scene sees Christ beyond the inner frame⁵⁶.

The two illustrations represent the complex relationship between the different levels of reality: the four scenes have a hierarchical, complementary and indistinguishable relationship, just as the one that exists between the visible and the invisible. A viewer with an appropriate state of mind is able to recognize these complex relationships through the details in the illustrations. Each type of relationship depends on different details. The two illustrations are a practical example of how invisible ideas may be conveyed through the senses.

Conclusions

Hildegard's *Scivias* presents a complex reaction to Augustine's theory of vision. Like Augustine, *Scivias* indicates that the senses can perceive only hints of the invisible, since the invisible is superior to nature. However, unlike Augustine, Vision VI in the second book of *Scivias* emphasizes how these hints are important to the perceiver. According to *Scivias*, these hints emerge because the invisible is identical to the visible and completes it; it is not merely superior to it. Accordingly, *Scivias* is structured around sensory experiences. The two illustrations of Vision II.6 are a practical example of visually conveying an abstract concept – that the invisible may be seen in visual objects.

⁵⁶ Saurma-Jeltsch also suggests this comparison between Ecclesia and Hildegard: L.E. Saurma-Jeltsch, *Die Miniaturen im «Liber scivias» der Hildegard von Bingen*, cit., p. 114.

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Book reviews

Recensões

Gomes de Lisboa, *Escrito sobre as Questões Metafísicas de António André / Scriptum super Questiones Metaphisice Antonii Andree*, ed. bilingue latim-português, introdução, edição, tradução e notas de Mário João Correia, (*Imago mundi*, 19) Ed. Afrontamento, Porto 2018; 195 pp.; ISBN 978-972-36-1839-6.

Gomes de Lisboa (Lisboa, c. 1440/50 – Roma, 1512), um dos mais relevantes vultos intelectuais e filosóficos do Renascimento português, certamente merecia um reconhecimento maior do que aquele que tem tido entre nós. Se, da sua juventude em Lisboa, a documentação é escassa, ela abunda, ao contrário, a partir da entrada na idade adulta, passada entre Paris, Veneza, Pavia e Roma, acerca da qual nos chegou bom número de cartas e testemunhos do prestígio filosófico, teológico, eclesiástico de que beneficiava por parte dos seus contemporâneos. Da sua entrada, ainda em Lisboa, na ordem dos Franciscanos nada sabemos: o primeiro registo que dele possuímos situa-o já em Paris, onde obtém, entre 1470 e 1473, o grau de bacharel em teologia. Os testemunhos seguintes dão notícia da sua estadia em Veneza, onde provavelmente obteve o grau de mestre, também em teologia, e onde terá preparado a edição da *Summa de casibus conscientiae* (1317) do franciscano Astesano de Asti, para a qual elaborou uma série de anotações teológicas. A obra, editada em 1478, conhecerá até 1519 três outras reimpressões, no que é o primeiro de um conjunto de indícios da importância de Gomes de Lisboa no seio da ordem dos menoritas.

É em Pavia, importante centro intelectual e filosófico da Itália renascentista, que se distinguia sobretudo pelo interesse dedicado à filosofia natural e à medicina, que Gomes de Lisboa passa a maior parte da sua vida. Aí ensina filosofia, e principalmente teologia, no colégio de Artes e medicina da Universidade, e desse período data a quase totalidade das suas obras: o *Scriptum super Questiones Metaphisice Antonii Andree* (composto provavelmente entre 1482-1483), a *Questio perutilis de cuiuscumque scientie subiecto, principaliter tamen naturalis Philosophie* (1485-1492?, reeditada em Veneza em 1517), a *Questio an licita sit institutio*

Montis Pietatis (1491), para além de algumas cartas e prefácios que atestam da diversidade das suas relações intelectuais e filosóficas (como, por exemplo, a carta-prefácio à obra do judeu convertido, seu colega e discípulo, Paolo Ricci, *Nupera a Iudaismo ad sacram Christi religionem translati compendium*, 1507). A lealdade de longa data para com o papa Júlio II vale-lhe, em 1511, a nomeação como Vigário Geral Apostólico da Ordem dos Frades Menores e dita-lhe a instalação em Roma. Morre no ano seguinte (1512), pouco depois da nomeação como Arcebispo de Nazaré por Júlio II e tendo tido ainda o privilégio de participar nas primeiras sessões do Vº Concílio de Latrão.

É, por conseguinte, com grande justiça que Mário João Correia resgata Gomes de Lisboa da discreta atenção que a historiografia moderna lhe tem votado, revelando, como nos atestam diversas fontes, uma figura ilustre aos olhos dos seus contemporâneos, e que, evoluindo em centros privilegiados do Renascimento italiano, privou, entre outros, com Ludovico Sforza e Leonardo da Vinci. A edição deste texto, acompanhada de tradução, acresce aos dois anteriores contributos já dados por Mário J. Correia: uma revisão sistemática e uma actualização crítica do arquivo, permitindo apurar pormenores biográficos de alguma relevância (por ex., o ano exacto da morte, 1512); e a edição, acompanhada de tradução, nesta mesma colecção, *Imago mundi*, de um dos mais importantes textos de Gomes de Lisboa, a *Questio perutilis de cuiuscumque scientie subiecto, principaliter tamen naturalis philosophie* (2016).

