

THE APPEARANCE OF THE CONCEPT CONCUPISCENTIA IN AUGUSTINE'S EARLY ANTIMANICHAEAN WRITINGS (388-391)

Julian of Aeclanum accuses Augustine that the latter had never been able to rid himself of his Manichaean background. This statement has prompted contemporary authors to examine the use of the concept of *concupiscentia* by Augustine and the Manichees. The possibility is brought forward that Augustine would have borrowed this concept together with its sexual implication from this Christian sect. In this way the negative connotation of *concupiscentia* would have entered in the Christian inheritance.¹ In this article we are led by the following questions: In what way did Augustine use the concept of *concupiscentia* in his early writings? Was Augustine for his use of the term *concupiscentia* directly dependent on the Manichaean use of the term? Or did he rather bases his theory on concupiscence on the Scriptures and than primary on Paul? The first position might imply an identical use of the term by both the Manichees and Augustine. This use would be explainable on the basis of Augustine's Manichaean past. The second case would provide a similarity between Augustine and the Manichees both invoking Paul but using their own

¹ J. VAN OORT, *Augustine and Mani on Concupiscentia sexualis*, in: J. DEN BOEFT and J. VAN OORT, *Augustiniana Traiectina*, Paris, 1987, p. 137-152; ID., *Augustine on sexual concupiscence and original sin*, in: LIVINGSTONE, E. (ed.), *Studia Patristica. Vol. 22: Papers presented at the tenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford*, Leuven, 1989, p. 382-386. Kam-Lun Edwin LEE, *Augustine, Manichaeism, and the Good* (Patristic Studies, 2), New York, 1999 (on *concupiscentia*, see p. 54-59). Johannes Van Oort discovers a remarkable conformity to Manichaeism regarding the random sexual desire (as a *motus inordinatus*) through which sin is propagated. He thinks that there is "possibly here" an influence of Manichaeism in Augustine. Kam-Lun Edwin Lee defends the existence of a direct link between the concept of concupiscence and Augustine's understanding of the Manichaean doctrine of evil. Lee tries to prove this in two steps, namely by trying to show that (a) "there is a link between Augustine's understanding of this notion in Manichaeism and his general use" and (b) that "Augustine acquires the strong sexual overtone he gives to *concupiscentia* from the Manichaean understanding of the term". According to him, "there is a change of emphasis in the concept of *concupiscentia* early around 388 when Augustine consciously attempts to equate the term with (the Manichaean notion) of libido." His second statement is that *concupiscentia* becomes part of the notion of *consuetudo* that is influenced by the Manichaean notion of evil as wickedness and mortality. Finally, he maintains that there is a continuity in the notion of *concupiscentia* before and after Augustine's focus on the Pauline writings. Lee concentrates his research on Augustine's "formative years prior to 400" (introduction, p. xii).

interpretation scheme's. In order to answer these questions we will take a look at some central passages regarding *concupiscentia* in Augustine's writings prior to Augustine's ordination to priesthood (391). The period examined is the one during which Augustine becomes familiar with Neo-platonic philosophy, starts developing arguments against the Manichees and augments his knowledge of the Bible.

***No concupiscentia in Augustine's philosophical writings
prior to his antimanichaean works***

An analysis by means of the *Cetedoc Library of Christian Latin Texts (CLCLT)* yields a surprising conclusion: the concept of *concupiscentia* is absent in Augustine's writings prior to 388². This means: it does not occur in *Contra Academicos* (386-387), *De beata uita* (386-387), *De ordine* (386-387), *Soliloquia* (386-387), *De immortalitate animae* (387), *De quantitate animae* (387/388), nor in the first book of *De libero arbitrio* (387). The concepts of *cupiditas* and *libido*, however, do occur at this early stage.³ In his philosophical writings *cupiditas* and *libido* appear as obstacles to wisdom and the happy life. Wisdom does not match with *libidinis immoderatio atque sordes, perniciosae cupiditates* and *falsae uoluptates*. Augustine urges Zenobius to devote himself to the study of philosophy in the following way:

"sic enim mihi notum est ingenium tuum et pulchritudinis omnimodae amator animus sine libidinis immoderatione atque sordibus, quod signum in te futurae sapientiae perniciosis cupiditatibus diuino iure praescribit, ne tuam causam deseras falsis uoluptatibus inlectus, qua praeuaricatione nihil turpius et periculosius inuenire potest".⁴

It is typical of Augustine that each time he urges someone to devote oneself to the study of philosophy, he warns that no bigger

² *Concupiscentia* then appears in *De Musica* VI (388-390) 5.13; PL 32,1170 and 14.44; 1186 (in a quotation of 1 John 2:15-16). Around the same time we find the concept in *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (388/389) 20.31; CSEL 90,99; (2x, one is Gal 5:24); 1.23.35; 2.12.16; 2.12.17; 2.26.39 (104. 137s. 138s. 164s.)

³ Cf: "Let us first make the philological point that he does not often use the term *concupiscentia* early in his career: he favors *cupiditas* and *libido*". J.T. BEANE, *The Development of the notion of concupiscentia in Saint Augustine. A dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Notre Dame in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy*, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1993, p. 67.

⁴ *De ordine* 1.4; CC 29,93ss.

hindrance for getting to know the truth exists as a life addicted to lust.⁵ Although these exhortations are vague, giving up one's lusts is a *conditio sine qua non* before one can even start the search for wisdom. The concepts of *cupiditas* and *libido* therefore merit a closer look. So does the verb *concupiscere* which is philologically linked to *concupiscentia* and which does occur in Augustine's philosophical writings and is moreover connected to reaching the happy life.

Concupiscere

The verb *concupiscere* is derived from the inchoative form (sc) of *cupere*, to desire, preceded by the prefix *-con* (heavy, strong). *Concupiscere* therefore means "to have a strong desire for".⁶ From the expectation that *concupiscentia* generally (but not always) carries "a bad and sexual connotation",⁷ we might expect a similar connotation for the verb *concupiscere*. Indeed, the present participle of the verb (*concupiscens*) forms the basis for the substantive *concupiscentia*. It is therefore remarkable that *concupiscere* does not share this meaning in the early Augustine. *Concupiscere* is not an elaborated theme in Augustine's early writings; it is casually used as a variant of *diligere* and *quaerere* with the meaning "strongly desire for". The verb is used in a positive way. In *Contra Academicos* (386-387), in the discussions of Augustine's friends, as well as in his own speech, the expression "*id quod (magnopere) concupivit*" seems to refer consequently to the truth and the port of wisdom.⁸ A similar use of the verb can be found in *De ordine* (386). The important bonum where Augustine and his friends were craving for (*concupivimus*) is: choosing, wanting, knowing and loving nothing else than the discovery of the truth.⁹ And when in

⁵ E.g. the exhortation to Licentius in *De ordine* 1.4; CC 29,94: "Ergo adgrediamur, Licenti, freti pietate cultores, et uestigiis nostris ignem perniciosum fumosarum cupiditatum opprimamus".

⁶ See: Terry L. MIETHE, *Augustine and Concupiscence*, in: ID. (ed.), *Augustinian Bibliography, 1970-1980. With Essays on the Fundamentals of Augustinian Scholarship*, Westport / London, 1982, p. 195-218, p. 200.

⁷ G. BONNER, *Libido and concupiscentia in St. Augustine*, in: F.L. CROSS, *Studia Patristica* 6 (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, 81), Berlin, 1962, p. 303-314 (= G. BONNER, *God's Decree and Man's Destiny. Studies on the Thought of Augustine of Hippo*, London, 1989, p. 303-314 (article IX), p. 308).

⁸ *Contra Academicos* 1.3 and 3.2; CC 29,6ss. 35s.

⁹ *De ordine* 2.20; CC 29,135ss.: "Quae uota ut deuotissime inpleantur, tibi maxime hoc negotium, mater, iniungimus, cuius precibus indubitanter credo atque confirmo mihi istam mentem deum dedisse, ut inueniendae ueritati nihil omnino praepo- nam, nihil aliud uelim, nihil cogitem, nihil amem, nec desino credere nos hoc tantum bonum, quod te promerente concupiuimus, eadem te petente adepturos".

Soliloquia (386-387) the ratio asks Augustine to pray to reach that which he desires (*ora salutem et auxilium qui ad concupita pervenias*)¹⁰ the reference is to God and the soul which Augustine wants to know (*Deum et animam scire cupio*)¹¹. The same positive meaning of *concupiscere* occurs, besides in the Dialogues, once again in *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* (388): "If wisdom or truth is not desired with all the powers of the soul, it shall not be found at all" ("Nam si sapientia et ueritas non totis animi uiribus concupiscatur, inuenire nullo pacto potest")¹². We however also find *concupiscere* as a desire to objects which should not be desired. In *De uera religione* (391) Augustine quotes for example the prescript from Exodus 20:17: "You shall not covet your neighbour's property" ("Ne concupiscas rem proximi tui")¹³ In *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (388) Augustine refers for the first time to Galatians 5:17: "the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh" ("caro concupiscit aduersus spiritum et spiritus aduersus carnem"). He will pay much more attention to this verse as he is rereading Paul from 392 onwards.

Cupiditas

A first definition of *cupiditas* can easily be derived from the exposition Augustine offers in *Soliloquia*, a record of his internal dialogue with Reason. Augustine makes plain that what is not loved for itself is not loved (*quod non propter se amatur non amatur*).¹⁴ Thus, having made progress in his search for wisdom, he states: "Now, I at least love Wisdom for herself alone, while as to other things, it is for her sake that I desire their presence or absence, such as life, ease, friends"¹⁵. So, the real danger does not come from the desire of any lower things that are sought or endured on account of some-

¹⁰ *Soliloquia* 1.1.1 ; CSEL 89,3s.

¹¹ *Soliloquia* 1.2.7 ; 11s.

¹² *De Moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.17.31; CSEL 90;35s., *The Catholic and Manichaean ways of life. Translated by D.A. Gallagher, Ph.D. and .I.J. Gallagher, Ph.D.* (The Fathers of the Church, vol. 56), Washington, 1966, p. 27.

¹³ *De uera religione* 46.89; CC 32,245: "ualet enim ad hoc etiam, quod praeceptum est : ne concupiscas rem proximi tui".

¹⁴ *Soliloquia* 1.13.22; CSEL 89,34: "Iam certe ostendi nihil aliud me amare, si quidem quod non propter se amatur, non amatur".

¹⁵ *Soliloquia* 1.13.22; 34: "Ego autem solam propter se amo sapientiam, caetera uero uel adesse mihi uolo, uel deesse timeo propter ipsam; uitam, quietem, amicos". *Two books of Soliloquies. Translated by Rev. Charles C.Starbucks, A.M., in: Ph. SCHAFF (ed.), Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. VII, Edinburgh / Grand Rapids, p. 531-560, p. 545.*

thing else (*propter aliud*), in *casu* wisdom. Therefore, *cupiditas* appears as the love (*amor*) *propter se* for temporal objects. This is confirmed by a definition of *cupiditas* we find in *De diversis quaestionibus* (388/396): “Nihil aliud est cupiditas nisi amor rerum transeuntium”.¹⁶ The concept *cupiditas* is frequently accompanied by a genitive indicating the specific kind of longing which is meant. Augustine speaks of wealth, offices of honour and so on. Typical of *cupiditas* is that the desire causes perturbations in the inner peace. *Cupiditas* is accompanied by the fear of loss. Except for fear, the objects of *cupiditas* can cause distress and extreme joy. Fear, distress and joy constitute a kind of “pathology of the soul”¹⁷. From the antimanichaean works onwards, Augustine is explicitly concerned with the question where evil comes from. He then regularly quotes 1 Timothy 6:10: “*radix omnium malorum cupiditas*”¹⁸. As we will see, this biblical quote has to serve his point against the Manichees who believed that an evil substance was the cause of all evil. According to Augustine, however, the origin of evil must be situated in *cupiditas* conceived as *mala uoluntas*. It is therefore rarely and exceptional that *cupiditas* is mentioned in a positive way. This is for example the case in *Contra Academicos* (386-387), one of Augustine’s earlier writings, where Augustine mentions the *inueniendi ueri cupiditas*, the longing to discover the truth, by which the whole philosophical project is indicated.¹⁹

Libido

In *De libero arbitrio I* Augustine offers two definitions of *libido*. The first one is given after an analysis of adultery. To Augustine, the one who commits adultery is as guilty as the one who would commit the same crime given a reasonable opportunity²⁰, or as

¹⁶ *De diversis quaestionibus octaginta tribus* 83.23; CC 44A,29s.

¹⁷ W. BABCOCK, *Cupiditas and caritas. The early Augustine on love and Human Fulfilment. The ethics of St. Augustine*, Atlanta, 1991, p. 63-66. “Following Cicero and Varro, Augustine gives a fourfold classification to the passions: joy (*gaudere*), desire (*cupere*), fear (*metere*) and grief (*dolere*)” J.T. BEANE, *o.c.*, p. 60, n.103.

¹⁸ See: *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.19.35 and 36; CSEL 90,39ss., *Contra Fortunatum* 21; CSEL 25/1,100ss., *De libero arbitrio* 3.17; CC 29,303s., *De diuersis quaestionibus octaginta tribus* 36.1; CC 44A,54ss. and so on.

¹⁹ *Contra Academicos* 1.3; CC 29,6ss.

²⁰ This might be a gospel reference to Matthew 5:28 where however *concupiscere* is used: “ego autem dico uobis quia omnis qui uiderit mulierem ad concupiscendum eam iam moechatus est eam in corde suo”. Augustine quotes this verse for the first time in *De sermone Domini in monte* (393) 1.33; CC 35,38s.

the one who does it with consent of his partners in the crime. For Augustine, the evil aspect of a bad deed is therefore not situated in the deed itself, but in the intention, in *libido*, "*id est improbanda cupiditas*"²¹. An analysis of manslaughter has to give a further clarification and elaboration of this definition. As a starting point in the argumentation Augustine introduces someone committing manslaughter, not out of desire to gain possession of something, but because he fears that some evil may befall him. The reason why this deed would be bad can then not be found in the fact of "desiring a life free of fear" (*cupere sine metu vivere*) itself. Otherwise, blame is placed upon all who love what is good. Therefore, Augustine draws an important distinction: "*The desire to live free from fear is characteristic not only of the good, but also of evil men, with this difference, that good men desire it by turning their love from whatever cannot be possessed without fear of loss, evil men, bent upon enjoying such things securely, try to remove hindrances stand in their way. As a result, they lead a life of crime and wickedness which should be called death rather than life*"²². The final conclusion (formulated by Evodius, the conversation partner of Augustine) implies at the same time a definition of the culpable desire: "*I have come to my senses, and I am very glad to have a clear understanding of the nature of that blameworthy desire (culpabilis cupiditas) called passion (libido). I now see that it is the love of things which each one can lose against his will (earum rerum amor, quas potest quisque invitus amittere)*"²³. Both definitions show that libido is closely related to *cupiditas*, a term which is hardly ever used in a positive way. The affinity to *cupiditas* is likewise found in a third definition of *libido* which Augustine later mentions in *De mendacio* (394/395): "*etenim libido quoque ipsa recte definitur appetitus animi, quo aeternis bonis quaelibet temporalia praeponuntur*"²⁴.

