

THE ACTUALITY OF AUGUSTINE'S DISTINCTION BETWEEN *UTI* AND *FRUI*^{*}

Augustine's well-known dialectic of *util/frui*, which really consists in distinguishing between the proper utilization of penultimate goods and the fruition of the ultimate Good¹, is all too often regarded from the perspective of an ethical concentration on the question of 'how to love' God and one's neighbor² or 'how to use' the temporal goods of this present life³. Even if it seems clear that E. Kant's now famous dictum to the effect that man must be "thought of as being *an end in himself*", or perhaps better would be to say that he should never be "used by anyone, not even by God himself, as a mere means"⁴, may have contributed to a more elevated sense of human dignity, it yet equally served to generate a dichotomic reflection upon the love of man for his neighbors and for God. This problematic of the two finalities or two orientations of love indeed resumes well that contained in Augustine's distinction between the two categories of *uti* and *frui*. When we go further in differentiating between the means and the end in terms of the pleasure that we experience at the consummation of each category of good, it is hardly surprising that we should be faced with a confrontation between sensual pleasure and spiritual delectation, something reflected in Heiko Oberman's claim that elements of a

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¹ For the *Quellenforschung* on Augustine's *util/frui*, see the articles by R. LORENZ, "*Fruitio Dei* bei Augustinus", *ZFK*, 63 (1950-1951) 75-132 and "Die Herkunft des augustinischen *Frui Deo*", *ZFK*, 64 (1952-1953) 34-60, as well as G. PFLIGERSDORFER, "Zu den Grundlagen des augustinischen Begriffspaares *uti-frui*", *Wiener Studien*, 84 (1971) 195-224. A. DUPONT, "Using or Enjoying Humans", in *Augustiniana* 54 (2004) 475-506.

² Cf. V. J. BOURKE, Joy in Augustine's ethics, The Saint Augustine Lecture 1978 (Villanova, 1979); R. CANNING, The unity of love for God and neighbour in St. Augustine (Louvain, 1993); O. O'DONOVAN, "Usus and fruitio in Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* I", *JTS*, 33 (1982) 361-397; id., The problem of self-love in St. Augustine (New Haven, 1980); L. VERHEIJEN, "Le premier livre du *De doctrina christiana* d'Augustin: un traité de 'télicologie' biblique", *Augustiniana Traiectina*, communications présentées au Colloque Internationale d'Utrecht. 13-14 novembre 1986, ed. J. DEN BOEFT and J. VAN OORT (Paris, 1987) 169-187.

³ J. CALVIN's discussion of this theme in his *Institutio* III, x well reflects the grounding influence of Augustine's account of the *util/frui* distinction, which had long been a theological common-place thanks to its inclusion in P. Lombard's *Sentences*.

⁴ *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, I, II, v, [237], tr. H. W. CASSIRER (Milwaukee, 1998) 166.

“dualistic dialectic” can still be discerned in Augustine’s thought at this point⁵.

Given that the value of any instrument can only be measured in accordance with its actual performance in serving the end to which it was intended, so the degree of utility as far as temporal goods are concerned must fall into the category of the relative. It is in this context of distinguishing between the referent and the referred that the role of the supreme Good might lead us to adopt a belittling appreciation of the category of the instrumental good and the passing pleasure with which it is associated. Here the question may legitimately be raised as to whether it is in fact possible to understand and interpret this ‘limited’ value of the means without any such negative connotation. It is with a view to finding a more acceptable meaning for such instrumental ‘subordination’ that the present paper will try and reconsider both the rhetorical expression, that by which the author embodies his or her intention, and the fundamental thought that lay behind Augustine’s elaboration of *util/frui*. It is also in the hope of reopening the long-standing debate about the proper relation between religion and culture that the paper will devote its conclusion to suggesting some open questions for our further reflection.

I. The cultivator-owner relationship as the implicit basis of *util/frui*

As is suggested by the Roman juridical term of *usus fructus*, which concerns the right to use and to dispose of goods one does not possess⁶, *util/frui* clearly reflects the values and concerns of an agrarian society. We are naturally led to think of a cultivator deriving benefit from the land held and exploited on the basis of some form of trust. Here indeed an analogy may be drawn between on the one hand the contractual accord of the proprietor and the one granted usufruct, and on the other, the biblical notion of the covenant established between the Creator and mankind according to which the latter should

⁵ “The pursuit of happiness: Calvin between Humanism and Reformation”, *Humanity and Divinity in Renaissance and Reformation: Essays in Honor of C. Trinkhaus*, ed. J. O’MALLY, T. IZBICKI and G. CHRISTIANSON, *Studies in the History and Christian Thought* (Leiden, 1993), vol. 51, 283.