Contrariamente a este texto, que tinha já sido editado e traduzido entre nós por Miguel Pinto de Meneses (Instituto de Alta Cultura, 1964), o *Scriptum super Questiones Metaphisice Antonii Andree* encontrava-se até hoje inédito. O texto é-nos transmitido por um único manuscrito, proveniente de Pavia e conservado na Biblioteca Bodleiana de Oxford. Este códice miscelâneo é, a diversos títulos, evocativo da diversidade de correntes que confluíam então por Pavia, como por outras cidades universitárias do norte de Itália: do humanismo ao luteranismo, do platonismo à cabala e à tradição hermética. Sem esquecer, e bem longe disso, o aristotelismo, que se mantinha predominante no conjunto das suas diversas tradições: às tradições tomistas e escotistas, acresciam as correntes arabizantes e sobretudo averroístas, e ainda, por esta época, especialmente em Pádua e Pavia, o aristotelismo helenizante que animava o impulso de traduções greco-latinas das obras dos comentadores gregos (Temístio e Simplicio, Alexandre de Afrodísias, Filopono). É precisamente no âmbito da tradição escotista na Itália do Renascimento que se inscreve este *Scriptum*, e, a essa luz, representa um testemunho precioso das tensões doutrinárias internas a essa tradição.

Como o nome o indica, trata-se de um comentário, ou talvez de uma reportagem incompleta, a catorze das *Questiones super duodecim libros Metaphysice* do escotista António André († 1333 ca.). De António André, tem sido sublinhado o seu contributo para a constituição de uma interpretação escotista de Aristóteles, favorecida e estreitamente associada, ainda que não circunscrita, à ordem Franciscana. Adotadas desde cedo como manual de ensino no seio da ordem, com uma difusão extraordinária, as *Questiones* de António André retomam as *Questiones* equivalentes de Duns Escoto, completando-as quer com posições expostas noutras obras do Doutor Subtil, quer com acrescentos originais do próprio A. André. Da grande diversidade de temas e questões filosóficas coberta pelo *Scriptum* destaca-se, nesta época de alvor da ciência moderna, o interesse pelo problema da relação entre experiência, demonstração e conhecimento – interesse proeminente que, de resto, partilha com a *Questio perutilis*. Foi talvez esse um tema de confronto entre as correntes escotistas e averroístas da época, já que, recordemo-lo, a *Questio perutilis* tentava responder às críticas dirigidas pelo averroísta Niccolotto Vernia, professor de filosofia em Pádua, à teoria escotista acerca do sujeito e critérios de definição de uma ciência, e da filosofia natural em particular. Por seu turno, o *Scriptum* permite-nos entrever, sobretudo, as diversas correntes que, no seio tradição escotista, se confrontavam em debates, por vezes acesos, sobre certas questões e problemas metafísicos emblemáticos, e relativamente a elas situar Gomes de Lisboa. Sem serem sempre e em tudo originais, as suas posições ou reformulações são consistentes e argumentadas. É, desde logo, o caso do seu entendimento das *formalitates* e dos vários tipos de distinção, discussão esta remontante ao século XIV – e que, na época de Gomes de Lisboa, florescera numa série de tratados sobre as noções de identidade e distinção, alguns dos quais foram reunidos num volume organizado por Maurício Hibernico e impresso em Veneza em 1505. Entre os autores destes tratados, é de destacar António Trombeta, confrade e professor na universidade de Pádua, de cujas posições Gomes de Lisboa se revela próximo, não só no que diz respeito às *formalitates*, como também em certos pontos de discordância com António André (vejam-se as questões «se o ente enquanto ente é sujeito da metafísica», ou «se o metafísico considera todas as quiddidades das coisas em particular»). Nesta divergência, como noutras questões de índole metafísica e epistemológica então em debate na tradição escotista (por ex., acerca da questão das paixões do ente), as posições de Gomes de Lisboa encontram eco na de certos outros escotistas coevos, por vezes bastante para além das fronteiras italianas, como é o caso dos universitários parisienses Nicolau de Orbellis (c. 1400-1475) e Pedro Tartareto († 1522).

É inequívoco, por conseguinte, o interesse filosófico intrínseco destas duas obras em particular de Gomes de Lisboa, o *Scriptum* e a *Questio perutilis*, das quais tanto resta ainda por estudar. Como já nos tinha habituado na sua precedente edição da *Questio*, a edição do *Scriptum* é cuidada, acompanhada de uma tradução escrupulosa e de um consistente aparato de notas. Sucintos e bem documentados, os estudos introdutórios dos dois volumes são complementares e oferecem uma perspetiva panorâmica da biografia de Gomes de Lisboa e de alguns dos pontos de maior interesse filosófico do *Scriptum*. É, pois, de saudar a publicação deste volume que, num formato em todos os sentidos claro e rigoroso, convida ao aprofundamento dos estudos sobre um autor de incontestável importância na tradição escotista renascentista.

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Schmitt, Jean-Claude, *Penser par figure. Du compas divin aux diagrammes magiques*, Les Éditions Arkhé, Paris 2019; 192 pp.; ISBN 978-2-918682-45-5.