²¹ *De libero arbitrio* 1.4.10; CC 29,216s.

²² *De libero arbitrio* 1.4.10; 216s.: "Cupere namque sine metu uiuere, non tantum bonorum, sed etiam malorum omnium est: uerum hoc interest, quod id boni appetunt auertendo amorem ab his rebus, quae sine amittendi periculo nequent haberi; mali autem, ut his fruendis cum securitate incubent, remouere impedimenta conantur, et propterea facinorosam sceleratamque uitam, quae mors melius uocatur, gerunt". *The free Choice of the Will*, translated by R. P. Russell, O.S.A. (The Fathers of the Church. A new Translation, vol. 59), Washington, 1967, p. 63-241, p. 80.

²³ *De libero arbitrio* 1.4.10; 217: "Respicio et admodum gaudeo tam me plane cognouisse, quid sit etiam illa culpabilis cupiditas, quae libido nominatur. Quam esse iam apparet earum rerum amorem, quas potest quisque inuitus amittere". *The free Choice of the Will*, translated by R. P. Russell, O.S.A. (The Fathers of the Church. A new Translation, vol. 59), Washington, 1967, p. 63-241, p. 80.

²⁴ *De mendacio* 7.10.16; CSEL 41,421.427.435.

This definition is similar to the one found of *cupiditas* in *Soliloquia* (386-387) and *De diversis quaestionibus* (388/396) cited above.

Nevertheless, when Augustine uses the term *libido*, the desire seems not so much directed to concrete objects as this is the case with *cupiditas*. *Cupiditas* is regularly used by Augustine with a genitive indicating the (inferior) object that is loved. *Libido* is rather used with a gerundium construction, for example in the expressions: *libido gloriandi*, *libido mentiendi*, *libido dominandi*, *libido ulciscendi*... *Libido* implies thus not so much greed or avarice as such, but it is rather associated with a wrong attitude. For Augustine the *regnum illius libidinis* contains a broad spectrum: pride, envy, jealousy, laziness, stubbornness, and so on.²⁵ Nevertheless, *libido* tout court not seldom does carry a sexual connotation. In *Soliloquia* (386-387) Augustine tests himself to which degree he is already removed from and purified of his desires to transitory things such as wealth, honours and delicious food. He uses the term *cupiditas*, but exactly when he speaks of the longing for a wife, the term *libido* occurs.²⁶ In *De ordine* (386-387) Augustine speaks of *illa foeda libido* when the lover of Pyramus kills herself on his dying body.²⁷ *Libido* is mentioned again when Augustine speaks of the prostitutes. The women of the streets also have their place in the order: if one forbids prostitution the illicit sexual acts (*libido*) will cause disorder everywhere.²⁸ And finally, is it no mere coincidence that the main example in *De libero arbitrio* leading to a definition of *libido* is the analysis of adultery? Our intuition is confirmed. Even when the concept concupiscentia appears, *libido* keeps on occurring in a sexual connotation, for example in the

²⁵ *De libero arbitrio* 1.11.22; CC 29,226.

²⁶ The term *libido* only occurs once in *Soliloquia*, namely in 1.10.17; CSEL 89,27: "A: ... Quamobrem, satis, credo, iuste atque utiliter pro libertate animae meae mihi imperavi non cupere, non quaerere, non ducere uxorem. R: Non ego nunc quaero quid decreueris, sed utrum adhuc lucteris, an uero iam ipsam libidinem uiceris". To be correct, we should remark that Augustine could also use "uxoris cupiditas" to indicate the desire for a wife (*Soliloquia* 1.14.25; CSEL 89,38).

²⁷ *De ordine* 1.24; CC 29,101: "Arripe illius foedae libidinis et incendiorum uenue-natorum execrationem, quibus miseranda illa contingunt: deinde totus ad tollere in laudem puri et sinceri amoris, quo animae dotatae disciplinis et uirtute formosae copulantur intellectui per philosophiam et non solum mortem fugiunt, uerum etiam uita beatissima perfruuntur".

²⁸ *De ordine* 2.4 ; 108: "Quid sordidius, quid inanius, dedecoris et turpitudinis plenus meretricibus leonibus ceterisque hoc genus pestibus dici potest? Aufer meretrices de rebus humanis, turbaueris omnia libidinibus; constitue matronarum loco, labe ac dedecore dehonestaueris. Sic igitur hoc genus hominum per suos mores impurissimum uita, per ordinis leges condicione uillissimum".

anti-Manichaeen exposition on the old-testament stories of the patriarchs and their relationship with women.²⁹ Bonner thought that *libido* and *concupiscentia* when used in a sexual connotation seem mutual interchangeable, but when any other than sexual lust is meant, *libido* would have been preferable.³⁰ Whether or not *concupiscentia* may also be regularly used as to indicate any other lust than sexual, remains the question to be solved. Here it seems indeed that *libido* as such is often sexual.

Reaching the happy life

We already made clear that *cupiditas* and *libido* form obstacles in man's longing for the happy life. In his early works, Augustine describes how the soul must climb up from the inferior changeable things to the unchangeable Truth. Though divine providence is affirmed as favouring this steady progression, Augustine admits that the time and peace of a leisured otium are required for the project of this philosophical contemplation. But can the soul really find its way back to God through reasoning or mystical contemplation? In *De libero arbitrio* it is reaffirmed that understanding (*intelligentia*) is man's highest good³¹, but the crucial turning point is the affirmation that the hallmark of the wise man is good will: *bona uoluntas*³². Th. Scott rightly points out that Augustine realizes that "what demands of us is not understanding, but love and obedience and while ignorance may separate us from God, it is sinful lust for temporal things that stands as the real barrier. While it is, of course, true that we should strive to develop reason and to have it rule over our passions, it is not by any special development of reason that we return to God. It is the will and the will alone that chooses either to love what is eternal or to love what is temporal, and the turning of the soul to God is a matter of fundamental choice for every person, not the ultimate attainment of a few select souls"³³.

In *De libero arbitrio* (book 1, 387) Augustine makes the pursuit of the good life somehow coincide with the happy life. This life

²⁹ *Contra Faustum* 22; CSEL 25,1,591ss.

³⁰ "when used to describe sexual desire (...) the two words are virtually interchangeable, but when any other lust is mentioned, *libido* is the one used, very occasionally supplemented by *cupiditas*" G. BONNER, *o.c.*, p. 304.

³¹ *De libero arbitrio* 1.1.3; CC 29,211, R.J. O'CONNELL, *De libero arbitrio I. Stoicism Revisited*, in: *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970) 49-68, p. 54.

³² *De libero arbitrio* 1.1132ss. 217ss.; R. J. O'CONNELL, *o.c.*, p. 55.

³³ Th. K. SCOTT, *Augustine. His Thought in Context*, New York, 1995, p.121-122.

consists in the joy provided by the possession of a good will. "Any man with the will to lead a good and upright life, provided he prefers this will to all fleeting goods, will acquire so great possession with such great ease", says Augustine, "that to have what he wills is the same thing as to will it".³⁴ Why is it then, that a person attains happiness by means of his free will, while the majority of people are unhappy and all want to be happy? Augustine answers that those who are happy, are not happy because they want to live a happy life (even bad men desire this) but because they live an upright life. "(...) unhappy men do not attain what they want, namely the happy life, for they do not also will what must be its companion, and without which no one can deserve to attain it, namely an upright life (...) Hence, when we say that men are unhappy by their own choice, we are not saying they want to be unhappy but that their will is such that unhappiness results of necessity and even against their will"³⁵. Obviously, Augustine jumped to conclusions as he changed his topic from the good will to the attainment of the happy life ("with such great ease"). At least at this point, he demonstrates no awareness of the fact that people can be entangled in *cupiditas*; the fact that people may be deceived by what they think is the happy life, though mentioned, is not developed at this point. Furthermore, Augustine does not break through to the deeper level, namely to the time before the fall: neither does he speak of the fall of the soul, nor of the fall of Adam and Eve. As we will see, Augustine will gradually give more attention to these considerations in elaborating the theme of *concupiscentia*.

³⁴ *De libero arbitrio* 1.13.29; CC 29,231: "Ex quo conficitur ut, quisquis recte honesteque uult uiuere, si id se uelle prae fugacibus bonis uelit, adsequatur tantam rem tanta facilitate, ut nihil aliud ei quam ipsum uelle sit habere quod uoluit" – And the core of the paragraph: "atqui hoc ipsum gaudium quod huius boni adpetitione gignitur, cum tranquille et quiete atque constanter erigit animum, beata uita dicitur; nisi tu putas aliud esse beate uiuere quam ueris bonis certisque gaudere". *The free Choice of the Will*, translated by R. P. Russell, O.S.A. (The Fathers of the Church. A new Translation, vol. 59), Washington, 1967, p. 63-241, p. 100.

³⁵ *De libero arbitrio* 1.14.30; CC 29,231s.: "Itaque cum dicimus uoluntate homines esse miseros, non ideo dicimus quod esse miseri uelint, sed quod in ea uoluntate sunt, quam etiam his inuitis miseria sequatur necesse est". *The free Choice of the Will*, translated by R. P. Russell, O.S.A. (The Fathers of the Church. A new Translation, vol. 59) Washington, 1967, p. 63-241, p. 101.

Concupiscentia in the early antimanichaean writings (388-391)

In 387/388 Augustine starts a direct anti-Manichaean campaign. After his mother died in Ostia, Augustine moves from Rome back to Thagaste where he is confronted with his Manichaean past. At that time the authorities in Carthage had just organised a mopping-up operation against the heretical Manichees.³⁶ By Augustine's "direct" antimanichaean campaign we mean that he no longer only intentionally writes against the Manichees (as he did in *De libero arbitrio* I), but that he starts manifestly writing against their beliefs even mentioning the Manichees in the title of his works.³⁷ Still before his ordination to priesthood in 391 Augustine writes *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et Manichaeorum* (387/388), *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (388/389) and *De uera religione* (390/391).³⁸ In these writings Augustine uses the Christian-technical term *concupiscentia*, a word he previously had not used in his philosophical writings. Is the sudden appearance of *concupiscentia* in these antimanichaean writings mere coincidence? Or, would it be possible to discover a link between Augustine's antimanichaean campaign and his making use of the concept *concupiscentia*?

Concupiscentia in De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et manichaeorum

Let us first take a look at *concupiscentia* in Augustine's work on the Catholic and the Manichaean ways of life. "Begun at Rome in 387 *De moribus ecclesiae* is Augustine's first response undertaken directly against the Manichees, though it was completed after *De Genesi adversus Manicheos*, at Thagaste in 389".³⁹ The aim of *De*

³⁶ P. BROWN, *Augustine of Hippo. A biography* (A new edition with an Epilogue), Berkeley / Los Angeles, 2000 (first published: 1967), p. 127.

³⁷ *De libero arbitrio* I was intended to the Manichaean ideas on evil, though the Manichees are not explicitly mentioned in this book. Cf. *Retractationes* 1.9; CC 57,23ss.

³⁸ Paulinus spoke of Augustine having written an anti-manichaean Pentateuch before his ordination to priesthood: (1) *De libero arbitrio*; (2) *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*; (3) *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*; (4) *De Moribus Manichaeorum*; (5) *De uera religione*. Ph. SCHAFF (ed.), *The writings against the Manichaeans and against the Donatists* (A select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Series I, Vol. 4), Grand Rapids, 1996 (repr. 1887), p. 39. Regarding *De libero arbitrio* R.J. Teske however writes: "the second two books were written at Hippo after his ordination to priesthood in 391, probably closer to 395, when he sent a copy of the finished work to Paulinus of Nola (ep. 31.7)". R.J. TESKE, *Libero arbitrio, De*, in: A.D. FITZGERALD (ed.), *o.c.*, p. 494-495, p. 494.

³⁹ K. COYLE, *Moribus ecclesiae Catholicae et de moribus Manicheorum, De*, in: A. D. FITZGERALD (ed.), *o.c.*, p. 571.

moribus is twofold: (1) to defend the Old Testament against the Manichees and (2) to demonstrate the inferiority of the Manichean asceticism in contrast to the purity of the Catholic morals.⁴⁰

One of the very first times Augustine uses the substantive *concupiscentia* he does so – and this is surprising – in line with the positive notion of the verb *concupiscere*. In *De moribus* 1.17.32 Augustine quotes from the Old Testament book of Wisdom 6:12-20:

“Wisdom is glorious, and never fadeth away, and is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them that seek her. She preventeth them that coveth her (*praeoccupat qui se concupiscunt*), so that she first showeth herself unto them. He that awaketh early to seek her shall not labor; for he shall find her sitting at his door. To think, therefore, upon her is perfect understanding, and he that watcheth for her shall quickly be secure. For she goeth about seeking such as are worthy of her, and she showeth herself to them cheerfully in the ways and meeteth them with al providence. For the beginning of her is the most true desire of discipline (*disciplinae concupiscentia*). And the care of discipline is love, and love is the keeping of her laws, and the keeping of her laws is the firm foundation of incorruption; and incorruption bringeth near unto God. Therefore the desire of Wisdom (*concupiscentia sapientiae*) bringeth to a kingdom”⁴¹

In this quote the verb *concupiscere* as well as the substantive *concupiscentia* is used. Both are related to the search for wisdom. The book of Wisdom was a favourite with Augustine “doubtless on account of its decided Platonic quality”.⁴² Indeed, Augustine starts *De moribus* in a rather philosophical vein: he revisits the themes of the

⁴⁰ *De Moribus* 1.1.1-1.2.3; CSEL 90,3ss. Cf. K. COYLE, *o.c.*, p. 571. and ID., *Augustine's De moribus Ecclesiae catholicae. A study of the Work, its Composition and its sources*, Fribourg, 1978, p.76-79.