⁶ *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine. Histoire des mots*, ed. A. ERNOUT and A. MEILLET (Paris, 1959⁴) 758. This fundamental notion of possession can easily be noticed in Augustine’s use of *habere* (*deum*) (*De beat. uit.*, II, 11-12; III, 21), *obtinere* (*DDC*, I, iv, 4) and *capere* (*DDC*, IV, iv, 4; *DDQ LXXXIII*, q. 30).

exercise a form of responsible stewardship over both animate and inanimate creatures. This parallel is implicit in Paul's injunction to the Corinthians so to treat the world as though "not using it fully"⁷: it was from this source that the concept was to be taken up and developed in the work of Augustine.

Here an important point to be noted is that whereas neither the cultivator nor the steward actually possess the goods they are using, they are yet in the situation of "servants"⁸ rather than "slaves" in relation to the owner of the property concerned, a distinction which implies from the outset the ethical notion of choice and responsibility. Translated into Christian terms, the task of reaping the benefits of divine grace is thus essentially twofold: there is an enduring responsibility or *officium* towards the created order, but this must yet be orientated with regard to the finality of the ultimate good in rendering honor to God⁹. Moreover, there is an element of choice involved in the decision whether or not to accomplish this twofold involvement of the cultivator's service vis-à-vis both Creator and creatures. The exercise of responsible stewardship is thus to imply a degree of freedom in the conduct of one's function in much the same way as that accorded to the farmer charged with the cultivation of the land.

Now this itself is to raise a question of a very different order, one which struck a very real chord in Augustine's mind. How can we ever choose something unless first knowing how to 'discern' what brings us a real benefit and having at the same time sufficient will to 'act' in accordance with the decision thus made? It seems to me that it is precisely in this context of the notion of 'order' in the microcosmic 'I', with its noetic and volitive dimensions, that Augustine really tried to elaborate his dialectic of *uti/frui*, employing for his own purpose a number of diverse pre-existing rhetorical expressions and reasoning¹⁰, the real sense of which was to distinguish between the

⁷ 1 Co. 7, 31 cited in the *City of God* I, x, 2; hereafter cited as *DCD*.

⁸ Cf. "libenter seruus" in *DDQ LXXXIII*, q. 30.

⁹ Cf. Augustine's use of *colere/cultus* in *DCD*, I, ii; I, x, 2.

¹⁰ Cf. *Enn.*, I, 4, 16, where Plotinus earlier drew the distinction between that which is needful (cf. "πρὸς τὴν χρείαν") and that which serves to an end (cf. "πρὸς τὸ τέλος"). In a Christian setting, Basil of Caesarea, in his well-known treatise addressed *To young people on the manner of deriving benefit from Hellenistic letters* (II), stressed the importance of using pagan works to a Christian end – eternal life – while a similar concern with the appropriate use of rhetorical style as a means of communicating the sublimity of thought is apparent in Pseudo-Longinus' *On the Sublime*, see *Du sublime*, ed. and tr. H. LEBÈGUE (Paris, 1952).

process of using and its consummation. But why did he employ this *di*-stinction and what was at stake in this separating process?

II. 1. Distinguish in order to unify?:

Vti et frui in the *De Doctrina Christiana* I

According to the *De Ordine* II, xi, 30, *ratio* consists in our ability to combine the similar and divide the dissimilar. What here attracts our attention is the underlying idea of singling out and binding together our notions according to a certain referent as an essential feature of the knowing process. The same line of reasoning is also apparent at the beginning of his *De doctrina christiana*, where three kinds of distinction are drawn with reference to human knowledge: the first concerns that between the mode of finding out what has to be understood and that of expressing what is understood, which are the two principal "things" in biblical interpretation¹¹; the second is that between the reality (*res*) of the signified and the outer sign (*signum*) of that reality¹², something of particular importance for his sacramental theology; and the final distinction, which really concerns us here, is that between the "reality for using" and the "reality for fruition"¹³. It is in the development of this final distinction that we can find a clear elaboration of the logic¹⁴ of *uti* and of *frui*. This may be summed up in the following three points:

1. The sense of *uti* and of *frui* is explained through the use of the images of a journey (*cursus*) and its final completion in the return to one's homeland (*patria*)¹⁵.
2. An element of will is apparent in the choice, either to use an object for immediate gratification or to reserve it for the final enjoyment¹⁶.

¹¹ I, i, 1.

¹² I, ii, 2.

¹³ I, iii, 3.

¹⁴ A word of precision about the term "logic" as employed here would be apposite. For the purposes of this present paper, I am not referring to any formalized system of logic such as would be apparent in one of the recognized schools of philosophy, but rather to a general approach to reasoning, something which would seem to do greater justice to the eclectic nature and scope of Augustine's mind.

¹⁵ I, iv, 4 "Suppose we were foreign travellers (*peregrini*) who could not live happily except in our home country. [...] Thus in this mortal life, wandering from God, if we wish to return to our home country where we can be happy [...]"

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: "But if the amenities of the journey (*amoenitates itineris*) and the motion of the vehicles itself delights us, and we were led to enjoy those things which we should use, we would not wish to end our path quickly, and, entangled in a perverse sweetness, we should be alienated from our country, whose sweetness would make us happy."