De entre a nomenclatura comumente usada de desenhos, esquemas, gráficos, diagramas, imagens, etc., Jean-Claude Schmitt opta, nesta obra, por privilegiar as figuras, o seu estatuto e *agir*, mostrando como «acompanham e manifestam operações de pensamento» (p. 13). A figura é «uma das formas possíveis de mediação e de realização do pensamento» (p. 13), entre a ideia a começar a ser pensada e a sua inscrição definitiva num suporte material qualquer. Uma figura «não pretende *representar* o real (...) mas visualizar os seus princípios dinâmicos» (p. 15). A utilização do desenho ajuda no exercício do pensamento, estruturando-o, clarificando, promovendo mais facilmente a memorização, e poderá servir fins pedagógicos, científicos ou retóricos. Desde a Idade Média que o seu uso passou a ser mais notório – principalmente a partir do século XII – e o autor levanta mesmo a possibilidade da explicação encontrar-se na cultura cristã ter impulsionado a abstração visual (pp. 22-23). As escolas monásticas, canónicas e a universidade contribuiriam para a difusão de diagramas. Os quais, juntamente com figuras que aparecem em textos medievais, promovem a meditação, contemplação e rememoração (p. 26). O termo «figura» traz a marca de medievalidade, com o termo latino *figura*, que se distingue de *imago* em significado, sendo o primeiro mais relacional e o segundo mais representacional (p. 28).

No primeiro capítulo do livro, o autor debruça-se sobre as relações entre as figuras e as imagens; o segundo capítulo foca-se na forma geométrica da figura; o terceiro capítulo apresenta tipos de figuras a partir da obra *Liber floridus* de Lambert de Saint-Omer; o quarto capítulo trata das relações entre a figura e a escrita.

Na história da civilização, os séculos XII e XIII mostram «uma verdadeira explosão de imagens sob todas as formas» (p. 33), como uma técnica intelectual ao serviço da relação entre o visível e o inteligível, tanto com a sua presença nas igrejas como nos manuscritos, com grande enfoque na literatura didática e moral, nomeadamente pelo recurso a listas, como passa a ser recorrente, por exemplo, na «árvore dos vícios».

As imagens medievais tendiam a assumir formas geométricas e é interessante constatar que, sobretudo a partir do século XII, surgiram muitas imagens do compasso, nomeadamente a de Deus criando o mundo. Percebe-se que o pensamento que se materializava nas imagens assumia a atração pela simetria, as medidas, o número, as proporções, as apresentações em círculos, a ordem, as linhas... Os diagramas cosmológicos ocupam também um papel de destaque no pensamento figurativo medieval. A figura medieval pretende imitar aquilo que ela procura representar, notando-se o interesse pela analogia. Aliás, conforme sustenta Jean-Claude Schmitt, a cultura medieval é «uma cultura de associação, da analogia, da *concordia*, da *convenientia*, da *similitudo*» (p. 102). Nos séculos XII e XIII, o carácter geométrico e icónico das figuras é o que mais se evidencia. Quanto aos séculos XIV e XV, continuam a estar bastante presentes os «diagramas científicos, astronómicos, astrológicos, musicais (...). Mas o período caracteriza-se mais pelas inovações gráficas e semânticas» (p. 94). Aparecem novos tipos de figuras, as representações do mundo começam a sofrer alterações significativas, com as experiências dos marinheiros, mercadores, viajantes, peregrinos, as cruzadas, a ficarem impressas em cartas e mapas *mundi*. Do simbolismo dos séculos anteriores, no qual a forma circular impera, passa-se para algum realismo, embora alguns dados geográficos sejam antropofornizados.

O *Liber floridus* de Lambert de Saint-Omer mostra bem o uso de figuras no pensamento medieval e relativamente a diferentes áreas do saber, e Jean-Claude Schmitt apresenta as características das figuras que nele constam, a saber: (1) associam e colocam em correspondência informações heterogéneas (p. 102); (2) figuras híbridas, compostas de imagem e texto que as envolvem (p. 103); (3) assumem funções cognitivas («colocam em relação conhecimentos, para produzir nos olhos do espectador ou do eventual leitor o resumo sintético de um saber compos-

to») e performativas («devem (...) produzir um efeito, por exemplo, influenciar o comportamento moral do leitor/espectador ou mesmo, em certos casos, oferecer uma técnica de divinação e guiar uma ação de tipo mágico»; pp. 107-108); (4) figuras estáticas e figuras dinâmicas (relativamente a estas últimas, o leitor terá de realizar um determinado tipo de movimento – orientado pela lógica das figuras – com os olhos ou dedo para acompanhar o seu sentido; p. 109); (5) outras figuras geométricas (p. 114); e, por último, (6) as figuras vegetalizadas (p. 117).

O livro aborda ainda as dinâmicas existentes entre figura, imagem e escrita, o modo como se entrecruzam, o que elas exigem e proporcionam aos actores da comunicação, o escritor/desenhador e o leitor. Depois de uma longa exposição das dialéticas existentes entre elas, o autor apresenta, nas páginas 142 e 143, uma síntese: «Uma figura (*figura*) é uma forma móvel, consistindo num esquema geométrico incluindo na quase-totalidade casos de elementos iconográficos (*imago*) e escriturais (*scriptura*). As suas funções são muito variadas (...). Em todos os casos, a figura visa a uma eficácia (...). A *figura* mediatiza o pensamento e inscreve-o na materialidade do suporte. (...)».

Por fim, a obra apresenta em anexo a lista dos manuscritos estudados, a análise sumária das suas figuras, um glossário, uma tabela das ilustrações, um index e notas.

A leitura deste livro de Jean-Claude Schmitt é fundamental para a compreensão da temática da conceptualização da figura (imagem-texto) e as possíveis «ações» que a figura origina, proporcionando ainda uma agradável introdução à cultura figurativa medieval, pelo acompanhamento da análise abrangente e cuidada que o autor faz com maior detalhe de algumas obras figuradas. Um livro excelente, escrito por um dos maiores historiadores franceses.

