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A VIEW ON AUGUSTINE'S TECHNIQUE OF BIO-GRAPHICAL SELF-OBSERVATION IN *DE ORDINE*.

1. The Problem:

The way Augustine describes it, his first serious interest in philosophy was awakened by a specific problem, namely the *unde-malum*-question.¹ For the Church Father, finding an answer to this question meant much more than getting rid of some intellectual uneasiness. Rather, the problem of the existence of evil within the good and almighty Creator's Creation arose a severe existential crisis Augustine laboured under for a long time and that was overcome only bit by bit.²

One of the first steps to the riddle's solution was Augustine's discovery that evil could not be defined as a substance (as the Manicheans did erroneously), nor as an autonomous static reference-point within the well-ordered Creation at all.³ Evil "is" not. Rather, evil "happens". That is the idea Augustine's philosophical solution for the problem pivots upon. But how and why does it happen, then? Certainly not as an element nor as an effect of God's Creation (strictly insofar as it stems from God). Still, God's Creation is an intrinsically dynamic system of references from and towards God and within itself, a system framed, built upon, and held together by certain parameters

¹ The question, pondered since the early writings, continues to be a vividly discussed problem in the last unfinished work, the *Opus imperfectum contra Julianum*, where it can still be found *ad verbum* (VI 16). Therefore, J. M. Rist is right to say: "That broad question, still raised in Augustine's last work [...] was the most important and most enduring challenge to Augustine throughout his life" (*Augustine*, Cambridge 1994, p. 261).

² Glancing backward, Augustine describes his search for a satisfying answer in terms of a feverish crisis (*Conf.* VII 5,7), a quest for answers that within short led to a delirium of his soul (VII 14,20): *et non requiescebat [scil. anima mea] et aliena loquebatur*. Also in *De libero arbitrio* I 4, Augustine explains to Evodius that it was the very question of evil that troubled him more than anything else in his youth and made him become a Manichee. And even by the time other philosophical problems seem to clear up in Augustine's mind, he still confesses that the problem of evil and its origin remained much of an unsolved and painful mystery to him (*Conf.* 7,11). – For a reasonable study on Augustine's *unde-malum*-question with a good insight into the close-to-traumatic experience of his Manichean past cf. F. De CAPITANI, *Il problema del male nel giovane Agostino*, in: *Il misterio del male e la libertà possibile* (Ed. L. Alici), Rome 1994, pp. 57-80.

³ Cf. *De civitate Dei* XII 3, XIX 11ff, *De moribus Manichaeorum* II 2,3, *De natura boni* 4, etc.

and cornerstones.⁴ And it is in these (free) dynamics God concedes to His Creation that the solution Augustine was looking for could be found.

For Augustine, the problem of defining evil has changed, then, since his Manichean days: evil cannot be denied, so much is true. But it is equally true that evil cannot be “something”, created by the good God’s will and power, nor that it can be an entity or a fixed parameter of Creation.⁵ It seems plausible, though, that evil could be the effect of a referential defect within the well-ordered Creation of God, and therefore has its roots in the fragile dynamics of reality. For Augustine, as for Shakespeare’s Polonius, it just “remains / That we find out the cause of this effect, / Or rather say, the cause of this defect, / For this effect defective comes by cause” (Hamlet II 2).

No doubt, then: evil is not a *natura*, nor a *substantia*, i.e. not an entity in its own right at all; rather, evil parasitically corrupts, lessens, or interferes with the sound (i.e. non-defective) relation every *substantia* or *natura* should have with its first ontological cause and intrinsic aim, namely God, its Creator and its *summum bonum*.⁶ Augustine’s final solution to the *unde-malum*-question by way of defining evil as an ontological lessening of the *natura* through free will’s *aversio a Deo*⁷ was initially based on this fundamental insight: that if we search for the origin of evil, we have to search within the possible deviations or hinderings of the world-process that stems from God and flows back to Him through every single creature’s reversion towards its ontological origin.

In his immense œuvre, Augustine seems to hint at this shift in his inquiry on evil several times. In this context, G.R. Evans has called attention to an episode the Church Father relates in *De ordine* (I

⁴ In *De natura boni* 4, Augustine names *ordo*, *species* and *modus* as the most important of these parameters; cf. my article *Augustine on Mode, Form and Natural Order*, in: *Augustinian Studies* 31 (2000), pp. 59-77.