⁴¹ *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et Manichaeorum* 1.17.32; CC 90,36s.: “(...) Clara est (...) et quae nunquam marcescat sapientia, et facile uidetur ab iis qui diligunt illam, et inuenitur ab iis qui quaerunt illam: praeoccupat qui se concupiscunt, ut illis se ostendat. Qui uigilauerit ad illam, non laborabit: assidentem enim illam inueniet foribus suis. Cogitare enim de illa, sensus est consummatus; et qui uigilauerit propter illam, cito erit securus: quia dignos seipsa circuit quaerens, et in uiis ostendit se illis hilariter, et omni prouidentia occurrit illis. Initium enim illius uerissimum disciplinae concupiscentia est. Cura ergo disciplinae dilectio est; et dilectio custoditio legum illius est: custoditio autem legum, confirmatio incorruptionis est; incorruptio autem facit proximum Deo. Concupiscentia itaque sapientiae deducit ad regnum”. *The Catholic and Manichaean ways of life. Translated by D.A. Gallagher, Ph.D. and I.J. Gallagher, Ph.D.* (The Fathers of the Church, vol. 56), Washington, 1966, p. 27-28.

⁴² Ph. SCHAFF (ed.), *The writings against the Manichaeans and against the Donatists* (A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Series I, Vol. 4), Grand Rapids, 1996 (repr. 1887), p. 49 n. 3.

happy life and the search for wisdom. At the same time, he demonstrates the harmony of the Old and the New Testament. In Augustine's view, Wisdom 6:12-20 forms a parallel to Matthew 7:7 ("Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you") and to Matthew 10:26 ("There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed"). Defending the Old Testament in general, Augustine argues that the Manichees ought not to pervert the figurative sense of the Old Testament for the purpose of deceiving their followers. Finally, the content of Wisdom 6:12-20 also directly applies to Augustine's critique on the Manichees. They had to abjure their "silly legends" and "unmeaning material imaginations". First of all, they should *desire* to understand divine things.⁴³ It is remarkable that the positive notion of *concupiscentia* we come across here in the following years seems to move to the background of Augustine's thought: Wisdom 6:20 containing the expression *concupiscentia sapientiae* reoccurs no earlier than in the Pelagian Controversy.⁴⁴

In *De moribus* Augustine also applies the concept of *concupiscentia* in its specific meaning of excessive appetite for food. The concept is used to criticize the Manichaean eating habits. The Manichees referred to the apostle Paul as their authority in order to defend their prescripts regarding food: "Bonum est fratres, non manducare carnem, neque bibere uinum"⁴⁵ (Romans 14:21). The letters of Paul were at the centre of the Manichaean preaching. In *De moribus* Augustine starts verbal dispute on how to read Paul. He criticizes the Manichees for only quoting the first words of Romans 14:21 without adding what follows "neque in quo frater tuus offenditur, aut scandalizatur, aut infirmatur"⁴⁶. This important addition, says Augustine, shows the intention of the apostle in giving the admonition. Augustine subsequently places Romans 14:21 in its historical context. At the time of Paul, meat and wine were offered to

⁴³ *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et Manichaeorum* 1.17.30-32; CC 90,34ss.

⁴⁴ "Sap. 6:20: Concupiscentia sapientiae perducit ad regnum. Après une citation isolée à l'intérieur du texte Sap. 6,12 à 20 transmis par le *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* I, 17 (32), écrit en 387-388 à Rome, le verset Sap. 6, 20 n'appartient qu'à la controverse antipélagienne". A.-M. LA BONNARDIERE, *Biblia Augustiniana. A.T. Le livre de la Sagesse* (Études augustiniennes), Paris, 1970, p. 103. La Bonnardière refers to *De civitate dei* 14,7; CC 48,421ss. (Sap. 6:20 together with Phil. 1:23 and Psalm 118:20); *En. in Ps.* 118, s. 8,3; CC 40,1687 (Sap. 6:20 together with Ps. 118:20); *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 2.10.23 and 2.30.52; CSEL 42,275s.308s.

⁴⁵ *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et Manichaeorum* 2.14.31; CSEL 90,114.

⁴⁶ *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et Manichaeorum* 2.14.31; 115. (This verse is also quoted in: 1.33.71; 76.

the gods of the Gentiles. Therefore, the 'weaker' had to prevent themselves from the risk of taking part in idolatry. The 'stronger', says Augustine, did realise that "nothing is unclean except from an evil conscience". Nevertheless, they too felt it their duty to abstain from this food. They did so in order not to give scandal to the weaker ones.⁴⁷ For Augustine, the Manichaean prohibition to eat flesh was quite a different case: it was based on idle fictions, such as the fact that the flesh would be made from pollution itself. Moreover, the teachings of the Manichees did not seem to be consistent: someone eating a piece of flesh, not out of concupiscence, but for health's sake could not remain under the elect, whereas a glutton giving in to excessive appetite eating no animal matter would be permitted to remain.⁴⁸ According to Augustine, the true defilement is not in eating flesh as such, but in the desire itself: one should not indulge in concupiscentia in regard to eating. Augustine regards this as an application of the general idea expressed by Paul in Romans 13:14: "And as for the flesh, take no thoughts for its lusts" ("et ne carnis curam ne feceritis in concupiscentiis")⁴⁹.

The lives of the catholic ascetics were an excellent application of Paul's prescription. In *De moribus* 1.31.67 Augustine describes for example the monastic life in the desert. Regarding the monks' order of the day, he writes: "They then take something to eat, allowing themselves only enough to maintain their health and bodily strength, thus preventing the appetite (*concupiscentia*) from satisfying itself, even on such poor and lowly fare as is provided. They abstain, not only from meat and wine in order that their bodily desires (*libidines*) may be kept under control, but also from those foods considered by some to be purer since they are more stimulating to the palate and stomach – a ridiculous and disgraceful subterfuge by which such individuals seek to excuse their shameful desire for certain exquisite

⁴⁷ *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et Manichaeorum* 2.14.31; 115.

⁴⁸ *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et Manichaeorum* 2.13.28-30; 112ss. and 2.17.51; 133s. See also 2.15.36-37; 121s. on the reason why the Manichees prohibit the use of flesh. – Augustine also explains the difference between Catholic and Manichaean abstinence in *Contra Faustum* 30.5; CSEL 25/1,752ss. The main difference is again situated in the motives of abstinence. Catholics do so "in order to subdue the body, that the soul may be more humbled in prayer". Manichees do so because they considered animal food as unclean and because abstinence was a sign of the electi as opposed to the auditors. J.K. COYLE, *Augustine's "De moribus ecclesiae catholicae". A study of the Work, its Composition and its Sources* (Paradosis, 25), Fribourg, 1978, p. 414-415 and *Contra Faustum* 30.5.

⁴⁹ *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et Manichaeorum* 2.14.31; CSEL 90,114s.

foods apart from meat".⁵⁰ In passing Augustine criticizes those people who reject certain food as unclean, but who do not refrain from eating other, more appetitive and more expensive, food. Besides some Christians, Augustine probably has the Manichees in mind.⁵¹ Indeed, the central aim is to show the general superiority of Christian asceticism over Manichaean asceticism. A bit further on he says: "All of their efforts are (...) directed, not to rejecting certain kinds of food as corrupt, but to overcoming concupiscence (*concupiscentia*) and preserving brotherly love".⁵² In this context, Augustine mobilizes Bible verses (especially Pauline verses) against the Manichaean food taboos: "for the clean all things are clean" (Titus 1:15), "what goes into the mouth does not defile a man, but that which comes out of the mouth, that defiles a man" (Matthew 15:11), "food for the belly and the belly for food, but God will destroy both it and them" (1 Corinthians 6:13), "for neither shall we suffer any loss if we do not eat, nor if we do eat shall we have any advantage" (1 Corinthians 8:8) and finally: "It is good, brethren, not to eat meat and not to drink wine, nor to do anything by which thy brother is offended" (Romans 14:21).⁵³ It is clear that the concept of *concupiscentia* and the Pauline verses are subject of exegesis whereby both the Manichees and Augustine were trying to put Paul on their side.

⁵⁰ *De moribus ecclesiae Catholicae* 1.31.67; "corpus deinde reficitur, quantum saluti et salubritati satis est, coercente unoquoque concupiscentiam, ne se profundat uel in ea ipsa quae praesto sunt parca et uelissima. Ita non solum a carnibus et uino abstinent pro sufficientia domandarum libidinum, sed ab iis etiam quae tanto concitatus uentris et gutturi prouocant appetitum, quanto quasi mundiora nonnullis uidentur: quo nomine solet turpe desiderium exquisitorum ciborum, quod a carnibus alienum est, ridicule turpiterque defendi". *The Catholic and Manichaean ways of life. Translated by D.A. Gallagher, Ph.D. and I.J. Gallagher, Ph.D.* (The Fathers of the Church, vol. 56), Washington, 1966, p. 52.

⁵¹ *Ooit een land van kloosters. Teksten van Augustinus over het kloosterleven. Inleiding en vertaling door Prof. Em. T.J. van Bavel o.s.a., Heverlee-Leuven, 1999, p. 46 n. 8.*

⁵² *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et Manichaeorum* 1.33.71; CSEL 90,76: «Itaque non reiciendis generibus ciborum quasi pollutis, sed concupiscentiae perdomandae, et dilectioni fratrum retinendae inuigilat omnis industria». *The Catholic and Manichaean ways of life. Translated by D.A. Gallagher, Ph.D. and I.J. Gallagher, Ph.D.* (The Fathers of the Church, vol. 56), Washington, 1966, p. 54.

⁵³ See *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 1.33.71; 76: "Omnia munda mundis" (Tit. 1:15 et "Non quod intrat in os uerstrum uos coinquinat, sed quod exit" (Matt. 15:11); "Esca uentri, et uenter escis, Deus autem et hunc et illas destruet" (1 Cor. 6:13) et alibi: "Neque si manducauerimus, abundabimus; neque si non manducauerimus, egebimus" (1 Cor. 8:8); et ilud prae prae ceteris: "Bonum est, fratres, non manducare carnes, neque bibere uinum, neque in quo frater tuus offenditur" (Rom. 14:21). *The Catholic and Manichaean ways of life. Translated by D.A. Gallagher, Ph.D. and I.J. Gallagher, Ph.D.* (The Fathers of the Church, vol. 56), Washington, 1966, p. 54-55.

Concupiscentia in De Genesi contra Manichaeos

While still working at *De moribus* Augustine wrote an exposition on Genesis against the Manichees in order to counter their version of creation which was "seducing the faithful".⁵⁴ Augustine turns to Genesis because he would like to find an answer to the Manichaean quest where evil comes from. Paying attention to the theme of *concupiscentia*, we will see that Augustine offers a highly figurative⁵⁵ explanation of the Genesis story, in which he also introduces neo-platonic interpretation schemes.

Have power over the beasts

The first hit of *concupiscentia* in *De Genesi* is found in Augustine's allegorical explanation of God's commandment to have power over the fishes in the sea, the birds of heaven and all reptiles that creep upon the earth (Genesis 1:28). Augustine writes:

"... we can (...) understand this verse spiritually in the sense that we should hold in subjection all the affections and emotions of the soul (*affectiones et motus animi*), which are like those animals, and have mastery over them by temperance and modesty (*per temperantiam et modestiam*). For if we do not rule these emotions, they burst forth and turn into the foulest habits (*foedissimae consuetudines*), carrying us off with all sorts of destructive pleasures (*diversae perniciosaeque delectationes*) and making us like every kind of beast. But when we rule them and hold them in subjection, they become completely tame and live in harmony with us. For the emotions of our mind are part of our nature. They are even nourished along with us by knowledge of the finest rational and moral principles of eternal life, as if by the grain and the fruit-trees and the green plants. Man's life is happy and peaceful (*beata atque tranquilla*) when all his emotions are in accord with reason and the truth. Then they are called joys and holy, chaste and fair loves (*gaudia, et amores sancti, et casti et boni*). But if they are not in accord [with reason] and are managed with negligence, they tear the mind apart and dissipate it, making life most miserable (*vita miserrima*). Then they are called perturbations and lusts and evil desires (*perturbationes, et libidines, et concupiscentiae malae*). We have been commanded to crucify them in ourselves with all the energy we can until death is swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:54). For the Apostle says, "Those who belong to Jesus Christ have crucified their flesh with its perturbations

⁵⁴ K. COYLE, *Genesi adversus Manichaeos, De*, in: A.D. FITZGERALD (ed.), *o.c.*, p. 378-379, p. 378.

⁵⁵ *On Genesis. Two books on Genesis against the Manichees and On the literal interpretation of Genesis: an unfinished book. Translated by R.J. Teske, s.j.* (The Fathers of the Church. A new Translation, 84), Washington, 1991, p. 22-23 (introduction) (Cf. *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 1.1.1; CSEL 91,67). At the beginning of book II Augustine notes: "This whole narrative unfolds, not clearly, but in figures, so that it might exercise the minds of those seeking the truth and call them from carnal labors to spiritual labors". *On Genesis*, p. 91.

and desires" ("Qui autem Jesu Christi sunt, carnem suam crucifixerunt cum perturbationibus et concupiscentiis") (Gal. 5:24).⁵⁶

In this commentary we encounter material and vocabulary which reminds us of Augustine's philosophical writings. In order to attain a happy and peaceful life, man has to gain control over the emotions by temperance and modesty. Emotions of the soul that are in harmony with reason are called *gaudia et amores sancti, et casti et boni*. *Concupiscentiae malae*, on the contrary, run parallel with *perturbationes* and *libidines*. These are the emotions or movements of the soul that cause a most miserable life because they are not in harmony with reason. Augustine introduces the notion of *concupiscentia* by documenting his insights with two Pauline texts, 1 Corinthians 15:54 and Galatians 5:24. The apostle Paul comments the Old Testament book on Genesis as an authority. This is important since the Manichees were using Paul in order to prove the supposed opposition between the Old and the New Testament.⁵⁷ Moreover, the scriptural

⁵⁶ *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 1.20.31; 98s.: "recte tamen intelligitur etiam spiritualiter, ut omnes affectiones et motus animi, quos habemus istis animalibus similes, subditos haberemus, et eorum dominaremur per temperantiam et modestiam. Cum enim non reguntur isti motus, erumpunt et pergunt in foedissimas consuetudines, et per diuersas perniciosasque delectationes nos rapiunt, et faciunt similes omni generi bestiarum. Cum autem reguntur et subiiciuntur, omnino mansuescunt et nobiscum concorditer uiuunt. Non enim a nobis alieni sunt motus animi nostri. Pascuntur etiam nobiscum cognitione rationum et morum optimorum, et uitae aeternae, tanquam herbis seminalibus et lignis fructiferis et herbis uiridibus. Et haec est hominis vita beata atque tranquilla, cum omnes motus ejus rationi veritatique consentiunt; et uocantur gaudia, et amores sancti, et casti et boni. Si autem non consentiunt, nihilominus dum negligenter geruntur, conscindunt et dissipant animum, et faciunt uitam miserrimam; et uacantur perturbationes, et libidines, et concupiscentiae malae. De quibus iam nobis praecipitur, ut eas cum quanto possumus labore crucifigamus in nobis, donec absorbeatur mors in uictoriam (1 Cor. 15:54). Dicit enim Apostolus: Qui autem Iesu Christi sunt, carnem suam crucifixerunt cum perturbationibus et concupiscentiis (Gal. 5:24)". *On Genesis. Two books on Genesis against the Manichees and On the literal interpretation of Genesis: an unfinished book. Translated by R.J. Teske, s.j.* (The Fathers of the Church. A new Translation, 84), Washington, 1991, p. 78-79.