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Kalbarczyk, Alexander, *Predication and Ontology. Studies and Texts on Avicennian and Post-Avicennian Readings of Aristotle's Categories*, (Scientia Graeco-Arabica, 22) De Gruyter, Berlin 2018, 344 pp.; ISBN 9783110591972.

Alexander Kalbarczyk tem vindo a estudar nos últimos anos a lógica e a filosofia da linguagem nos autores árabes medievais no âmbito de um projeto conjunto da Universidade Ruhr-Bochum e da Universidade de Cambridge intitulado

«Major issues and controversies of Arabic logic and philosophy of language». Este livro enquadra-se nesse projeto. Faz ele parte de uma coleção, organizada por Marwan Rashed (Université Paris-Sorbonne – Paris IV), de estudos e textos sobre a receção da filosofia antiga no mundo árabe.

Como é habitual nesta coleção, Alexander Kalbarczyk intercala estudos sobre problemas fundamentais da leitura aviceniana das *Categorias* de Aristóteles com a edição crítica, acompanhada de uma tradução para o inglês, dos textos relevantes onde esses problemas são aflorados. Os textos apresentados não são apenas textos de Avicena, mas também de alguns autores mais tardios que receberam a influência de Avicena, seja para segui-lo, seja para criticá-lo ou transformá-lo criticamente, tais como al-Allama Al-Hilli, entre outros.

É certo que a grande maioria dos estudos e textos de Kalbarczyk se funda na parte do chamado *Livro da Cura* (*Kitab as-Sifa*) dedicada às *Categorias* (*al-Mantiq, Al-Maqlat*), mas é também certo que há uma leitura genética das diversas obras de Avicena em que um mesmo problema é trabalhado, numa tentativa de mostrar uma evolução do seu pensamento. Para aqueles que, como nós, não estão familiarizados com toda a produção literária do filósofo persa, muito menos com as diversas escolas de pensamento árabes, este livro pode tornar-se difícil de acompanhar. De facto, é um livro claramente destinado aos especialistas, havendo nele diversas contendas com interpretações de grandes nomes dos estudos árabes e avicenianos como Dimitri Gutas e Richard Bodéüs. Um leigo na matéria acaba por perder-se no labirinto de textos e autores referidos.

Seguindo sempre a estrutura mencionada – estudo de um problema, seguido dos textos fundamentais –, o livro divide-se em quatro secções. A primeira secção diz respeito ao problema do âmbito das *Categorias*, isto é, o problema do seu enquadramento teórico na lógica ou na metafísica. Efetivamente, não foi Aristóteles que estabeleceu o chamado *Organon*, nem diz em parte alguma que as *Categorias* dizem respeito à lógica. Mais ainda, não define em parte alguma se a sua lista das categorias diz respeito a palavras, a conceitos, a coisas reais, ou a algum tipo de conjugação destas várias abordagens possíveis. Avicena recebe da tradição heleenística neoplatónica a ideia de que as *Categorias* dizem respeito às expressões significantes simples, as quais servem de introdução à lógica e também a toda a filosofia. Contudo, como aponta Kalbarczyk, o autor persa não aceita esta interpretação e vai-se demarcando gradualmente das convenções dos neoplatónicos, acabando por considerar que as *Categorias* devem ser excluídas do currículo lógico. Há uma evolução da sua posição ao longo da sua produção literária.

Na segunda secção, estuda-se em detalhe a divisão que dá origem ao chama-

do quadrado ontológico, baseada em dois critérios: ser dito de um sujeito e estar num sujeito. Kalbarczyk revisita o problema da compatibilidade entre as *Categorias* e a estrutura hilemórfica da substância apresentada na *Metafísica*, mostrando, de seguida, uma dessas propostas de compatibilização presente em Averróis. A partir destas bases, regressa a Avicena e, mais uma vez, mostra que houve um percurso intelectual até uma posição madura, a qual, neste assunto em particular, se encontra no *Livro da Cura*. Termina o seu estudo com a influência de Avicena em autores futuros, algo que se repercute na subsecção de textos, onde, após traduzir passagens de *al-Muhtasar* e do *Kitab as-Sifa*, apresenta um texto de al-Lawkari. A conclusão a que Kalbarczyk chega é que Avicena acaba por evitar utilizar os dois critérios que dividem o quadrado ontológico para fazer uma divisão dos seres. Em vez disso, desloca os critérios para outro propósito: classificar a relação entre um atributo (*sifa*) e a coisa caracterizada por esse atributo (*mawsuf*). De acordo com o autor deste livro, as consequências, caracterizadas como vantajosas, deste deslocamento são duas. A primeira é o facto de Avicena evitar uma confusão comum entre acidentes e predicados acidentais, por um lado, e entre substâncias e predicados essenciais/substanciais, por outro. A segunda é o facto de descartar, neste contexto, uma divisão entre universais e particulares, havendo uma leitura semântica dos dois critérios, que são critérios de predicação, não ontológicos, que servem para distinguir predicados essenciais e acidentais. Este passo conduziu a que o quadrado ontológico não tivesse um papel significativo na filosofia islâmica oriental (exclua-se Averróis, portanto).