⁵ After all, all things God created were “very good”, *omnia valde bona*, as we know from *Gen* 1,31. In the Platonic tradition, too, there exists a dogma of God who is not responsible for evil or badness: cf. Plato, *Rep.* 379 bc etc.

⁶ Cf. *Contra epistolam Manichaei* 35,39: *quis enim dubitet totum illud quod dicitur malum, nihil esse aliud quam corruptionem*; or *De natura boni* 6, where evil’s quasi-nature is reduced to the fact of *adimendum et minuendum quod bonum est*; and in *De natura boni* 17, Augustine states: *cuique naturae non est malum nisi minui bonum etc.*

⁷ The defect-cum-effect theory Augustine offers for the explanation of evil plays with the multiple meaning of *defectus*, which in Latin stands for “defect” or “flaw” etc., as well as for (e.g. military) “defection”, “desertion”, etc., which is where the problem of free will and the voluntary aversion from God comes in.

3,6ff).⁸ Evans is certainly right in his surmise that this episode and its literary elaboration tell us something about Augustine's intellectual biography during the decisive time of his first approach to a satisfying philosophical solution for the problem of evil (which roughly coincides with the period of his Christianising). Still, I think Evans' interpretation can be deepened and expanded in order to obtain a fuller understanding of the episode. In the following, I shall therefore reconsider the *De ordine* episode in question, taking Evans' terse comments as a point of departure for my own interpretation. Also, I shall begin my interpretational attempt without judging the historicity of the episode; for the present, my primary concern is with the philosophical insight Augustine wants to illustrate by telling this episode.⁹

2. An Awkward Episode:

Before his baptism, Augustine and a circle of his friends (or "disciples") spent some time for reflection and preparation at the country-estate of Verecundus in Cassiciacum near Milan (autumn 386). One night, when Augustine lay awake absorbed in disquieting thoughts (as he usually did at the time, he informs us in parenthesis), his attention was drawn to the irregular noise of the bath-water flowing by outside the sleeping-room through a water channel. And as much as he thought about it, he could not find a plausible explanation for the irregularities of the water's flow. – When Augustine puts his question about the strange phenomenon to the other members of the Cassiciacum circle in the next morning, however, one of them (Licentius) immediately has a disarmingly simple answer to it: the shedding of leaves in these months of autumn-winds might plug the channel with foliage and stop up the water's flow from time to time until the water pressure washes away the leave-plug (*De ordine* I 3,7). This is indeed the kind of reasonable explanation Augustine was looking for, and therefore he does not hesitate to agree to Licentius' theory: *visum est mihi probabile aliud [scil. explanation] non habenti, confessusque sum [...] nihil me invenisse, cum diu quaesissem cur ita [scil. the irregular water-flow] esset* (*De ordine* I 3,7).

⁸ Cf. G. R. Evans, *Augustine on Evil*, Cambridge 1982, p. 93f.

⁹ The same as other early Augustinian writings, *De ordine* is composed in a "Platonic" manner as a dialogue. It is almost impossible to decide how much of the dialogue's content and "link and frame" story can be considered to be historical in a strict sense. In any case, symbolic and metaphoric elements might have permeated or even overlapped the historic nucleus I am very much inclined to concede to the episode.

In spite of the quick agreement, Augustine's tiny problem and its solution gives way to a lengthy philosophical discussion within the circle of friends, that soon transcends the parameters of the triggering water-channel episode: why do disturbing things like the plugging of a water-channel happen at all? Obviously, neither the construction of the channel, nor the planting of the trees, nor the autumnal shedding of leaves were meant to be out for this unpleasant effect. On the contrary, everything seemed to be disposed at its best: The channel was designed to swiftly conduct sufficient water into the bathing room; the leafy trees in the garden were planted in the hope that they would cast cool shadows and perhaps bear fruits; let alone the entirely agreeable natural disposition that makes trees lose their foliage in the autumn in order to make place for new budding in springtime ... (*De ordine* III 4,11).

Certainly everybody would admit that all this can be called well disposed, and arranged in an orderly manner, and not without a sufficient cause. And exactly this seems to be an important principle that persists in spite of all open questions: we may not always understand why something happens in one way or another (or why it happens at all) in particular circumstances, v.gr. why the leaves of the well-planted trees in an accurately designed garden should have plugged the rightly constructed water-channel. Yet, Augustine and his disciples of the Cassiciacum circle coincide in one thing: whatever happens, there is an evident principle subjacent to all particular difficulties of explanation any event or happening might raise. It is the principle that nothing happens without a cause: *Latent ista sensus nostros, penitus latent: illud tamen quod aggressae quaestioni satis est, nescio quomodo animum non latet, nihil fieri sine causa* (*De ordine* I 4,11). In a more apophthegmatic formulation (after a wordy investigation of the problem), Augustine repeats this principle in I 5,14: *nihil fieri, nihil gigni quod non aliqua causa genuerit ac moverit*.