⁵⁷ Paul's letters were favourite literature among (African) Manichees. The Manichees read Paul as if he was condemning the Law (i.e. the Old Testament). P. ALFARIC, *Les Écritures manichéenne*. Vol. 2. *Étude analytique*, Paris, 1918-1919, p. 164. Cf. e.g. Augustine's remark in Ex. Prop. Rm. 13. Augustine from his side, discovered that the divergences between Paul and the Old Testament were rather apparent than real. In *Confessiones* 7.21.27 he writes: "With avid intensity I seized the sacred writings of your Spirit and especially the apostle Paul. Where at one time I used to think he contradicted himself and the text of his words disagreed with the testimonies of the law and the prophets, the problems simply vanished". *Confessiones. Translated with*

quotes introduce *concupiscentia* as a variant of *perturbationes* and *libidines*. Finally, those were considered to be Christians who are expected to crucify their flesh with its perturbations and desires.

A bit further on in *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* Augustine returns to God's commandment to have power over the beasts. He does so in a prophetic commentary on the passage where he draws a comparison between the sixth day of creation and the coming of Christ as a stage in human history. He says:

"On that day man was placed over the cattle, and the serpents and the birds of heaven, just as in this age, Christ rules souls obedient to him who have come to his Church in part from the Gentiles and in part from the Jewish people. Thus, whether given over to carnal desire (*carnalis concupiscentia*), like the cattle, or blinded by dark curiosity (*tenebrosa curiositas*), like the serpents, or puffed up with pride (*superbia*), like the birds, men might be tamed by him and grow gentle"⁵⁸.

In this allegorical interpretation of man's superiority over the cattle, the serpents and the birds, it is Christ who masters those who are given over to carnal desire, curiosity and pride. A. Labhard remarks that Augustine's enumeration of the beasts (*pecora / serpentes / uolatilia coeli* or *aues*) does not totally correspond to the enumeration given in Genesis 1:26 (*pisces maris / uolatilia coeli / omnes pecora et ferae / [omnis terra] / omnia reptilia, quae super terram repunt*) nor the enumeration offered in Genesis 1:28 (*pisces maris / uolatilia coeli / reptantia omnia quae repunt super terram*). The fishes have disappeared in Augustine's interpretation. Moreover the order in which Augustine presents the beasts ("*pecora / serpentes / uolatilia coeli* or *aues*") does not correspond to any order presented in

an introduction and notes by Henry Chadwick, Oxford, 1991, p. 130. The predominance of Paul from *De Moribus ecclesiae catholicae* I onwards and the link with Manichaeism is also noted by J.K. COYLE, *Augustine's "De moribus ecclesiae catholicae"*. A Study of the Work, its Composition and its Sources (Paradosis, 25), Fribourg, 1978, p. 187-188.

⁵⁸ *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 1. 23.40; CSEL 91,109: "Et praepositur homo in illo die pecoribus et serpentibus et uolatilibus coeli, sicut in ista aetate Christus regit animas obtemperantes sibi, quae ad Ecclesiam eius, partim de Gentibus, partim de populo Iudaeorum uenerunt; ut ab eo domarentur atque mansuescerent homines, uel carnali concupiscentiae dediti sicut pecora, uel tenebrosa curiositate obscuritati quasi serpentes, uel elati superbia quasi aues". *On Genesis. Two books on Genesis against the Manichees and On the literal interpretation of Genesis: an unfinished book. Translated by R.J. Teske, s.j.* (The Fathers of the Church. A new Translation, 84), Washington, 1991, p. 87.

the Genesis-text.⁵⁹ Therefore it is likely that Augustine had an already existing interpretation scheme in mind and that he therefore dropped the “fishes” in order to be able to present the triad of carnal desire, curiosity and pride. We will soon come across further evidences proving that this is indeed the case (cf. *infra*, *The Fall of Adam and Eve* and *concupiscentia* in *De vera religione*).

The Fall of Adam and Eve

Augustine’s commentary on the power over the beasts made clear that ‘evil desires’ must be suppressed or at least brought in harmony with reason in order to attain the happy life. What then does Augustine write on concupiscence in regard to the fall (Genesis 3:1-7) when Adam and Eve are dismissed from the happy life?

Augustine indicates Adam and Eve’s sin as *superbia*. Augustine explains that the serpent persuades Adam and Eve to sin *through pride*. The serpent promises that by eating from the fruit of the tree in the middle of paradise they would not die but would be like gods knowing good and evil. Augustine clarifies that Adam and Eve were persuaded “to love to excess their own power”. As is the custom with pride Adam pushes the fault upon Eve and the woman subsequently passes the guilt upon the serpent. Augustine refers to Ecclesiastes 10:15 for pride as “the beginning of every sin”. Pride seems to be a violation of the right order because man did not receive the capacity of being happy on the basis of his own power without God ruling. Augustine’s detailed analysis of Genesis 3:1-7 moreover learns that sinning is also related to a violation of the balance of power between virile reason and the soul’s appetitive part.

Augustine’s analysis of Genesis 3:1-7 is in fact an actualisation of the biblical account. Augustine understands Adam in an allegorical way as representing virile reason (*uirilis ratio*) while Eve represents the lower part of the soul (*inferior animae pars*). In Augustine’s view the woman was created to provide an illustration of the fact that virile reason should hold subject the soul’s appetite part by means of which we control the members of our bodies. The ideal ‘spiritual union’ between man and woman implies that the “the flesh does not lust against the spirit” (Galatians 5:17) but is subjected to the spirit, that is,

⁵⁹ A. LABHARDT, *Curiositas. Notes sur l’histoire d’un mot*, in: *Museum Helveticum* 17 (1960) 206-224, p.222-223, but he compares Augustine’s enumeration in 1.23.40 only with Gen. 1:26. Augustine quotes Genesis 1:26 in *De Genesi contra Manicheos* 1.17.27; 94s. and Genesis 1:28 in *De Genesi contra Manicheos* 1.20.31; 98s.

so that carnal desire (*concupiscentia carnalis*) is not opposed to reason, but rather ceased, by obeying to be carnal". The right order, which may not be violated seems to be that of 1 Corinthians 11:3: "For Christ [i.e. the wisdom of God] is the head of man and the man is the head of woman".

What then happens in sinning? Using the words *cupiditas* and *libido* Augustine offers the following analysis of the fall:

"Even now nothing else happens in each of us when one falls into sin than occurred then in these three: the serpent, the woman and the man. For first the suggestion is made, whether by thought or by the senses of the body, by seeing or touching or hearing or tasting or smelling. When this suggestion has been made, if our desire (*cupiditas*) is not aroused toward sinning, the cunning of the serpent will be excluded. If, however, it is aroused, it will be as though the woman were already persuaded. At times reason checks and suppresses in a virile way even desire (*cupiditas*) that has been aroused. When this happens, we do not fall into sin, but we are crowned for our modest struggle. But if reason consents and decides that what desire (*libido*) has stirred up should be carried out, man is expelled from the whole happy life as if from paradise"⁶⁰.

Augustine distinguishes three stages in committing a sin: (1) the suggestion, (2) the arousal of our desire and (3) the consent of reason. When we commit a sin our reason is brought to consent by the arousal of the soul's appetitive part. It is however possible not to respond the suggestion that is made, or even, in case the desire which might be aroused, to suppress it by reason. What happens in Adam and Eve

⁶⁰ *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 2.14.21; CSEL 91, 142s.: "Etiam nunc in unoquoque nostrum nihil aliud agitur, cum ad peccatum quisque delabitur, quam tunc actum est in illis tribus, serpente, muliere, et uiro. Nam primo fit suggestio siue per cogitationem, siue per sensus corporis, uel uidendo, uel tangendo, uel audiendo, uel gustando, uel olfaciendo: quae suggestio cum facta fuerit, si cupiditas nostra non mouebitur ad peccandum, excludetur serpentis astutia; si autem mota fuerit, quasi mulieri iam persuasum erit. Sed aliquando ratio uiriliter etiam commotam cupiditatem refrenat atque compescit. Quod cum fit, non labimur in peccatum, sed cum aliquanta luctatione coronamur. Si autem ratio consentiat, et quod libido commouerit, faciendum esse decernat, ab omni uita beata tanquam de paradiso expellitur homo". *On Genesis. Two books on Genesis against the Manichees and On the literal interpretation of Genesis: an unfinished book.* Translated by R.J. Teske, s.j. (The Fathers of the Church. A new Translation, 84), Washington, 1991, p. 117. – The stages of suggestion, pleasure and consent are also mentioned in *De sermone Domini in monte* 1.12.34–35; CC 35, 36ss. They are "three distinct degrees of the same sin, accordingly as it is in the heart, in a deed, or in a habit. These three types degrees of sin are, as it were, three types of death". *Saint Augustine, Commentary on the Lord's sermon of the Mount.* Translated by D.J. Kavagh (Fathers of the Church. A new translation, 11), Washington, 1977³, p. 53–55.

indeed exemplifies what happens in each one of us. Hence, Augustine speaks of *our* being dismissed from the happy life when we sin.⁶¹

To what extent has the sin of Adam and Eve an influence on our present situation? Augustine makes clear that *mortalitas* is the punishment of sin. Adam and Eve were dismissed from paradise in a mortal body.⁶² And with them humanity lost its previous immortality. Does Augustine speak of any other consequence of Adam and Eve's sin? Does he speak of concupiscence, or even of inherited concupiscence? In order to answer this question we need to take a look at the punishments of the serpent, Eve and Adam.

The punishment of the serpent lies in the fact that it has in its power those who despise God's commandments. In Genesis 3:14 God punishes the serpent: "You will creep upon your chest and belly and you will eat the earth all the days of your life". In Augustine's allegorical explanation of this verse the term "chest" signifies pride (*superbia*); the term "belly" refers to "carnal desire" (*carnale desiderium*) and "eating the earth" symbolises the "third kind of temptation", namely "curiosity" (*curiositas*). According to Augustine "eating the earth" means "penetrating things deep and dark, but nonetheless temporal and earthly". In other words: the serpent represents the three temptations: pride, carnal desire and curiosity.⁶³ The fact that this triad here reoccurs strengthens the idea that while explaining man's power over the beasts (*De Genesi contra manichaeos* 1.23.40; 91,109) Augustine had indeed an already existing interpretation scheme in mind.

As a consequence of the sin, the woman will bear children in pain. This punishment refers to the condition of mortality, but also to the difficulties experienced by the 'hidden woman' to bear offspring: "*there is no restraint from carnal desire (uoluntas carnalis) which does not have pain in the beginning, until habit has been bent toward*

⁶¹ *On Genesis. Two books against the Manichees and On the literal interpretation of Genesis: an unfinished book. Translated by R.J. Teske, s.j.* (The Fathers of the Church. A new Translation, 84), Washington, 1991, p. 31 (introduction) (cf. *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 2.14.21; CSEL 91,21s. quoted in note 60: *unoquoque nostrum – cupiditas nostra – labimur – coronamur*).

⁶² God had threatened them with death when he gave the commandment not to eat from the fruit of the tree in the middle of paradise. After the fall Adam and Eve were dressed in garments of skin. According to Augustine these garments signify the mortality of this life because they are made from death animals. J. PEPIN, *Saint Augustin et le symbolisme néoplatonicien de la vêtue*, in: *Augustinus Magister. Vol. 1: Communications* (Congrès International Augustinien, Paris, 21-24 septembre 1954) (Études augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 1), Paris, 1954, p. 293-306.

⁶³ *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 2.17.26 – 2.18.27; CSEL 91,148s.

the good deed. In order that this habit might be born, there was a painful struggle with bad habit".⁶⁴ Likewise the punishment of the man is explained in a way beyond the literal of merely labouring on earth and dealing with the necessities of life. The punishment rather refers to the fact that anyone born in this life has difficulty in discovering the truth because of the corruptible body: "the body which is corrupted weighs down the soul, and earthly habitation presses down the mind that thinks many thoughts" (Wisdom 9:15). In other words: the mortal body seems to imply consequences for the soul, but Augustine does not go so far as to say that we inherit sin (or any form of concupiscence), or that our situation has turned to the worst because of Adam and Eve's sin.