A terceira secção trabalha profundamente o problema da sistematização, ou justificação, do esquema das dez categorias. Efetivamente, os autores de língua árabe receberam da tradição, através da influência das perspectivas de Amónio e Temístio, uma tentativa comum, que se repercute também noutras tradições, de sistematizar a lista aristotélica de dez categorias através de uma via divisiva que demonstre a sua completude e justeza. Esta *diairesis* das categorias, no mundo de língua árabe, começa por distinguir substância (ou sujeito) e acidente (ou num sujeito). De seguida, divide o acidente em relativo e absoluto. O absoluto, por sua vez, dividir-se-ia em quantidade e qualidade, equivalente à divisão entre divisível e indivisível. As restantes seis categorias eram vistas como composições entre as substâncias e os três acidentes anteriormente descritos: da conjugação da substância com a quantidade, encontrar-se-ia o onde e o quando; da conjugação da substância com a qualidade, o agir e o padecer; da conjugação da substância com a relação, o ter (ou a posse, ou hábito) e a posição. Como é sabido, Avicena é um dos críticos deste tipo de abordagem. Alexander Kalbarczyk começa este

estudo por apresentar detalhadamente as posições de Amónio, João Filópono e Olimpiodoro (por meio da versão de um presumível David, ou Elias...), que são todas elas versões da *diairesis* anteriormente descrita. Apresenta igualmente a versão temistianiana da *diairesis*, a qual se encontra presente na paráfrase erradamente atribuída a Agostinho de Hipona denominada *Categoriae decem*, que se baseia na tríade intrínseco vs. extrínseco vs. parcialmente intrínseco, parcialmente extrínseco. Depois deste levantamento das fontes do problema, mostra como, no *Livro da Cura*, Avicena faz duas coisas que, aparentemente, parecem chocar entre si. Por um lado, afirma que este tipo de divisão não tem valor e que é impossível provar que as dez categorias não podem ser menos ou mais em número. Por outro lado, não deixa de tentar corrigir os esquemas divisivos que recebe da tradição, de modo a torná-los mais perfeitos e justificados. Kalbarczyk lê esta tentativa como uma conjugação entre a abordagem amoniana e a abordagem temistianiana. Mostra igualmente que noutras obras, uma em árabe (*Ta'liqat*), outra em persa (*Danesname*), Avicena esquematiza os acidentes de um modo alternativo e, de acordo com o autor, menos exigente, assumindo o carácter descritivo e aproximativo deste tipo de tentativas. A interpretação que sobressai é que Avicena julga que estas tentativas têm apenas o valor de descrever indutivamente alguns aspetos dos conceitos básicos utilizados em metafísica, mas não mais do que isso.

A quarta e última secção deste livro diz respeito à disputa acerca da unidade conceptual das noções de acidente e substância. A secção começa pela descrição aristotélica de acidente como aquilo que se encontra em algo, mas não como uma parte, e que é incapaz de subsistir separadamente daquilo no qual se encontra. Kalbarczyk expõe o modo como Al-Farabi, al-Wahibi e Ibn at-Tayyib justificaram o facto de o acidente, ao contrário da substância, não se constituir como um género, do qual os diversos acidentes seriam espécies. De seguida, compara a posição de Avicena sobre este assunto com a dos seus antecessores. Fá-lo, novamente, mostrando a evolução entre *al-Muhtasar* e o *Livro da Cura*. O que emerge desta comparação é o facto de Avicena distinguir o acidente (*al-'arad*) e o accidental (*al-'aradi*), isto é, as entidades que não são ontologicamente subsistentes e o predicável porfiriano do acidente. O seu desacordo com as propostas dos seus antecessores provém, em grande medida, desta distinção. Acidente, para Avicena, acaba por significar apenas que em todos os géneros dos acidentes existe uma relação de dependência relativamente àquilo no qual estes se encontram, mas isso não constitui qualquer tipo de unidade genérica, nem define a sua quiddidade ou natureza. De seguida, Kalbarczyk expõe a história do debate sobre a unidade da noção de substância desde a refutação de Plotino, na sexta *Enéada*, até aos

sucessores de Avicena, mostrando, assim, que o autor persa constitui um marco na questão. Aquilo que é particularmente relevante na posição de Avicena é o facto de este considerar, contra Plotino, que o facto de haver substâncias simples e compostas, corpóreas e incorpóreas, no plano da existência, não retira a unidade genérica à noção de substancialidade como „ser não num sujeito“. Deste modo, ainda que no plano da existência, haja substâncias que instanciam melhor, ou de um modo mais primário, esta propriedade do que outras, isso não impede que haja um género comum a todas elas. Depois desta resposta de Avicena, há nos autores posteriores de língua árabe uma controvérsia grande em torno desta questão. Para ilustrá-la, Kalbarczyk apresenta uma questão de Rukn ad-Din b. Sarafsah al-As-tarabadi, discípulo de Nasir ad-Din at-Tusi e também a refutação de Fahr ad-Din ar-Razi de que a substância é um género.

O livro termina com uma breve síntese, voltando ao início, de certa maneira. A leitura geral da receção das *Categorias* em Avicena proposta por Kalbarczyk consiste no seguinte: ao longo das várias obras nas quais Avicena comenta ou faz uso dos conteúdos das *Categorias*, há uma cada vez maior aperceção de que o seu lugar não pode ser nos currículos da lógica. Confessamos o nosso estranhamento, dado que o livro encerra em si muitos maior conteúdos do que aqueles que esta síntese aparenta. Mas, evidentemente, trata-se de um pormenor. O livro de Kalbarczyk é extremamente rico, minucioso e apresenta aos leitores – com grande dificuldade para aqueles que não são versados na tradição filosófica islâmica medieval, como já tivemos a oportunidade de dizer – uma visão detalhada do modo inventivo como Avicena lê e utiliza o texto aristotélico para estabelecer algumas das suas teses metafísicas fundamentais. Fica também patente a riqueza da tradição filosófica islâmica, cuja dificuldade de acesso para o leitor ocidental só pode ser minorada através de trabalhos deste género, onde se conjuga o estudo com a edição e tradução das obras.