3. The Background of the Episode:

– So much for now concerning the Cassiciacum-discussion. What has been said so far is sufficiently revealing to venture the following observations, before returning to the discussion of the causes of evil:

G. R. Evans is certainly right to say that (so far) the outcome of Augustine's conversation about the nightly water flow with his friends

in Cassiciacum is a typically Platonic one¹⁰: it is a pivot also of Plotinus' philosophy that everything happens strictly according to explaining causes¹¹. No doubt: Augustine brings up a principle pertaining to the philosophical denomination he consulted in those times of troublesome inquiry into the origin of evil, reading the *Platoniorum libri*¹². And, as it is well known, it will be the Platonists' tenets on the issue that later on would serve as a basis for Augustine's further discussion (and solution?) of the problem.

Yet, I think there is much more "Platonic potential" to this Cassiciacum-episode. Regardless of the question of the told events' historicity – at a closer look (which is the look I want to propose in this article) it seems hard to believe that the water's continual flow and its irregular disturbing interruption shouldn't imply a metaphorical reference to the Neo-platonic image of the perpetual outflow of reality, the constant emanation from the first cause: well disposed and flawless in its arrangement, but punctually obstructed and disarranged in many important regards. An obstruction of the otherwise perfect emanation that we identify as evil. The fact is that during his time in Cassiciacum (and also even earlier), Augustine was desperately pondering the problem of evil, of the defective causes for this occasional obstruction or disarrangement of the – Platonically speaking¹³ – ontological flow coming from God and transmitting good being onto creatures. By the way it is told, and in view of its suggestive choice of images and motifs, Augustine's Cassiciacum episode could well be considered an anecdotal – maybe, in the worst of cases: burlesque or self-parodying – pendant of his "philosophical situation" in autumn 386. It was deep at night when he noted the bath-

¹⁰ Evans *op. cit.*, p. 94.

¹¹ Cf. *Ennead* III.1.1,14-16: Περὶ δὲ τῶν γιγνομένων ἢ ὄντων μὲν αἰεὶ, οὐ τὴν αὐτὴν δὲ ἐνέργειαν ποιουμένων αἰεὶ κατ' αἰτίας ἅπαντα λεκτέον γίνεσθαι, τὸ δ' ἀναίτιον οὐ παραδεκτέον κτλ. This axiomatic *nihil sine causa* of the Platonists' account of reality can be traced back to Plato's *Timaios* (28 a 4ff): πᾶν δὲ αὖ τὸ γιγνόμενον ὑπ' αἰτίου τινὸς ἐξ ἀνάγκης γίνεσθαι· παντὶ γὰρ ἀδύνατον χωρὶς αἰτίου γένεσιν σχεῖν. For the further history and development of the axiom, cf. Jan Opsomer / Carlos Steel, *Evil without a cause*, in: *Zur Rezeption der hellenistischen Philosophie in der Spätantike* (Eds. Th. Fuhrer and M. Erler), Stuttgart 1999, p. 255.

¹² Cf. *Conf.* VII 9,13 about the time in question: *procurasti mihi [...] quosdam Platoniorum libros ex graeca lingua in latinum versos*; and VIII 2,3; *quosdam libros Platoniorum, quos Victorinus [...] in latinam linguam transtulisset*.

¹³ A Neoplatonic way of speaking perfectly assimilated in *De ordine* to a Christian interpretation of reality – and to the metaphors of the water-channel episode: in paragraph 17 of the same book, Augustine lets the whole world(process) "flow out" of God.

water's irregular flow, and repeatedly our attention is drawn to the fact that it was pitch-dark: *erant enim tenebrae* (*De ordine* I 3,6). – A metaphor, more probable than not, for Augustine's situation of groping in the dark regarding the problem of evil¹⁴: a situation that had led him into the obscurity of heretical Manichaeism with its belief of an ontological principle of evil, which the Manichees themselves called *tenebrae* (cf. *Contra epistolam Manichaei* 35,39). In this utter darkness of his spirit, Augustine lays awake turning thoughts and questions over in his mind. It is a state of mind the Church Father also tells us about in *Conf.* VII¹⁵; and it is a known biographical fact that it was exactly the *unde-malum*-problem Augustine was racking his brain with at the time in question, *cum evigilassem de more, mecum ipse tacitus agitare quae in mentem nescio unde veniebant* (*De ordine* I 3,6).