The analysis of *concupiscentia* in *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* has provided us the following insights: (1) Augustine does not seem to borrow any notion of *concupiscentia* from the first three books of Genesis. He uses a variety of words indicating evil desires of temptations: *cupiditas*, *libido*, *desiderium carnale*, *superbia*, *curiositas*... Using the biblical term *concupiscentia* Augustine refers twice to Paul, namely to Galatians 5:17 and Galatians 5:24 (2) In *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* Augustine works with a triad of temptations consisting of *carnalis concupiscentia*, *curiositas* and *superbia*. Augustine discovers this triad in the beasts of Genesis 1:26 and Genesis 1:28 and in the punishment of the serpent (Genesis 3:14). (3) It seems as if Augustine balances between on the one hand the idea that we are able to freely resist sin and on the other hand the admission that Adam and Eve's sin also compromises our capability to discover truth. Augustine does not go so far as to pretend that we inherit sin, nor does he say that our situation has turned towards the worst by Adam and Eve's sin. Augustine rather describes our situation as similar to that of Adam and Eve. (4) It is not sure whether Augustine could convince his Manichean adversaries. Questions such as why the serpent was able to convince Adam and Eve still remain till the end of the book. To the modern reader it is clear that Augustine's exposition on Genesis

⁶⁴ *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 2.19.29; 150s.: "... quod nulla abstinencia fit a uoluntate carnali, quae non habeat in exordio dolorem, donec in meliorem partem consuetudo flectatur. Quod cum prouenerit, quasi natus est filius, id est ad bonum opus paratus est affectus per consuetudinem bonam. Quae consuetudo ut nasceretur, cum dolore reluctatum est consuetudini malae". *On Genesis. Two books on Genesis against the Manichees and On the literal interpretation of Genesis: an unfinished book. Translated by R.J. Teske, s.j.* (The Fathers of the Church. A new Translation, 84), Washington, 1991, p. 124.

explains *that* humans fell into sin (according to Augustine by free will) but that he does *not* explain *why* humans would ever freely choose to sin if they were created good.⁶⁵ And this is exactly part of the Manichaean quest. A new element I would like to add: (5) If Augustine's argumentation could not sufficiently convince the Manichees he could however score by depicting the Manichaean error in a way similar to his description of the serpent of the Genesis story, using the triad of pride, carnal desire and curiosity:

"That error creeps in its chest and belly and eats the earth. For it deceives none but the proud who claim for themselves what they are not, and who soon believe that the supreme God and the human soul have one and the same nature. They deceive also those caught in carnal desires, who are glad to hear that it is not they themselves who do whatever they do in their wantonness, but the nation of darkness. They deceive also the curious who are wise about the things of earth and search out spiritual things with an earthy eye".⁶⁶

Concupiscentia in De uera religione

Just before his ordination, Augustine wrote *De uera religione* (390/391), a work dedicated to Romanianus, a Manichee belonging to the leading circles of Thagaste. Previously, Augustine had been instrumental in leading Romanianus to the Manichees, now he writes in order to invite him to Christianity.⁶⁷ This book is an expression of Augustine's own position, rather than a polemic. Through Romanianus Augustine addresses all Manichees and all those seeking true religion.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Also in Gen 1-3 the answer is not found.

⁶⁶ *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 2.26.40; CSEL 91,165s.: "... ille ergo error pectore et uentre serpit, et terram manducat. Non enim decipit, nisi aut superbos, qui sibi arrogantes quod non sunt, cito credunt quod summi Dei et animae humanae una eademque natura sit; aut desideriiis carnalibus implicatos, qui libenter audiunt quod quidquid lasciuie faciunt, non ipsi faciunt, sed gens tenebrarum; aut curiosos, qui terrena sapiunt, et spiritualia terreno oculo inquirunt". *On Genesis. Two books on Genesis against the Manichees and On the literal interpretation of Genesis: an unfinished book*. Translated by R.J. Teske, s.j. (The Fathers of the Church. A new Translation, 84), Washington, 1991, p. 136-137.

⁶⁷ "Augustine had previously dedicated *Contra Academicos* to Romanianus seeking to lead him to study philosophy" (*Contra Academicos* 2.8; CC 29,28s.; Conf. 6.14.24; CC 27,89ss.)

⁶⁸ J.P. PRENDIVILLE, *The Development of the Idea of Habit in the thought of Saint Augustine*, in: *Traditio* 28 (1972) 29-99, p. 43; F. VAN FLETEREN, *Augustine's De vera religione. A new Approach*, in: *Augustinianum* 16 (1976) 475-497; F. VAN FLETEREN, *Vera religione, De*, in: A. D. FITZGERALD (ed.), o.c., p. 864-865.

What has Augustine written on *concupiscentia* in *De uera religione*? More than two third of the quotes are Pauline, but surprisingly the word *concupiscentia* does not occur in a Pauline quote. It does however occur, but in reference to the Johannine *concupiscentia* of 1 John 2:15-16: "*Nolite diligere mundum, quoniam ea, quae in mundo sunt, concupiscentia carnis est et concupiscentia oculorum et ambitio saeculi*".⁶⁹ ("Love not the world, for all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"). The verse is first cited by Augustine in *De musica* 6.14.45⁷⁰, but it becomes a real theme in *De vera Religione*. The importance of 1 John 2:15-16 in this work may be deduced from Augustine's recurrent reference to it. The verse occurs both near the beginning (*De uera religione* 3.4) and the end (*De uera religione* 55.107) of the work where it functions as an exhortation to Romanianus. In the middle of the work (*De uera religione* 38, 70-71) it serves as a way of categorising different kind of vices which Christians should try to overcome in order to climb the ladder of perfection.⁷¹

Augustine interprets the threefold concupiscence of St. John in a special way. *Concupiscentia carnis* is seen as referring to the love of the lower pleasures (*uoluptates infimae*), to the addiction to carnal pleasures, to voluptuousness and more general to the desire of lust. The *concupiscentia oculorum* covers a broad spectrum: curiosity and the fact of "being madly delighted by some showy spectacle".⁷² According to Augustine, the *ambitio saeculi* from 1 John 2:16 refers to pride and to the pursuing of vain and idle power. In *De vera religione* Augustine, moreover, uses the three-fold cupidity in an inventive way in his allegorical exegesis of Jesus' temptations in the desert (Matthew 4:3-10). He explains that Christ overcame these three temptations. The *concupiscentia carnis* is related to the demand to

⁶⁹ The Vulgate reads "superbia vitae" for the third form of desire. Augustine's "ambitio saeculi" appears in the K-version.

⁷⁰ Book VI of *De Musica* was probably completed in Thagaste ca. 390. See: U. POSSANI, *Il sesto libro*, in: *De Musica* (Lectio Augustini, Settimana Agostiniana Pavese, 5), Palermo, 1990 p., 65.

⁷¹ The second part of *De uera religione* can be divided as follows: Introduction: the three kinds of concupiscence and the three temptations of Christ (§38, 69-71); the remedy for uoluptas (§39,72-§45,82); the remedy for pride (§45,84 - §48,93); the remedy for curiosity (§49, 94 - 51, 100); Conclusion (§52, 101-§55, 107).

⁷² In *De uera religione* Augustine charges the Manichees with *concupiscentia oculorum*: he reproaches those who, while trying to resist the flesh, envision immense spaces of light which they see limited by certain boundaries. Augustine focuses on those who let themselves be led by the deceitful senses. These people think that they understand the truth, but in fact they are deluded by their shadowy phantasms.

change stones in bread. The pleasure of the flesh has to be kept in bounds so that one does not give in to the feeling of hunger. The worldly desire for power is related to the kingdoms of the world which were shown to Jesus by the devil. Finally, *curiositas* is explained by the question to Jesus to cast himself down from the pinnacles of the temple: one should not try to explore divine power by subjecting it to visible experiments, says Augustine.⁷³ The second part of *De uera religione* is devoted to steering the soul clear of the triple concupiscence. To this end, Augustine speaks successively about the remedy for lust, pride and curiosity.

It is important to consider the context in which these three vices appear in *De uera religione*. The ascent of man to God by means of true religion is the central theme of the work. After an explanation of evil (11, 21-23, 44) Augustine moves towards the central theme of the work: the ascent of man to God by means of true religion (24, 45 – 54, 106). It should not surprise us too much that falsity and the threefold vice (pleasure, pride and curiosity) are included precisely in the section of the soul's ascent to God. *De uera religione* is certainly not the only book of the Augustinian corpus where Augustine describes an ascent including vices as hindrances.⁷⁴ In *De uera religione* Augustine could replace *libido*, *uoluptas* and *cupiditas* by the term *concupiscentia*. This might be an indication that this term gradually takes over the place and the meaning of the previous terms. Augustine's idea on vices seems to be amplified in the sense that they are not only hindrances on man's ascent to God, but that they remind man at and admonish him to union with God. Regarding the three kinds of concupiscence Augustine concludes:

"What can fail to urge man to strive for virtue, when his very vices urge him? Curiosity seeks nothing but knowledge, which cannot be certain knowledge unless it be knowledge of eternal things which remain ever the same. Pride seeks nothing but power, which has reference to facility in acting. But power is attained only by the perfect soul which is submissive to God and which with great live turns towards his kingdom. Bodily pleasure seeks nothing but rest, and there is no rest save where there is no poverty and no corruption."⁷⁵

⁷³ According to D. Dideberg, Mt. 4 : 1-10 (Jesus' temptations in the desert) can be found in the Augustinian corpus as an illustration of the Johannine threefold cupiditas "dès le *De uera religione*, de 390, jusqu'aux *Tractatus in epistulam Ioannis*, de 407". Apart from *De uera religione* 38, 70-71; CC 32,232s. Dideberg refers to *Sermo* 284.5; PL 39,1291s., *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 8.13; CC 38,55ss. and *Tract in epist. Io.* 2.14; PL 35,1996s. D. DIDEBERG, *Saint Augustin et la première épître de saint Jean. Une théologie de l'Agapè* (Théologie Historique, 34), Paris, 1975, p. 186.

⁷⁴ Cf. F. VAN FLETEREN, *Ascent of the Soul*, in: A.D. FITZGERALD (ed.), *o.c.*, p. 63-67.

⁷⁵ *De uera religione* 52.101; CC 32,252s.: "Quid est autem, unde homo comme-

It even seems that the 'triple cupidity' of lust, pride and curiosity is a "remote negative image – an *effigies veritatis* – of the Holy Trinity itself."⁷⁶

Some considerations on the origin of the threefold concupiscence

Augustine's interpretation of 1 John 2:16 is certainly not a straightforward exegesis of St.-John's letter. We can substantiate this claim by comparing Augustine's interpretation of the threefold concupiscencia with the (probable) intention of the biblical writer. In the expression – ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκός, σάρξ evokes not only physical (or sexual) appetite, but it also implies the broader biblical sense of fragile and sinful humanity, of the "flesh lusting against the spirit" (reference to: Galatians 5:17, Ephesians 2:3, 1 Peter 2:11). This broader biblical context is certainly not absent in Augustine's understanding of *concupiscencia*. Yet, in *De uera religione* (as well as in the *Confessiones*) Augustine's concretisations of *concupiscencia carnis*, as one of the three kinds of concupiscence, primarily seem to refer to physical pleasures and sensual appetites. The biblical term – ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν is rather unspecified in St.-John's letter. Probably the author intended to refer to the eyes conform with the biblical usage, namely as ministers of arrogance, greed and lewdness. In Augustine, however, *concupiscencia oculorum* receives the rich signification of curiositas and "being madly delighted by some showy spectacle". St. John's – ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου refers to the vaunting of livelihood, the showing off material possession and the goods of this world. 1 John 3:17 sheds light on this. In Augustine the *ambitio saeculi* is about pride as primal sin and cause of the fall.

A close look at the emergence and the progressive systematisation of the triad *uoluptas*, *curiositas* and *superbia* in the Augustinian corpus can shed some more light on the fact that Augustine's interpretation of 1 John 2:16 is not an ordinary exposition of St.-

morari non possit ad uirtutes capessendas, quando de ipsis uitiis potest? Quid enim appetit curiositas nisi cognitionem, quae certa esse non potest nisi rerum aeternarum et eodem modo se semper habentium? Quid appetit superbia nisi potentiam, quae refertur ad agendi facilitatem, quam non inuenit anima perfecta nisi Deo subdita et ad eius regnum summa caritate conuersa? Quid appetit uoluptas corporis nolo quietem, quae non est nisi ubi nulla est indigentia et nulla corruptio?". *Of true religion* (Gateway editions, 6042), Chicago, 1959, p. 96.

⁷⁶ In *Contra Secundinum* 10; CSEL 25/2, 919ss. (399) Augustine will clearly see them as false imitations of God (O. DU ROY, *L'intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon Saint Augustin. Genèse de sa théologie trinitaire jusqu'en 391*, Paris, 1966, p. 350, n.1).

John's text. The threefold cupidity seems to take form in *De moribus ecclesiae* (387/388). The objects of the three forms of *concupiscentia* are indeed present in this text, namely as *illecebrae corporis*, *gloria popularis*, *per imaginationes... rerum scientia* (*curiositas*), but they do not yet form a clear pattern (*De moribus ecclesiae* 20.37–21.38; CSEL 90,41ss.). Augustine must have had 1 John 2:16 at the back of his mind since he quotes the precedent verse 1 John 2:15, which in St.-John's letter introduces the three kinds of concupiscence: "*Huic ergo auctoritati Noui Testamenti qua iubemur 'nihil mundi huius diligere'*" (*De moribus ecclesiae* 21.39; 44s.). The schema of lust, pride and curiosity further develops in *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (388/389) where it appears no less than three times. It first occurs in Augustine's explanation of man's superiority over the beasts (1.23.40: *carnalis concupiscentia – tenebrosa curiositas – elati superbia*; CSEL 91,108s.). It is found a second time in the allegorical reading of the punishment of the serpent (Genesis 3:14) (2.27.41–2.28.42; 166ss.: *superbia – carnale desiderium – curiositas*) and a third time regarding the same verse in a description of those who are deceived by the serpent of the manichaean heresy (2.26.40; 165s.: *superbi – desiderii carnalibus implicati – curiosi*). In each of these cases Augustine mentions the three vices without any link to 1 John 2:16. In the sixth chapter of *De musica* (390) we find this triad at least twice in a long passage on how the soul turns away of the Truth: *carnalis uoluptatis – superbia excellentia – curiositas* (6.13.39; PL 32,1184) and *carnalis uoluptatis – honores et laudes – exploratio* (6.14.48; 1185). Although 1 John 2:16 with the enumeration of the three forms of concupiscence is part of the immediate context, Augustine's own enumeration of the threefold cupidity does not follow the order of the Johannine text.⁷⁷ This is once again an argument for the (largely) independent development of the triad in relation to the Johannine verse.