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Flood, Anthony, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Love: Aquinas on Participation, Unity, and Union*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington 2018; 148 pp.; ISBN: 978-0-8132-3120-4.

Anthony Flood escreve esta obra a partir da verificação da necessidade de

analisar a filosofia prática de Tomás de Aquino à luz dos seus supostos metafísicos. A análise proposta pelo autor baseia-se nas explicações do Angélico acerca dos princípios de *participação*, de *unidade* e de *união*. A partir de um estudo detalhado destes três conceitos-chave da metafísica de Tomás, Flood explora as ramificações do amor de si. O amor de si, na opinião de Flood, pode ser considerado como o fundamento dos aspetos essenciais da vida humana. Porém, este amor próprio não deve ser entendido como auto adoração ou como sentimento narcisista. O autor explica que o amor de cada sujeito por si próprio assenta num desejo fundamental de bem e deriva da unidade substancial da pessoa. Flood explica a relação hierárquica e metafísica entre unidade e união, sendo a unidade fundamento da relação de união entre duas coisas. Sendo o amor interpessoal uma relação de união, tem também como fundamento a unidade substancial, a unidade de si alcança-se pelo amor de si e pelo amor a Deus (pp. xi). Nesta obra, Flood explora o argumento avançado na sua obra anterior *The Root of Friendship: Self-Love and Self-Governance in Aquinas*, segundo a qual a *subjetividade* (diferente de consciência de si) é um elemento central na antropologia de Tomás de Aquino (pp. x). Quanto a este aspeto, o autor explica que segue as interpretações de Karol Wojtyła e Charles Taylor sobre a subjetividade interior; de Linda Zagzebski, sobre a subjetividade irreduzível e a omnisubjetividade; e de Therese Scarpelli Cory, sobre subjetividade experiencial (pp. xiv).

Esta obra está dividida em seis capítulos. Os capítulos de um a cinco estabelecem os princípios da filosofia prática de Tomás de Aquino supra indicados. Como se referiu, estes capítulos destinam-se a fundamentar o argumento de Flood no seu livro anterior, que é desenvolvido com novos detalhes no sexto capítulo. O primeiro capítulo (pp. 1 a 24) constrói a base da análise que o autor fará nos capítulos seguintes. Nele são apresentados os três conceitos da metafísica de Tomás mencionados, na sua articulação com a interpretação de Flood sobre a doutrina da amizade do Angélico. Na interpretação de Flood, a amizade – com Deus, consigo próprio e com outras pessoas – é considerada por Tomás de Aquino como a forma superior do amor. De entre esta tríplice forma de amizade, Tomás considera que o amor aos outros não pode ser superior ao amor de si. A justificação para esta visão aparentemente egoísta do amor está na superioridade ontológica da unidade substancial individual relativamente à relação entre outras unidades substanciais ou pessoas. O amor próprio é mais importante do que o amor pelos outros na medida em que, do ponto de vista ontológico, é a primeira forma de união substância – a da pessoa enquanto ser racional – que nutre a segunda. Além desta forma primeira de união substancial, Tomás concebe outro tipo de união, que Flood também

analisa: a semelhança. Pela semelhança entre indivíduos são construídos os primeiros passos para a união final – «the union of possession or real union with the beloved» (pp. xi) – e para a manutenção das amizades. O cultivo da amizade, no sentido de amizade verdadeira precisa de atos de amor contínuos e persistentes, que apenas são possíveis mediante um amor próprio regrado e orientado para o verdadeiro bem, que, na ótica de Tomás, é o próprio Deus.

No segundo capítulo (pp. 25-43) Flood desenvolve o estudo do princípio da semelhança na construção da amizade com o outro. A disponibilidade e aptidão para amar outra pessoa requer que haja semelhança entre as duas pessoas. A natureza humana, partilhada entre seres humanos, é uma semelhança suficiente para que seja construído um laço de amizade. Contudo, quanto maior o grau de semelhança entre dois indivíduos, maior a probabilidade de se unirem no afeto. Desde esta perspectiva, as relações familiares tendem a ser mais estáveis e duradouras do que as relações construídas por escolha própria, cujo nível de união é mais intenso e «often lack the stability and permanency marking familial relationships» (pp. 28). Segundo Flood, Tomás de Aquino considera que a relação matrimonial é a mais importante entre os diversos elos de amizade humana. Pelo compromisso de fidelidade são criadas condições para que a união, para além de intensa e íntima, se torne também uma união que aproxime ambos o máximo possível da sua própria unidade metafísica. Essa aproximação é possível pela partilha e aceitação recíproca da vida interior de cada um.