– I should fear all this could seem to be an over-interpretation of the short *De ordine* anecdote if it wasn't for a certain additional stylistic indication, or rather an idiomatic clue that strongly speaks for an interpretation of the anecdote as a glimpse Augustine allows us into his intellectual biography:

From Cicero's *De officiis* we know of an ancient Latin saying that was used to characterise a situation of stagnation, of obstructed continuation, where something is wrong or lacking, where one finds oneself at a loss: (*hic*) *haeret aqua*.¹⁶ The proverb appears for a second time in Cicero's writings; also in *Ad Quintum fratrem* II 8, it is clearly used to express personal resignation facing an unnerving problem or question: *in hac causa mihi aqua haeret*; meaning: "I am quite at a loss concerning this problem". This winged word of the stagnant water expresses the perplex condition of "being completely out of one's depth" with the very same image Augustine chooses to illustrate his own perplexity when introducing us into the vexing problem of defining evil by means of telling us the personal experience of the stagnant water flow in *De ordine*.

¹⁴ For *tenebrae* is a Biblical metaphor for evil as well as for an obscured state of mind: cf. the usage of the word in *Mt* 4,6, *John* 8,12 and 12,46, *Acts* 26,18 1 *Ptr* 2,9, among others.

¹⁵ Cf. *Conf.* VII 7,11 and *passim*. In *De libero arbitrio* I,4, Augustine confesses to Evodius that the question of evil and its origin had been the cause for his heretical aberration and that it was only by God's help that he came out of it and could acquire a new standpoint facing the problem: cf. *supra* note 2.

¹⁶ *De officiis* III 33,117: [...] *sed aqua haeret, ut aiunt*. The expression *ut aiunt* shows that the idiomatic phrase *aqua haeret* was in proverbial use at least at Cicero's times. (Generally, and as Cicero himself admits, *De officiis* indulges in proverbial clichés and commonplaces now and then: cf. *De officiis* I 30,33).

Should it be possible, then, that Augustine's Cassiciacum episode of the plugged water-channel imitates the proverbial expression? Or is the episode to be taken as a real biographical experience Augustine had in or about the year 386? But in this case: why does he tell it in such a lengthy manner? Why should he make such a "big deal" out of it? As a matter of fact, I think we could be facing an autobiographical experience that – put together with the simultaneous existential situation of the Church Father – retrospectively acquired a deeper symbolical meaning for Augustine, not at least, most probably, by combining it with the known classical proverb.¹⁷ By offering the reader this multiple access to and open interpretation of the *De ordine* discussion about evil, Augustine intends to play with the proverbial stagnant water motif in order to give us a succinct insight into a decisive moment of his spiritual biography and philosophical development the way he thought of it by the time he wrote *De ordine*.

From his *Confessions*, we know that the solution Augustine found to the *unde-malum*-question was not entirely his own. Rather, Augustine was put on the scent for the right answer (which he was not able to find by his own wits) by others whom he considers to be God's tools: in the *Confessions*, the Church Father retrospectively tells us that it was an "unworthy person" who introduced him to the writings of the Platonists (and made them accessible to him) and to their view of the problem, a view he himself was *mutatis mutandis* willing and afterwards also definitely going to adopt (*Conf.* VII 9,13). In Cassiciacum, it is Licentius, to whom Augustine must confess that he never would have guessed by his own wits what had caused the water's irregular flow if it had not been for Licentius' simple conjecture of the clogging leaves in the water channel: *nihil me invenisse, cum diu quaesissem cur ita esset* (*De ordine* I 3,7). The same as it were the fundamental insights of the Platonists on the problem of evil that helped Augustine for his solution of a disquieting philosophical problem, it is Licentius in the metaphorically condensed Cassiciacum episode who confronts Augustine with the eye-opening explanation and the Platonic maxim of the impossibility of causeless events or happenings (*De ordine* I 3,7, and I 4,11).