⁷⁷ To be correct, it should be mentioned that the triad *sensibilis uoluptas*, *curiositas* and *superbia* (in the Johannine order!) is already found in 6.13.39–40, but it is 'hidden' between other terms: "Amor igitur agendi aduersus succedentes passiones corporis sui, auertit animam a contemplatione aeternorum, sensibilis uoluptatis cura eius auocans intentionem (...) Auertit etiam amor de corporibus operandi (...) Auertunt phantasiae atque phantasmata (...) Avertit denique amor uanissimae cognitionis talium rerum (...) et ex his curiositas nascitur (...) Generalis uero amor actionis (...) superbia proficiscitur." After the Johannine quote in 6.14.44, however, the triad appears more clearly in 6.14.45 ("non ad carnales uoluptatem... non ad superbam excellentiam suam (...), non ad superfluam uel perniciosam curiositatem") and in 6.14.48 ("Quamobrem neque in uoluptate carnali, neque in honoribus et laudibus hominum, neque in eorum exploratione quae forinsecus corpus attingunt, nostra gaudia collece-mus"). O. DU ROY, *o.c.*, p. 347, n.6.

From then on the scheme seems familiar to Augustine. In *De uera religione* (69-107) Augustine offers a systematic exposition describing the three forms of *concupiscentia*. Though 1 John 2:15-16 is quoted up to three times Augustine's enumeration of the threefold *cupiditas* does not follow the order of St. John. In the tenth chapter of the *Confessiones* we find an equally important and elaborate discussion of the threefold cupidity, namely in the form of an examination of conscience. Augustine quotes 1 John 2:16 three times and discusses the *concupiscentia carnis* (30, 41 – 34, 53; CC 27,176ss.), the *concupiscentia oculorum* (35, 54 – 36,58; 184ss.) and the *ambitio saeculi* (36,59 – 41,66; 187) at length. A short note on the triad appears shortly afterwards in *Sermo Denis* 14; MA 1,65ss.⁷⁸ (around 401).

Meanwhile, Augustine could detect the three forms of cupidity behind other biblical texts. At some places the idea of the threefold concupiscence even becomes a binding factor in Augustine's exegetical method of biblical texts commenting each other. In an allegorical interpretation of Psalm 8:8, for example, Augustine interprets the "beasts of the field" as people looking for *carnales uoluptates*, the "birds of the air" prefigure the *superbi* and the fishes of the sea are the *curiosi*. Augustine subsequently quotes 1 John 2:16 and refers to the three temptations of Christ (cf. Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13).⁷⁹

⁷⁸ In *Sermo Denis* 14; MA 1,65ss. (written around 401) Augustine explains 1 John 2: 16. "In concupiscentia carnis uoluptas est, in concupiscentia oculorum curiositas est, in ambitione saeculi superbia est". He subsequently dwells on the carnalis uoluptatis appetitio, the turpis curiositas and the ambitio saeculi. He concludes his exposition by an enumeration of the three vices in the inverse order: "Ubi mors uenerit, nulla remanebit ambitio, nulla curiositas oculorum, nulla appetitio sordidarum et carnalium uoluptatum: una uita contempta omnia superantur" (*Sermo Denis* 14.2-4; MA 1,65ss.).

⁷⁹ A fusion of the threefold concupiscence (but no explicit reference to 1 John 2:16) with Psalm 8 is found in *Confessiones* 5.3.4; CC 27,59: "They do not kill their own pride (*exaltationes*) like high-flying birds (*uolatilia*), their curiosity (*curiositates*) like 'fishes of the sea' (*pisces maris*), and their sexual indulgence (*luxurias*) like 'the beasts of the field' (*pecora campi*) (...)" – The interpretation Augustine previously gave in *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 1.23.40 (CSEL 91,108ss.) must have come in handy. The enumeration of the beasts, however, is not the same. *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 1.23.40 has the following links: (1) *pecora* – *carnalis concupiscentia*; (2) *serpentes* – *tenebrosa curiositas*; (3) *uolatilia coeli* or *aues* – *superbia* – In *Confessiones* 13.21.30; 259 we still find another enumeration: "Restrain yourselves from the savage cruelty of arrogance (*ab immani feritate superbia*), from the indolent pleasure of self-indulgence (*ab inerti uoluptate luxuriae*), and from 'knowledge falsely so called' (*a fallaci nomine scientiae*)" (cf. 1 Tim. 6:20). Then the wild animals are quiet (*bestiae mansuetae*) and the beasts are tamed (*pecora edomita*) and the serpents are rendered harmless (*innocui serpentes*): in allegory they signify the affections of the soul. The

Furthermore, the link between 1 John 2:16 and Augustine's explanation of Jesus' temptations in the desert as found in *De uera religione* and repeated in *Enarationes in Psalmos* 8.13; CC 38,55s., reappears in *Sermo* 284.5; PL 38,1291s.⁸⁰ and in *In Iohannis epistulam tractatus* 2,14; PL 35,1996s.⁸¹ Finally, Augustine's capacity to be creative with the threefold cupidity emerges in his interpretation the parable of the banquet (Luke 14:16-24). Augustine finds that the excuses made by the invited guests in the parable follow an order inverse to the one of 1 John 2:16. The *concupiscentia carnis* is prefigured in the words "I have married a woman", the *concupiscentia oculorum* is found in the evasion "I have bought five yokes of oxen" and the *ambitio saeculi* may be discovered in the excuse "I have bought a countryhouse".⁸²

haughtiness of pride (*fastus elationis*), the pleasure of lust (*delectatio libidinis*), and the poison of curiosity (*uenenum curiositatis*) (1 John 2:16) are the passions of a dead soul". O' Donnell has proposed that the beasts enumerated here correspond to an enumeration in Psalm 148,10: "... *bestiae et omnia pecora, reptilia et volatilia pennata...*" (J.J. O' DONNELL, *Confessiones II*, p. 451 and *Confessiones III*, p. 393). – The birds are left out.

⁸⁰ In *Sermo* 284, 5; PL 38,1291 (397 or 418) Augustine draws the following links: "in pane, concupiscentia carnis; in promissione regnorum, ambitio saeculi; in curiositate tentationis, concupiscentia oculorum". He repeats the three vices as *carnalis voluptatis, honores et sublimitates saeculares and superfluae uel damnabiles curiositates*. Remark that Augustine neither follows the Johannine order, nor the order of Jesus' temptations. He, however, concludes by enumerating the vices in the order of John: "... tria sunt, aut voluptas, aut curiositas, aut superbia".

⁸¹ In *Iohannis epistulam ad Parthos tractatus* 2:11-14; PL 35,1995ss. (406-407) Augustine uses 1 John 2:16 as a point of departure in his exposition. He interprets *concupiscentia carnis* as *desiderium ad carnem* (12), *concupiscentia carnis* as *curiositas* (13) and *ambitio saeculi* as *superbia*. Augustine subsequently discovers the vices in Jesus' temptations in the desert. He the Johannine order which corresponds to the order of temptations in Matthew and Luke.

⁸² *Sermo* 122, 6; PL 35,684: "Nolite diligere mundum, nec ea quae in mundo sunt. Quisquis dilexerit mundum, non est charitas patris in illo. Quoniam omnia, quae sunt in mundo, concupiscentia carnis est, et concupiscentia oculorum, et ambitio saeculi. Ab imo coepit: quo euangelium terminauit. Inde ille coepit, et unde euangelium coepit, inde iste terminum posuit. Concupiscentia carnis: uxorem duxi. Concupiscentia oculorum: quinque iuga bouum emi. Ambitio saeculi, uillam emi." – 1 John 2:16 also plays a role in the second Pelagian controversy. Augustine's interpretation of the verse is by then less complex. It concentrates on one element of the triad: *concupiscentia carnis*. Julian thinks *concupiscentia* as such is innocent, whereas Augustine affirms that it is sinful because it is not from the Father, but from the world. D. DIDEBERG, *Saint Augustin et la première épître de saint Jean. Une théologie de l'agapè* (Théologie historique, 34), Paris, p. 187ff; M. LAMBERIGTS, *De Polemieken tussen Julianus van Aclanum en Augustinus van Hippo. Een bijdrage tot de theologiegeschiedenis van de tweede pelagiaanse controverse (418-430)*, unpublished doctoral thesis KU-Leuven, Leuven, 1988, dl. 1, p. 200-251 and dl. 2, p. 51-144.

Looking at the progressive systematisation of the triad, it seems that the influence of 1 John 2:16 increases, but it also seems that the biblical verse is not the first or only source of the triad. Did Augustine find the scripture quotation to be a good summary to express ideas previously derived from any other source? Where could Augustine have come upon this triad? Procopé writes:

"... his source for the triad is generally thought to lie somewhere in the 'Platonic writings', the *libri Platoniorum* (*Conf.* VII.13), which he had been reading around the time of his conversion. Now the closest parallel in surviving Platonist literature – and the fact of a 'parallel' between two texts does not automatically prove the earlier text to be a 'source' for the later – to Augustine's threefold cupidity for pleasure or excellence or sights (*Ver. Rel.* 69) comes in a work by Plato himself. Returning in Book IX of the *Republic* to the theme of the soul and its three parts, he indicates that each 'part' of the soul has its own desire: the 'appetitive part' wants physical pleasure; the 'spirited part' strives for power, victory and glory; while the 'reasoning part' seeks knowledge. This account – and it is only one among several somewhat varying accounts which Plato gives of the threefold soul – does present a trio of desires not unlike Augustine's, with the important difference that, for Plato, the drive for knowledge is our highest instinct, whereas Augustine would never treat the 'lust of the eyes' as superior or preferable 'concupiscence'. More seriously, Augustine is most unlikely to have known this passage. The *Republic*, unlike the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedo*, had not been translated into Latin – as far as we know; Augustine does not seem to have read Plato in Greek, and the literature which survives from the centuries between the two writers provides no convincing parallel to the triad which they appear to have in common."⁸³

Augustine's triad with the three types of vices indeed corresponds to Plato's tripartition of the soul. The Greek terms used by Plato in Book IX of the *Republic* are: τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν, τὸ θυμικόν, τὸ λογιστικόν.⁸⁴ Pleasure is the vice of the desiring part of the soul, pride can be seen as the vice of the courageous part of the soul and curiosity belongs to the rational part of the soul.⁸⁵ Is this correspondence no mere coincidence? Procopé doubts that Augustine was familiar with this text in Plato, but he is right when he asserts a bit further on in his article that Augustine "certainly knew, perhaps from Cicero or from some doxography, that Plato had 'made the soul

⁸³ PROCOPE, *a.c.*, p. 1301.

⁸⁴ *Republic* IV 434d-445b (especially 439e-442c). Plato returns to the issue in *Republic* IX 580d – 583a and 588b-592a. J. Adam (ed.), *The Republic of Plato*, Vol. 1-2, Cambridge / London / New York / Melbourne, 1979.

⁸⁵ Cf. the reference to the Platonian division of the soul in e.g. DU ROY, *o.c.*, p. 344-345 n. 2.

tripartite', but that was a commonplace with a variety of possible interpretations".⁸⁶ Attempts to trace back the triad to one particular Neo-platonic author, were undertaken by W. Theiler (referring to Porphyry) and J. O' Donnell (referring to Plotinus).⁸⁷ Both proposals were criticized by Du Roy.⁸⁸ As Procopé says, no convincing parallel has been found.⁸⁹ The same holds true for the Greek and Latin church fathers. Several fathers have taken up a scheme of threefold desire, but in tripartitions that do not correspond to the Augustinian division.⁹⁰ In Latin patrology the exegesis of 1 John 2:16 has nowhere received the importance nor the richness of Augustine's triad.⁹¹

Therefore, we should not underestimate Augustine's capacity to create new syntheses based on his cultural background. The Plotinian influence is certainly present in Augustine's view on pride. In *Enneads* V, 1, 1-8 a treatise we know Augustine read⁹², Plotinus explains the fall of the soul in terms of a primal 'audacity' (τόλμα) along with the desire to belong to oneself. Such motives have clear affinities with

⁸⁶ PROCOPÉ, *o.c.*, p. 1302. – In *De Ciuitate Dei* 14.49; Augustine writes: "Plato triplicem fincit animum". Cf. CICERO, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.20. (Procopé, *a.c.*, p. 1305 n.17)

⁸⁷ W. THEILER, *Porphyrius und Augustin*, Halle, 1933, p. 37 and 40; R. J. O'CONNELL, "The plotinian fall of the soul", in: *Traditio* 19 (1963) 1-32.

⁸⁸ W. Theiler associates the augustinian scheme with Porphyry (without excluding a possible influence of stoicism, see my note 92) but he does not quote any text of Porphyry offering a similar triad. (W. THEILER, *Porphyrios und Augustin*, Halle, 1933, p. 37 en 40). Du Roy criticizes the double presupposition at the basis of Theiler's work, namely: "Augustine ne peut avoir élaboré lui-même de tels schèmes, et quand on en trouve chez lui qui ne sont pas chez Plotin, ils proviennent de Porphyre"; J. O'Connell thought that the scheme could be traced back to Plotinus (R. J. O'CONNELL, *a.c.*, p. 24-32). Du Roy, however, doubts whether curiositas stems from πολυπράγμων found in *Enneads* III, 7, 11, 15. Du Roy, *o.c.*, p. 344-345.

⁸⁹ A. Labhardt refers to Seneca (Ep. 59,15) though not without he himself uttering doubts. (A. Labhardt, "Curiositas. Notes sur l'histoire d'un mot et d'une notion", in: *Museum Helveticum* (1960) 206-224, p. 222. Regarding this quote O. Du Roy admits that the triad might have existed before, but he does not doubt that Augustine's use of it is highly original; Procopé classifies Seneca, Ep. 59,15 as "the closest – and not very convincing – parallel". – The stoic tripartitions quoted by Theiler are disposed by both DU ROY, *o.c.*, p. 345-346, n.3 ("peu convaincants") and PROCOPÉ, *a.c.*, p.1305 n. 16 ("still less convincing"). These quotations are: Epiktet. *Entretiens* 3,2,1; Cicero, *De officiis* II, 5, 18; Mark. Aurel., *Pensées* VII, 5, 55 and Stob. II 115,5 W. (THEILER, *a.c.*, p. 40 n.1).

⁹⁰ DIDEBERG, *o.c.*, p. 184.

⁹¹ DIDEBERG, *ibid.* – The triad appears in Ambrosius, Ambrosiaster, Cyprien, Hieronymus and Tertullian.

⁹² Augustine quotes *Enneade* V i (10) as *de tribus principalibus substantiis* in *De Ciuitate Dei* 10.23 (DU ROY, *o.c.*, p. 84, n.2; PROCOPÉ, *a.c.*, p. 1302, n. 22.