No terceiro capítulo (pp. 44-66), Flood analisa o papel de Deus no amor. Este capítulo reporta ao princípio da participação ontológica: a criatura existe na medida em que participa no ser divino, uno e primordial. Não esqueçamos que a filosofia prática de Tomás de Aquino brota profundamente da sua doutrina criacionista. Por isso, para além da relação de cada um consigo próprio, no sentido da prosperidade da vida comunitária e da aquisição da beatitude, é fundamental o amor a Deus acima de todas as coisas. O amor a Deus é possível unicamente pela participação ontológica. Desta amizade com Deus deriva o amor de si adequadamente orientado pelos valores universais e que irá de igual modo orientar as formas de união/unidade com os demais. Segundo Flood, Tomás de Aquino defende os seguintes princípios: a unidade é superior à união, a unidade é causa de maior amor e a união de menos. Devemos, por isso, amar primeiro e mais Deus do que nós próprios. Flood diz que estes princípios podem levar a duas considerações: a primeira diz que há uma unidade metafísica entre Deus e todos os seres humanos, que corre o risco de ser lida como panteísta; a segunda afirma que a relação metafísica de cada um com Deus constitui algo tão fundamental que

«his very unity and identity have an ongoing relational dependency in God» (pp. 49). O que o autor pretende mostrar é que a identidade humana é inerentemente relacional, na medida em que a própria existência do sujeito enquanto substância individual depende da sua relação ontológica com Deus. Tomás de Aquino mantém que essa qualidade relacional, naturalmente intrínseca na identidade pessoal, se estende do amor de si para o amor aos outros. Portanto, aquilo que é ser um ser humano é estar enraizado em Deus por via da participação e, por isso, a maneira mais primária de atividade amorosa de si deve ter relação a Deus para que seja a melhor possível e a mais adequada.

Nos capítulos quarto e quinto (pp. 67-84, pp. 85-109) o autor descreve os tipos de orientação do amor. No capítulo quarto analisa as deformações das uniões que resultam de orientações consideradas por Tomás como desviadas e desviantes da amizade com Deus. Flood explica que este tipo de desvio e de decadência do amor a Deus é por norma resultante do amor de si construído sobre o orgulho. O orgulho origina vários tipos de atitudes egoístas que acabam por isolar e produzir tristeza no sujeito. Estas consequências do amor próprio baseado no orgulho não resultam apenas do mal enquanto movimento que contraria a direção da criatura para Deus, mas radicam no desvio da própria identidade metafísica do ser humano. Neste capítulo, Flood também analisa o papel de Satanás neste processo de deformação. No quinto capítulo o autor ocupa-se dos modos práticos e quotidianos de progresso dos três tipos de amor: amor a Deus, a si próprio e aos outros. Ao longo do capítulo, Flood defende que, de acordo com o modelo ético de Tomás de Aquino, o correto modo de proceder para desenvolver a amizade quer com Deus quer com os outros é a conformação da vontade própria à vontade divina. No capítulo final, Flood explora o conceito de subjetividade que tinha desenvolvido no seu primeiro livro e reformula o seu antigo argumento. Esta nova versão do seu argumento apresenta-se, na presente obra, constituído por 3 proposições: 1) a amizade deriva do amor de si, e tudo aquilo que pode ser dito de relevante sobre a primeira é dito sobre o segundo; 2) uma vez que a amizade é, principalmente, a aceitação e a experiência da vida interior do outro pela sua partilha voluntária, também o amor próprio envolve a experiência da própria vida interior de cada um; 3) da mesma forma que a unidade é superior à união, também a experiência de si é mais permanente e contínua do que a experiência relacionada com as amizades interpessoais. Flood explica que esta sua reformulação do argumento face à versão precedente é fruto tanto da análise feita nos capítulos anteriores quanto do trabalho de Therese Scarpelli Cory. O autor trabalha também o conceito de omni-subjetividade de Linda Zagzebski, entendido como uma propriedade importante

que se deve atribuir à concepção tomista de Deus. Este conceito, que resulta de uma aplicação à análise da subjetividade dos atributos divinos da onnipresença e da onisciência, indica o facto de Deus conhecer de modo completo e preciso cada estado consciente de cada ser na perspectiva da primeira pessoa. Flood utiliza esta noção para fundamentar a subjetividade relacional – aquela subjetividade que consiste na relação ontológica do eu com Deus – recorrendo à análise de escritos de Tomás de Aquino nos quais o autor reconhece poderem fundamentar-se validamente algumas afirmações de Zagzebski.

O capítulo sexto e último termina com algumas considerações acerca da caridade, enquanto relação de amizade com Deus, mostrando como a explicação de Tomás sobre esta virtude oferece uma visão completa da subjetividade pessoal. O argumento de Flood contribui para desenvolvimentos das discussões tomistas sobre a natureza da ação humana, assim como para o aprofundamento das interpretações da ética e da antropologia tomasianas. Este livro, ao apresentar uma análise muito completa e fundamentada da metafísica do amor construída por Tomás de Aquino, permite compreender como as teorias metafísicas estão implicadas nas soluções de outras questões filosóficas do Angélico, concretamente nas questões de filosofia prática. Mais concretamente, contribui para os estudos tomistas acerca do problema da intersubjetividade.

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Kerr, Gaven, *Aquinas and the Metaphysics of Creation*, Oxford University Press, New York 2019; 252 pp.; ISBN 9780190941307.