¹⁷ The proverb's etymological background might not differ all that much from Augustine's *prima facie* somewhat trite experience at Cassiciacum. August Otto's conjecture about the origin of the *aqua-haeret*-proverb is: „Nach der gewöhnlichen Annahme wäre an die Wasseruhr zu denken, doch könnte auch das auf den Feldern stehende Wasser, das nicht ablaufen will, die Quelle der Redensart gewesen sein“ (*Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten der Römer*, Leipzig 1890, p. 32).

And there is still another conspicuous point to the Cassiciacum episode and to the way it is told: The careful reader of *De ordine* will note a tacit shift in Augustine's formulation of the meditated question between the beginning of the water-channel episode (I 3,6) and its thematic conclusion (I 5,14). This shift corresponds to a philosophical insight Augustine underwent about the year 386 and would ponder and pursue for the rest of his life. And this shift can easily be traced by Augustine's choice of words in the Cassiciacum anecdote, and the crucial insight that has brought it about can easily be deduced from the variation in style that lets the vocabulary of the initial question in *De ordine* I 3,7: *cur ita esset* (the question Augustine found no answer to) differ from the choice of words Augustine's questioning displays on the way towards a possible solution: it is the *oboriri* (I 3,8), the *fieri* (I 3,8f), the *gigni* and *moveri* (I 5,14) Augustine is concerned about now, the growing, the realisation, the accomplishment or the coming about of things, or rather of situations or states of affair.¹⁸

It is another correspondence with Augustine's inner biographical development that is expressed in this semantic shift in *De ordine*: by the time he reached the Cassiciacum-stage of his philosophical concern with the *Platoniorum libri* and the entire Platonic system, Augustine had gradually dismissed his Manichean positions and attitude that had formerly made him pursue the origin of evil in the quest for some ontic quantity, for an entity or any substantial being whatsoever that could serve his explanation as a cause. Meanwhile, he had acquired another philosophical attitude towards the problem he had been struggling with for so long and in vain. An attitude that opened the way for an interpretation of evil understood as an obstruction or a disarrangement within the delicate dynamics of reality, of its flowing system of interrelations and interdependencies: the solution for the problem of evil does not lie within the sphere of being, *esse*, it must have dawned upon Augustine at some time around 386, but in the realm of coming-to-be, of *fieri* and *gigni*¹⁹ – just as the nightly obstruction of the water-flow in Cassiciacum had no explanation in an "ontological" defect, in a defect

¹⁸ The literary style of the whole passage – as if it were imitating the water-channel anecdote by rhetorical means – is in itself a breakthrough that overcomes a semantic clog and gives free way to a set of active, dynamic verbs and formulations in Augustine's new found way of explaining his vexing problems concerning evil.

¹⁹ Which brings us back in a roundabout way to Evans' interpretation, who also notices an important change in Augustine's setting of the same old question: "The important word is here 'happens'. He is discussing, not a static order, but an order of events", etc. (*op. cit.*, p. 94).

of things in their very being (of the water-channel, of the trees, of the water, etc.), but in the flow and interrelation or connection of events: the autumnal alteration of nature, the leafing of the trees in the wind, the movement of the water, etc.

– So let us finally return to the discussion in the School of Cassiciacum once more: the conversation has meanwhile reached a point where the “order of all things” has become the issue (*De ordine* I 5,14). This orderly system of beings we call God’s Creation is all-embracing, God’s work, and good, as paragraphs 15 to 20 of the same chapter are quick to explain. And thus the same old question reappears under a decisively new premise. Given that the entire reality is from God and entirely in order the way He created it: how is a disarrangement or a disturbance of this originally good universal balance of all things possible? In short: not “how can evil be?” is the question to be asked in order to obtain a satisfying answer, but: “how does evil *come about*?”. It is the long-known *unde-malum*-question Augustine feels compelled to raise once more at that point of *De ordine*. What is new in the question this time, is the shift from “to be” to “to come about”: evil has to be explained within a dynamic correlation of substances and events, it has to be and only can be explained as dynamically arisen, as an effect. Augustine sticks to his premise of the *corruptio-boni*-thesis that evil cannot have an autonomous ontological status, cannot be a substance, not a being in its own right. Rather, it will only be definable as a failed or obstructive relation of ontologically autonomous (and therefore naturally good) *naturae* to their similars, to certain good-warranting parameters of Creation, and most of all to the *summum bonum*.²⁰