Augustine's notion of *superbia*, as we can see from *De moribus* 12.20 where Augustine calls it 'audacia' and defines its intention as "suae potestatis esse cupit".⁹³ Together with bible verses such as Ecclesiastes 10:15, this might explain the primacy Augustine gives to pride, unlike Plato. The link between *curiositas* and *concupiscentia oculorum* might have arisen in Augustine's mind while writing the paragraphs on *temperantia* in *De moribus* 35-39. There are some indications that the link between *curiositas* and *concupiscentia oculorum* is 'in the making'⁹⁴: (a) Augustine reminds St. John's warning not to love the world (*nihil mundi huius diligere*). The three kinds of concupiscence are not mentioned, but – as will become clear – Augustine might have had them at the back of his mind. Augustine presents a "Platonist interpretation of the 'world' as the realm of the senses: *amandus igitur solus Dei est; omnis uero iste mundus, id est, omnia sensibilia contemnenda*". 1 John 2:15-16 suggests that the influence of the sensible world is threefold: alongside *corporeas illecebras laudemque popularem*, a third kind of temptation might exist; (b) Augustine draws a contrast between on the one hand "true knowledge of the *invisibilia et divina*" and on the other hand, "a fallacious *rerum scientia* derived de *corporibus per imaginationes*". Procopé remarks that Augustine was already familiar with the terms *imagines* and *simulacra* as impediments to real knowledge (see: *Contra Academicos* 3.18 and *De beata vita* 33). *Curiositas* was not mentioned in this context. The concept of *curiositas* simply meant "desire for superfluous knowledge" (*De ordine* 1.31; 2.17) or for "occult knowledge" (*De ordine* 2.27, 42). Exactly in *De moribus* 38 (where the three kinds of concupiscence nearly emerged) the prohibition against being curios is equated with *cavendum esse simulacris* (1 John 5:21). According to Procopé "the contrast between love of genuine and love of spurious

⁹³ Cf. O'CONNELL, "The Plotinian Fall of the Soul", in: *Traditio* 19 (1963) 24-32, p. 28-30. O. Du Roy supports O'CONNELL at this particular point: "Je suis entièrement d'accord avec lui voir dans Enn. V.I, 1, 1-8 un texte bien connu d'Augustin comme l'avait déjà montré A. Solignac. De même la composante plotinienne (*tolma*) de la *superbia* augustinienne est indubitable comme on le voit dans le *De Mor.*, I, 12, 20, PL, XXXII, 1320, où Augustin l'appelle *audacia* et en définit l'intention par *suae potestatis esse cupit*" (O. DU ROY, *o.c.*, p. 344-345, n.1 (ad nr. 2). Du Roy's approval at this point, though he is making critical comments, is also noted by N. J. TORCHIA, *St. Augustine's treatment of superbia and its Plotinian Affinities* in: *Augustinian Studies* 18 (1987) 66-80.

⁹⁴ I follow J.F. Procopé's argument: PROCOPÉ, *a.c.*, p. 1305 n. 5. The quotations in my paragraph on the link between *curiositas* and *concupiscentia oculorum* refer to Procopé's note.

wisdom" was "a commonplace in ancient moralising about *curiositas*". "In writings of Cynic tendency, any pursuit of useless knowledge was just 'vain curiosity'"; (c) "In *De moribus* the notion that sight is our prime sense and that *visibilia* can do duty for *sensibilia*" provides "a weapon against the Manichees". In *Confessiones* 10.54 a significant addition is found: "the eyes are our most important sense when it comes to knowledge: *oculi... sunt ad noscendum in sensibus principes*. Hence our desire for experience as against sheer pleasure, our *experiendi per carnem vana et curiosa cupiditas*, ... *concupiscentia oculorum eloquio divino appellata est*."⁹⁵ The link between *uoluptas* and *concupiscentia carnis* is not surprising. I point to the fact that Augustine takes up the notion *concupiscentia carnis* from 1 John 2:16 whereas previously he generally used *carnalis concupiscentia*, *carnalis desiderium*...

Some considerations on "Augustine, Manichaeism and the Good" by Kam-lun Edwin Lee

Before concluding, we would like to make some critical observations on Kam-lun Edwin Lee's book *Augustine, Manichaeism and the Good*. In the fourth chapter of this book, entitled "concept of personal evil", Lee has proposed a direct link between Augustine's use of the term *concupiscentia* and his understanding of the Manichaean notion. Treating the concept of concupiscence Lee has tried to prove that there is a change of emphasis in the concept of *concupiscentia* early around 388. According to Lee Augustine would have consciously attempted to equate the term *concupiscentia* with the "Manichaean notion of libido". In this process, which he sees completed in 390, when *De uera religione* was composed, *concupiscentia* would have acquired a strong sexual overtone. Lee admits that Augustine has not forsaken the more general understanding of *concupiscentia* as uncontrolled desire for worldly things, but he also finds in this a result of the influence from the Manichaean concept of evil as loss of tranquillity.⁹⁶

To our opinion, Lee is too fast in drawing conclusions. We have pointed out that *concupiscentia* occurs in Augustine's works no earlier than in 388 when Augustine used *concupiscentia* in the context of food. It is therefore premature to discover already from 388 onwards

⁹⁵ PROCOPE, *o.c.*, p. 1304 n. 11 and 1305 n. 5.

⁹⁶ Kam-lun Edwin LEE, *Augustine, Manichaeism and the Good* (Patristic Studies, 2), New York, 1999, p. 41-59.

of a change of emphasis in the concept of *concupiscentia* in Augustine's corpus. In 390 *concupiscentia carnis* is indeed sexual, but one might not forget that in *De uera religione* Augustine does not only elaborate on *concupiscentia carnis* but also on *concupiscentia oculorum* and on *ambitio saeculi*. Thus, *concupiscentia carnis* is only part of the picture. Moreover, Augustine clearly states in the *Confessiones* that *concupiscentia carnis* might not be limited to the sexual realm.⁹⁷ The position of Lee implies that libido is a sexual term which (at least in Augustine's thought) was used by the Manichees. He does however not sufficiently prove this.⁹⁸ Anyway, we need to remark that *libido* is a classical term which as a matter of fact also occurs in the Bible. Augustine uses this term not only in a sexual sense, but also with a general meaning for example in *De Sermone domini in monte* where *libido* is used to indicate the element of consent in sinning.⁹⁹ Finally, regarding the assertion that Augustine would have derived the notion of uncontrolled desire from Manichaeism, T. van Bavel has uttered the critique that we should consider the possibility that Augustine draws upon an general philosophical conviction, rather than on Manichaeism. Indeed, also Plato had spoken of ἄτακτος κίνησις (unordered, uncontrolled movement) and in *De civitate Dei* 14,19; CC 48,441s.

⁹⁷ The most remarkable and interesting text regarding the sexual interpretation of *concupiscentia carnis* in the early Augustine is probably *De sermone Domini in monte* 1.36 where Augustine understands *fornicatio* as "every kind of carnal and lustful concupiscence" (*carnalis et libidinosa concupiscentia*). Augustine legitimates this interpretation on the basis of scripture: "Indeed since the Scriptures so constantly give to idolatry the name of fornication (cf. Ezech 16.20v) and since the Apostle Paul calls avarice idolatry (cf. Col. 3,5; Eph. 5:5), who can doubt that every evil concupiscence may be rightly called fornication?" Augustine explains the metaphor as following: "For when the soul disregards the higher law by which it is governed, and prostitutes itself as though for a price, then it corrupts itself through base delight in lower natures." *Avaritia*, idolatry and *infidelitas* (in the sense of unbelief) all belong to this kind of *fornicatio*. In other words: the concept of *concupiscentia* is not limited to the sexual realm, but a term normally given a sexual interpretation, is broadened to every kind of *concupiscentia*. – Lee could at least have remarked that *concupiscentia* keeps on occurring in the context of food, e.g. in *De sermone Domini in monte* 2.59; CC 35,155 and *Confessiones* 10.31.45-47; CC 27,178ss. Moreover, he could have mentioned that in *De mendacio* 7.10; CSEL 41,428s. (394/395), treating the question whether or not a white lie can be used to prevent sexual abuse Augustine speaks of *libido* (with and without sexual connotation), not of *concupiscentia*.

⁹⁸ Lee bases this assumption on a reference to *libido* in the description of the Manichaeic myth. LEE, *o.c.*, p. 54-55.

⁹⁹ Th. F. MARTIN, *Rhetoric and Exegesis in Augustine's interpretation of Romans 7:24-25a* (Studies in Bible and Early Christianity, 47), Lewiston / Queenston / Lampeter, 2001, p. 56.

Augustine explicitly mentions the position of the neo-platonici regarding the *inordinate moveri* by the *libido*.¹⁰⁰

Secondly, Lee makes much of a thing of the mentioning of the word *consuetudo* in *De uera religione*. He says that the general optimism of the earlier dialogues is replaced by a general recognition of human fallenness in terms of carnal *consuetudo*.¹⁰¹ In the following paragraph Lee explains the vicious circle mechanism which he finds in *De uera religione*:

"To summarize, the vicious circle begins as the soul voluntarily defects toward bodily pleasure. This defection causes bodily corruption that burdens the soul with increased susceptibility to the appeal of further bodily pleasure. The dynamic notion of turbulence inherent in the Manichaean idea of bodily pleasure is now put to work in this mechanism of a vicious circle. Moreover, the blinding effect due to ignorance is an added assurance of bondage to this pleasure. There is then no need for the supposition of a substantial evil principle to work behind the scenes in a person, because the enticement of the bodily pleasure with its blinding effect on the soul is enough to keep a fallen human in perpetual bondage. In abstinence of divine grace, the human existential condition of "corruption" provides an alternative explanation to the phenomenon of human struggle. Or, in other words, the flesh" as an evil principle is this corruptive condition, characterized by the soul's earthly affection, being sustained in the mortal body. Consuetudo, then, is the corruptive condition -or the flesh- played out in the vicious circle mechanism, from which comes the mysterious gravitation toward evil".¹⁰²

According to Lee, at the point when the full theory of *consuetudo* is developed, *concupiscentia* is only a part of the picture. Nevertheless, he writes that already in *De uera religione* *concupiscentia* plays a central role in the concept of *consuetudo*. In Augustine's explanation of the relationship between the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the *ambito saeculi*, Lee finds the "gist of the theory of personal evil":

"bondage comes as one's pride leads to self-love in the form of the pursuit of carnal delights, and one's curiosity adds to the viciousness of the situation by deceiving the soul into thinking that there is no alternative (i.e., worshipping God as the highest truth) (xxxviii.69). Under general consideration, concupiscentia is the force that keeps one in bondage. Although the blinding effect of concupiscentia oculorum helps the enticement of uoluptas or concupiscentia carnis to work (xx. 40), it seems that it is the enticing sweetness (dulcedo) of the latter that does the more serious damage by drawing one back to sin repeatedly (xv. 29), and hence, as the logic goes, enables consuetudo to entrench".¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ T.J. VAN BAVEL, *Augustinus' houding tegenover seksualiteit*, in: *Kleio* 22 (1993) 176-185, p. 180-182.

¹⁰¹ LEE, *o.c.*, p. 73

¹⁰² LEE, *o.c.*, p. 51.

¹⁰³ LEE, *o.c.*, p. 58.

Lee is truly right in pointing out that there is a link between the ideas of bodily pleasure and ignorance. There is indeed a mutual influence. Augustine writes: "*Nolite certare nisi cum consuetudine corporum. Ipsam uincite, uicta erunt omnia.*" Still it seems to him that the "unhappy friends of this world" fear to be separated from worldly things so that "nothing is more toilsome to them than to be at rest". This is due to falsehood which originates in sin and deceives us so that we think something is what it is not (20.40; CC 32,211s. and 35.65-67; 229ss.).¹⁰⁴ However, asserting that Augustine works out a systematic theory of a vicious circle and perpetual bondage already in *De uera religione*, is pushing the issue too far. In our opinion, the three-fold concupiscence of 1 John 2:16 primary functions as a comprehensive term for all kind of vices. Only a few years later, in 395, Augustine writes in his commentary on Psalm 8: "Now these three kinds of vices, namely the pleasure of the flesh, and pride and curiosity, include all sins. And they appear to me to be enumerated by the apostle John, when he says "Love not the world, for all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."¹⁰⁵ His most important critique on the Manichees seems to be: "It is very easy to execrate the flesh, but very difficult to not to think carnally."¹⁰⁶ The Manichees dismissed the flesh, but what more urgently they need to do, is stop thinking carnally. Augustine here points

¹⁰⁴ Cf. "he (=Augustine) is aware of the stages by which the *consuetudo corporum* can tighten its hold on a man. It leads him to neglect God, to prefer corporeal things to their Creator. And this sin brings its penalty with it. It feeds the sinner with deceptive pleasures which are merely passing, and do not satisfy him. In fact, they torture him most painfully, and eventually lead him into error. He begins to think that the material object he loved is the first form, when it is the lowest form of all, namely that of a corporeal thing. And, even when he attempts to avoid sin, his materialistic point of view can still deceive him about God. For he images God as an immense light that he sees about him here. He promises himself a future dwelling place with this light, but he does not know that he is still caught in the concupiscence of the eyes, and that he is carrying this world with him in his effort to transcend it. He thinks that he has reached another world simply by imaging the bright part if this world infinitely extended." PRENDIVILLE, *a.c.*, p. 32-33.

¹⁰⁵ That Augustine could use the three-fold cupidity in an inventive way, can be illustrated by the way he uses it in his allegorical exegesis. In his commentary on Psalm 8 as well as in *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* the triad of concupiscence is discovered in the beasts of the field (carnal voluptuousness), the birds on the air (pride) and the fishes in the sea (fantasy and imagination). "The curious who walk to the paths of the sea, search in the deep after the temporal things of this world, which like paths of the sea, vanish and parish as quickly as the water comes together again after it has given room in the passage of ships or fish."

¹⁰⁶ *De uera religione* 40 ; CC 32,235ss.

to the material way in which the Manichees conceived God and parts of lights which in their vision had spread everywhere. Augustine charges the Manichees with *concupiscentia oculorum*.