Esta obra de Gaven Kerr está focada na questão da dependência ontológica da criação em relação a Deus, tal como é concebida no sistema metafísico de Tomás de Aquino, abordando esta relação desde a perspectiva do princípio de causalidade. Na introdução (pp. 1-14.), o autor define o seu objetivo principal e apresenta a sua própria posição filosófica, que se inscreve na tradição aristotélica-tomista, nomeadamente no que se refere à concepção metafísica do cosmos. Kerr defende uma explicação das estruturas metafísicas do universo de matriz tomista e afirma que estas não são incompatíveis com os princípios validados pela filosofia contemporânea da ciência. No primeiro capítulo (pp. 15-45) o autor apresenta as concepções antigas sobre a origem do universo, sobretudo a platô-

nica e a aristotélica, explicando o modo como Tomás de Aquino se posicionou perante elas. O capítulo seguinte (pp. 46-72) trata da estrutura do ser a partir do modelo criacionista proposto por Tomás de Aquino. Deste modo, neste capítulo Kerr analisa sobretudo a concepção de Tomás sobre as potências específicas de Deus e o modo como elas atuam na criação, através de uma análise da doutrina da causalidade – formal, final e eficiente. No terceiro capítulo (pp. 73-99) o autor apresenta a definição tomista de criação focando-se no significado da expressão *creatio ex nihilo* e mostra que, na perspectiva de Tomás de Aquino, a ação de criar, especificamente divina, supõe a produção de algo no ser. Criar significa, segundo Kerr, produzir algo no que diz respeito à sua existência, e não a aspetos particulares desta. Deste modo, a criação é um ato realizado «from nothing but God's own resources and emerge out of a state of nothingness» (p. 79) – antes de as coisas existirem nada do que as compõe existe. Kerr conclui assim que, na perspectiva de Tomás, existir não é uma propriedade intrínseca das criaturas pois pertence por essência à natureza divina. Deus faz as coisas existirem em virtude do seu próprio ser que é uno, absoluto e ilimitado. Portanto, as criaturas dependem radicalmente de Deus, dado que esta dependência diz respeito à sua própria existência. Para melhor explicar esta dependência Kerr analisa a distinção entre criação, alteração e produção na teoria criacionista tomasiana. A partir desta análise conclui-se que a criatura não tem o poder de criar *ex nihilo*. Este facto exclui de imediato uma possível correlação de dependência entre Deus e os entes criados. Como explica Kerr, a dependência das criaturas em relação a Deus é de tipo assimétrico. No capítulo quarto (pp. 99-122) o autor analisa a doutrina da causalidade de Tomás de Aquino, tomando em consideração precisamente este primado ontológico absoluto de Deus. Kerr afirma que este processo de causalidade constitui o significado essencial da criação. Como tal, neste capítulo foca a sua análise principalmente na natureza da primeira causa, distinguindo dois tipos de cadeias causais geradas por ela – *per se*, *per accidens* – e explicando o nível de autonomia de cada uma das cadeias, o modo como se comportam e a forma de atuação de cada um dos seus elementos. No capítulo quinto (pp. 123-157) Kerr analisa os componentes metafísicos da substância criada de acordo com a cosmologia de Tomás de Aquino. Para tal, mostra as relações entre as noções de matéria, forma, essência e acidente, e a função destes princípios na composição dos entes criados. Ao fazê-lo aborda duas questões relevantes: se a propriedade material das coisas pode ter origem num princípio imaterial e qual o estatuto ontológico das propriedades matemáticas e universais, dado que estas não são tipicamente entes criados. A primeira destas últimas duas questões é importante na medida em que abre a discussão sobre a

definição de matéria na filosofia tomista. Esta questão é complexa porque a matéria tem uma natureza contrária à natureza imaterial de Deus, facto que levanta questões estruturais sobre a origem da matéria-prima na metafísica criacionista do Angélico. O sexto capítulo (pp. 158-201) trata da questão da temporalidade e está focado na posição e nos argumentos apresentados por Tomás de Aquino no debate acerca de um possível início da criação. Apoiano-se nos comentários de Tomás de Aquino ao Livro do *Genesis*, Kerr analisa a distinção operada por Tomás entre origem e início, e analisa o modo como em ambas as dimensões da criação ocorre a temporalidade. No sétimo e último capítulo (pp. 202-238), o autor analisa o sentido teleológico da criação concebido por Tomás, recorrendo às noções de causalidade primeira e contínua, examinadas ao longo do estudo. Kerr argumenta que se há realmente um suporte contínuo do cosmos quer pela ação divina, quer pela própria substância de Deus que colabora nessa sustentação, então deve haver uma finalidade no cosmos. A ordem pela qual a cadeia de causas acontece implica um desígnio. Este, por sua vez, supõe a existência de uma intenção latente à criação. O autor integra os tipos de cadeia causal apresentados anteriormente – *per se* e *per accidens* – no âmbito da causa final, que é o próprio Deus, a fim de explicar o movimento teleológico da criação, segundo Tomás de Aquino. Neste livro Gaven Kerr distancia-se quer de abordagens analíticas contemporâneas à metafísica, quer da continental, de matriz existencialista. Na sua análise do modelo criacionista de Tomás de Aquino, Kerr atribui uma ligação necessária e irresolúvel entre os diferentes componentes metafísicos do universo, mostrando como todos esses elementos convergem na constituição da realidade como totalidade. Para além de apresentar de modo consistente a noção cristã de criação, este livro contribui para um melhor conhecimento da metafísica criacionista de Tomás de Aquino, alimentando o debate atual sobre o aspeto unitário da metafísica do Angélico. Os estudos mais recentes sobre do debate metafísico medieval acerca das primeiras causas, aliados às novas abordagens das questões sobre a origem cosmológica podem vir a propor novas formas de superação dos problemas metafísicos da atualidade que parecem permanecer num impasse nos últimos anos, como por exemplo, a superação de modelos dualistas ou a possibilidade da existência de multiversos.

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