4. Some Concluding Remarks (and a Short Outlook):

On these few pages, I have tried to show how I think that *prima facie* unconnected biographical facts, self-observation *a posteriori*, Augustine’s interpretation of his own inner development, and a Latin winged word, worked together to form a much-telling literary setting for Augustine’s *De ordine*. The link-and-frame story of the dialogue (part of which is what I have called the Cassiciacum anecdote) can thus be read on more than one interpretatory level, or so I wanted to

²⁰ Cf. also Evans *op. cit.*, p. 96: “In any case, it is clear that once we begin to allow for the possibility of change and movement in the universe, the problem of evil takes on a new dimension. We are no longer concerned with the crude Manichean notion of a ‘territory’ of evil, but with an active force, with the way evil *brings about* events” (my italics).

argue. In a shallow way of reading, it is just a nice – though by modern standards not all too witty – opening and framing for the philosophical dialogue, a mere introduction to the severe topic of Creation's inner order and the possibility of its understanding. But the simple fact that the trite water-channel episode should be triggering an in-depth discussion of the entire world order should be calling our attention. There must be more to it than it seems on first sight, and there surely is.

Understanding Augustine often (if not always) requires a multiple-level reading of what he writes – at least as far as his biographical works or anecdotal allusions are concerned. By way of the short and somewhat awkward Cassiciacum anecdote, I have tried to demonstrate what I think could be an adequate interpretational way of reading Augustine. I should like to venture the statement that much of Augustine's biographical material could (and should) be read in this way. Some of the most troublesome problems of interpreting Augustine would appear in an entirely different light. I just want to mention two of them: the much commented upon theft-episode of *Conf.* II²¹, and the question of the Church Father's inner relationship to his mother, Monnica. Especially the latter one has become a thorny and more often than not completely (v.gr. psycho-pathologically) misunderstood problem of modern Augustine-exegesis. A thorough multiple-level reading of the *Confessions* in the style I have tried to propose on these pages with the example of the Cassiciacum-anecdote would most certainly discover Augustine's biographical accounts of his relationship to Monnica as an episodic cipher or a metaphor for his inner relationship (in terms of distance, betrayal, forgiveness, approximation, loving acceptance, etc.) towards his Church, which he – reborn in baptism as a “late” Christian – must have felt and recognised to be his second, spiritual mother, *Mater Ecclesia*, by the time he wrote his *Confessions*. – In this context, I should like to touch just on one of so many possible examples: In *Conf.* II 3, Augustine incidentally lets us know that his mother used to be very glad about his studies of (pagan!) academic literature. She thought, as he relates, that this would not only do no harm to his spirit, but rather bring him (the pagan!) nearer to God by inquiring into truth. Take this biographical glimpse combined with 4th-century abomination of pagan lore some Christian denominations proposed and attacked with a

²¹ For a thorough discussion of the theft-motif in *Conf.* II cf. chapter 3.3.1 of my forthcoming book *Unde malum*.

staunches *sola-scriptura*-principle²², on the one hand, and with the orthodox Faith's usage of Ancient pagan wisdom (philosophy, above all) for its own theological purposes²³ on the other hand: what a multiple-level reading of Augustine's short reference to his mother's encouragement of his studies can show, is not only a contingent, perhaps even nostalgic, information about the loving care and almost providential wisdom of Monnica in raising her son, but certainly also a plain allusion to Mother Church's standpoint concerning pagan wisdom; namely, that Ancient thought, philosophy and academic lore, though pagan, can be successfully used in the propagation, explanation, and understanding of the true Faith, and even can be a route to Christian Faith.

By this way of reading the Church Father, I should like to argue by way of conclusion, then, we would do nothing else but follow Augustine's own exegetical method²⁴ allowing a metaphorical or allegorical sense to a text's contents without at the same time denying its historicity, its *ad-litteram* or "factual" correctness.

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²² After all, for many critics of pagan philosophy and above all of Platonism, the so-called 'Ελληνισμός was nothing else but one of the standard-heresies a Christian could incur in; for an excellent study of the problem cf. B. R. Suchla, *Verteidigung eines platonischen Denkmodells einer christlichen Welt*, Göttingen 1995, p. 6-11, and for an exhaustive bibliographical listing of publications on the question of Platonism in early Christian theology cf. *ibid.* note 19 on p. 2.

²³ Just like Israel used and took with it the treasures of Egypt in the Exodus, Augustine says in *De doctrina christiana* II 40,60.

²⁴ Cf. *De Genesi ad litteram* I 1,1f; *De utilitate credendi* 3,5ff; *De doctrina christiana* II 9 and 10; etc.