The vicious circle which Lee discovers, is not to be found as such in Augustine. Lee therefore seems to make *De uera religione* much more ponderous than it really is.¹⁰⁷ By reading *De uera religione* one should imagine a ladder of perfection leading from earth to heaven. From the second half of *De uera religione* onwards (29.52; 221) Augustine uses a discourse of ascent. With this he touches a neo-platonic theme which dominates much of Augustine's early thinking. The elaboration on the threefold concupiscence and how it must be overcome, (cf. *supra*), should be seen against this background. The ascent is here described by means of biblical themes: starting with the old, outer and earthly man chained by the desire to temporal objects, moving forward to the new, inner and heavenly man. (Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:15; 1 Corinthians 4:16). Augustine is aware that the transformation from the old man into the new, can not fully be reached in this life. Nevertheless, the upward line of the soul's ascent towards the vision of God is a characteristic of *De uera religione*. Prendiville, who investigated the topic of *consuetudo* in *De uera religione*, writes:

"...de vera religione is still hugging the coastline of Plotinus, where sin is weakness rather than defiance, cured by greater wisdom and a change of plan, rather than contrition or expiation, and where there is the same optimistic view that habit alone stands between God and the soul"

"Sinful habits are not regarded primary as productive of disobedience, revolt, rebellion against God, but as hindrances to seeing God"

"Accept the medicine of Revelation, Augustine says...do not bury yourself in the world of the senses, and you will conquer yourself, attain the selfpossession necessary to see God."¹⁰⁸

This runs counter to the assessment of Lee that "the general optimism of the earlier dialogues is replaced by a general recognition of the effect of human fallenness".¹⁰⁹ Firstly, the term 'optimism' is not an adequate term to describe Augustine's early view because it sug-

¹⁰⁷ It seems as if Lee is aware that he offers an over-interpretation of the problem of the struggle of the flesh in *De uera religione*. Lee is aware of the fact that Augustine seems to feel that the key problem of the struggle of the flesh resides in the mind. Nevertheless, Lee wants to continue asking the question of "the true nature of this 'flesh' – the principle of personal evil – that Augustine *has only implicitly* assumed in the foregoing discussion" (my italics).

¹⁰⁸ PRENDIVILLE, *a.c.*, p. 56 (three quotes).

¹⁰⁹ LEE, *o.c.*, p.73.

gests that the later Augustine would be a pessimist, whereas in fact, grace is accepted as a gift which can only be positive. It would be better to assess man's power consequently in the light of God's grace. Secondly, although Prendiville and Lee both seem to speak of 'optimism' and 'pessimism' taking as a point of view (only) man's ability to proceed toward the vision of God, they come to a different assessment of the same work. This difference is closely related to Lee's argument that "despite Augustine's use of a discourse of ascent from *uer. rel.* xxix.52 onwards, his intention is to point out the presence of human perversity which, without the correction of divine grace, will undoubtedly prevent one from seeing God (e.g. xxxiii.62)."¹¹⁰ Grace is assumed, but in my opinion Lee exaggerates the impact of evil in the composition of *De uera religione*. Augustine does indeed accept the fall, he speaks of personal evil and evil which is *poena peccati* and therefore not an evil but a good. My point is that Augustine elaborates these ideas on evil however without clearly willing to imply an elaborated system or even a spiral of evil which could be an alternative to the Manichaeon idea on evil as a substance forcing us to commit evil deeds.

By reading ideas on a 'vicious circle mechanism' already in *De uera religione*, Lee is able to minimize the influence of Augustine's rereading of Paul: he stresses the fact "*that the content of Augustine's notion of consuetudo is already found in De uera religione, although there could be a clarification along the Pauline route*".¹¹¹ As to *concupiscentia*, Lee speaks of "*the continuity in the notion of concupiscentia before and after Augustine's focus on the Pauline text*".¹¹² Yet, it is no earlier than in *Acta contra Fortunatum* (392) that Augustine clearly and explicitly restricts the full exercise of free will to the first man:

"I say that there was free exercise if will in that man who was first formed. He was so made that absolutely nothing could resist his will, if he had willed to keep the precepts of God. But after he voluntarily sinned, we who have descended from his stock were plunged into necessity."¹¹³

¹¹⁰ LEE, *ibid.*

¹¹¹ LEE, *o.c.*, p. 53

¹¹² LEE, *ibid.*

¹¹³ *Acta contra Fortunatum* 22; CSEL 25/1, 103s.: "liberum uoluntatis arbitrium in illo homine fuisse dico, qui primus formatus est. Ille sic factus est, ut nihil omnino uoluntati eius resisteret, si uellet dei praecepta seruare. Postquam autem libera ipse uoluntate peccauit, nos in neccessitatem praecipitati sumus, qui ab eius stripe descendimus" (Comp. *De libero Arbitrio* 3.17.48; CC 29,303). Ph. SCHAFF (ed.), *The writings against the Manichaeans and against the Donatists* (A select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Series 1, Vol. 4), Grand Rapids, 1996 (repr. 1887), p. 121.

The explanation of how freedom can turn into necessity is in fact an enlargement to the meta-level of mankind of what Augustine finds on the individual level:

"But each one of us can by little consideration find that what I say is true. For today in our actions before we are implicated by any habit, we have free choice of doing anything or not doing it. But when by that liberty we have done something and the pernicious sweetness and pleasure of that deed has taken hold upon the mind by its own habit the mind is so complicated that afterwards it cannot conquer what by sinning it has fashioned."¹¹⁴

In his dispute with Fortunatus Augustine was challenged to explain how Paul was "consistent with his faith" since the Manichaean priest had used some Pauline verses (Romans 8:7 and Galatians 5:17) in order to support Manichaean dualism. As to Romans 8:7 Augustine explains that the *prudential carnis* does not imply an evil nature fighting against the law of God. The *prudential carnis* cannot possibly be under the law of God, just as "snow cannot be warm". Just as snow melts by heat, so the mind of the flesh can make 'good habit' in stead of evil habit. This is possible "when our mind had become illuminated, that is when God has subjected for Himself the whole man to the choice of the divine Law". As to Galatians 5:17 Augustine states: "what wars against the soul is habit formed in the flesh (*consuetudo facta cum carne*)". He recalls the fact that we still live according to the "old" or "earthly man", this is: "according to the flesh" (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:21, comp. 5:19).¹¹⁵ In short: concupiscence of the flesh against the spirit has come down to us as a punishment for primal sin which was voluntarily committed, but God promises us to set us free from the law of sin and death through Christ.

Lee is certainly right when he says that Augustine challenged by the Manichees had no choice but to study Paul. In his subsequent Pauline commentaries Augustine will even work out a scheme defending the Law and making use of the concept *concupiscentia*. This scheme reflects "both (1) the stages of human history as per-

¹¹⁴ *Acta contra Fortunatum* 22; 104; : "potest autem unusquisque nostrum modiori consideratione inuenire uerum esse, quod dico. Hodie namque in actionibus nostris antequam consuetudine aliqua implicemur, liberum habemus arbitrium faciendi aliquid uel non faciendi. Cum autem ista libertate fecerimus aliquid et facti ipsius tenuerit animam perniciosa dulcedo et uoluptas, eadem ipsa consuetudine sua sic implicatur, ut postea uincere non possit, quod sibi ipsa peccando fabricata est". Ph. SCHAFF (ed.), *The writings against the Manichaeans and against the Donatists* (A select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Series I, Vol. 4), Grand Rapids, 1996 (repr. 1887), p. 121.

¹¹⁵ *Acta Contra Fortunatum* 22; CSEL 25/1, 103ss.

ceived in relation to the law of Sinai and the coming of Christ and (2) various dispositions of the human person in relation to the evil and morally good".¹¹⁶ I am not going into further detail, but I only point to the fact that these ideas are new and not yet in *De uera religione*.

Conclusions and final remarks:

Concupiscentia as a Manichaeian idea taken over by Augustine?

The concept of *concupiscentia* appears in the Augustinian corpus from 388 onwards, as soon as Augustine starts his direct anti-manichaeian campaign writing *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et Manichaeorum* (387/388) and *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (388/389). Augustine's first usage of the concept *concupiscentia* in *De moribus* 1.17; CSEL 90,34s. is based on a quotation of Wisdom 6:12-20. Although the positive connotation of the concept *concupiscentia* is in line with the positive use of the verb *concupiscere* in Augustine's early writings, the positive connotation subsequently seems to have disappeared to the background of Augustine's thought. The concept of *concupiscentia* reappears in *De Moribus* in its negative sense, namely as an equivalent of an excessive appetite for food while criticizing the Manichaeian eating habits. In *De Genesi* Augustine concentrates on the allegorical explanation of God's commandment to have power over the beasts, i.e. to crucify the flesh with its perturbations and desires. Augustine differentiates the concept *concupiscentia* according to (some of) the beasts enumerated in Genesis: the cattle represents the *carnalis concupiscentia*, the serpents are blinded by dark *curiositas* and the birds are puffed up with *superbia*. In his explanation of Genesis, Augustine depicts the Manichaeian error in a way similar to his description of the serpent, using the triad pride, carnal desire and curiosity. The same triad is worked out in a splendid way in *De uera religione* (391) on the basis of 1 John 2:15-16. The three temptations should be held in subjection in order to move forward from the old and earthly man towards the new and heavenly man. Especially the concept of *concupiscentia oculorum* was used by Augustine against the Manichees to criticize their imaginations of large spaces of light and their carnal way of thinking God. In other words: the term *con-*

¹¹⁶ W. S. BABCOCK, *Augustine's interpretation of Romans* (A.D. 394-396), in: *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979) 55-74, p. 59. – See: *Prop. ad Rom.* 13-18; CC 84,6ss. *De diversis quaestionibus* 83, q. 66-68; CC 44A,150ss. *Ad Simplicianum* 1.1-2; CC 44,7ss. (implicitly).

cupiscentia occurs both in an exhortation to overcome the temptations as well as in critique on the Manichaeans' beliefs and their concupiscent behaviour.

The concept of *concupiscentia* seems to be a 'more biblical equivalent' of *cupiditas* and *libido*. Though the number of *concupiscentia*-hits in Augustine's early works may not be exaggerated, the gradual increase of the term *concupiscentia* in Augustine's work runs parallel to the increase of his knowledge of Bible. Up to 391 Augustine refers to the following Bible verses containing either the word *concupiscentia* or the verb *concupiscere*: Romans 13:14, Galatians 5:17.24, Exodus 20:17 and 1 John 2:15-16. The specific meaning of *concupiscentia* as 'excessive appetite for food', for instance, might not be clear from the quoted verse Romans 13:14, but the fact that greediness is an aspect of the biblical meaning of *concupiscentia* is clear from other biblical verses, such as Ecclesiasticus 23:6 and Genesis 25:34 (which Augustine quotes in *Confessiones* 10.46). Regarding the interpretation of the threefold *concupiscentia* in 1 John 2: 15-16 we made clear that the triad *concupiscentia carnalis* – *superbia* – *curiositas* was used by Augustine before his actual use of the triad of the First letter of St. John. Since *concupiscentia* is a biblical term, Augustine did not necessarily borrow it from Manichaeism. Assuming that *concupiscentia* was a concept well known by the Manichees, that Paul had a lot of prestige in Manichaean circles it seems that Augustine could and did use the concept *concupiscentia* to fight the Manichees with their own weapons. Further research regarding the use of *concupiscentia* in Manichaean texts might reveal further parallelisms between Augustine and Manichaeism sharing biblical texts. Further research regarding the use of *concupiscentia* in Manichaean texts might reveal further parallelisms between Augustine and Manichaeism sharing biblical texts.

Van Oort has pointed to the fact that both the Manichees and Augustine share the aspect of unordered and uncontrolled desire. However, this aspect should not necessarily be derived from Manichaeism, since the idea is already present in Augustine's description of the reign of *libido* (cf. *De libero arbitrio* 1.11.22; CC 29,226). Moreover, Augustine knew of the neoplatonic position regarding the *inordinate mouveri*. What is left of the theory that the strong sexual overtone in *concupiscentia* would be based on the Manichaeism implication of *libido* or *concupiscentia*? Up till 391 we could only find the sexual meaning of *concupiscentia carnis* in *De uera religione* but this is only one type of *concupiscentia* and it is limited to one hit. The sexual implication of *concupiscentia* is frequent in Augustine's dis-

pute with Faustus (397/399) on the Old Testament and is especially used by the late Augustine in the Pelagian controversy.

I do agree with Lee pointing to the difference between the Johannine and the Pauline notion of *concupiscentia* in Augustine: the Johannine notion of *concupiscentia* fails to bring out the issue of inner struggle as forceful as Paul does. Indeed, the Johannine concept of *concupiscentia* rather offers Augustine a structural help for the elaboration on the theme of *concupiscentia*. The idea that different types of concupiscence reinforce each other is certainly present. Furthermore, Augustine is indeed looking for an explanation on evil and he does so in terms of *concupiscentia* but I have serious doubts whether Augustine tried to imply any elaborated system explaining evil and offering an alternative to the Manichean legend already in *De uera religione*. Firstly, in *De Genesi*, Augustine holds that the corrupted body weighs down the soul (Wisdom 9:15), but he does not say that our situation has turned to the worst because of Adam and Eve. Secondly, the large place Lee gives to evil in *De uera religione* seems to run counter to the general optimism of the book. In *De uera religione*, the threefold concupiscence is placed in the context of an ascent. The meaning of *concupiscentia* is even amplified: the temptations not only function as obstacles towards the happy life, but they also remind man at his true vocation. Thirdly, if Augustine hold a clear theory on the necessity of evil already in *De uera religione*, why than is he still looking for an explanation in *Acta contra Fortunatum* and subsequently struggling with the problem in the Pauline commentaries?

By speaking of a "direct link" between Augustine and Manichaeism, Lee has tried to move beyond the research of J. van Oort who is "only willing to concede the possibility of a common root between the two views"¹¹⁷. Nevertheless, Lee's "direct link" remains – as to say – 'in Augustine's head': between Augustine's *understanding* the Manichaean notion and between Augustine's own notion. Augustine's writing on *concupiscentia* surely runs parallel with his anti-Manichaean debate. I doubt whether Augustine tried to imply an already elaborated system on evil in *De uera religione*. Rather than taking over the Manichaean notion of *concupiscentia* he might have been 'forced' to write on *concupiscentia* because of the Manichaean debate. He concentrates on Scripture and defends his ideas with the authority of Scripture. Doing so, he has to take seriously the Pauline

¹¹⁷ LEE, *o.c.*, p. 54.

insight of man's inability to attain the good without God's grace. What Augustine writes is a critique on Manichaeism, rather than being indebt. And: Could (part of) the common root looked for between Augustine and the Manichees not simply be Paul?¹¹⁸

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¹¹⁸ I would like to thank prof. dr. M. Lamberigts for his critical remarks and useful suggestions.