3. The problem of the inherent value of an object is implicit in the discussion concerning its proper employment, whether as a consumable resource or as something directed towards the inconsumable supreme Good.

It is in terms of this noetic perspective of identifying what is what that Augustine makes the distinction between the utilization of temporal means and the fruition of the eternal end. Treated in the light of the wayfaring of the soul, all temporal reality created for our utility has the role of a 'support' to help direct us towards an eternal state of beatitude, the long desired fulfillment of the itinerary¹⁷. What should here be noted is the distinction between these two modes of reality, the one transitory, and the other eternal, which latter Augustine came to define as the efficient cause of beatitude¹⁸.

It is clear from his reasoning at this point that anything but this final reality fails in its attempt to provide for a sense of abiding happiness. It is precisely for this reason that it can be argued that Augustine's distinction between *uti* and *frui* inevitably leads to a devaluation of corporeal reality. Still, if we read carefully the *De doctrina christiana* I, iv, 4, it is the instrumental or secondary function of the medium that is here in question and this doesn't imply any fundamental denigration of the temporal, since it aims rather at the simple clarification between means and ends as the point of continuity between the two categories of reality: "Thus in this mortal life, wandering from God, if we wish to return to our home country where we can be happy we should use this world and enjoy it, so that the 'invisible things' of God 'being understood by (*per*) the things that are made'¹⁹ may be seen, that is, so that from (*de*) corporeal and temporal things we may grasp (*capiamus*) the eternal and spiritual."

All of "this" created order, which is of course closer to the existential condition of our present life, serves to "assist" us in "advancing" on a journey towards that "other" reality, and in this sense, the ancillary role of the sensible world is necessary to facilitate our eventual return to the homeland. Moreover, Augustine further characterizes the utility of this world as one of a guided movement towards another world through the conscious use of the preposition *ad*. This is to

¹⁷ I, iii, 3: "Those which are to be used help (*adiuuamur*) and, as it were, sustain us (*adminiculamur*) as we move toward (*tendentes ad*) happiness in order that we may gain and cling to those things which make us happy."

¹⁸ Cf. *DDC*, I, iii, 3: "Facere nos beatos"; *ibid.*, I, iv, 4: "[...] cuius suauitas faceret beatos"; *ibid.*, "efficere beatos".

¹⁹ *Rm.* 1, 20.

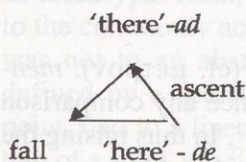
suggest a degree of continuity between the two categories of reality – the one visible and lower, and the other invisible and higher – something which is itself implied by the hierarchic structure of order referred to in the frequent image of a pyramid. Furthermore, the bishop of Hippo then warns against any inversion of this order through the tendency of the will to love and enjoy what it is supposed to use in the service of a higher end, a process here categorized as the “love of lower things” (*amor inferiorum*)²⁰.

The use of this image of an order based on inferiority and superiority necessarily connotes some sense of domination as between the higher and the lower, something which can easily lead to a polarized understanding of the relation between terrestrial good and the celestial Good, as is the case where *uti/frui* is described as a “dualistic dialectic”. Yet it is at this point that Augustine provides a recapitulation of his teaching on how to use properly the goods of the present world through reference to the invisible Good: material goods are regarded as a “point of departure” (cf. *de*), which should lead towards a fuller vision of the spiritual Good: the fruition “in” God. Here Augustine expounds the entire process leading up to this final fruition with much subtlety, employing not only *per* to make clear both the instrumentality and the auxiliary role of the temporal, but also *de* to underline the fact that the starting point of our guided return or ascending journey towards the eternal is necessarily to be found in the terrestrial dimension of the here and now.

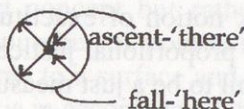
As long as we focus only on the ultimate end of spiritual union with God, seen as the summit of the whole process, the consummation in delectation, we cannot but ascribe a minimal value to the corporeal means. Yet, if we consider all the parts of the entire process together, “from” → “through” → “to(ward)”, we come to see a rather different model of a conjunctive rather than a disjunctive relation between the visible and the invisible. Whereas the bishop of Hippo uses a language that conjures up the image of a polarity between the “low” – terrestrial reality and the “high” – heavenly reality in thus describing the two objects or directions of human love, his fundamental reasoning on the necessary ascent “from here” “to there” can only operate through a constant returning to the ordering unity of the whole.

²⁰ DDC, I, iii, 3: “And we, placed in the midst of things of both kinds, both enjoy and use them; but if we choose to enjoy things that are to be used, our advance is impeded and sometimes even diverted, and we are retarded in obtaining those things which are to be enjoyed, or even prevented altogether, because we are hamstrung by our love of lower things.”

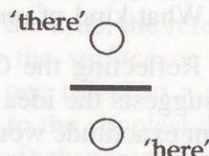
Proceeding further in the same line, let us stop here for a moment to consider what kind of configuration might best convey this aspect of continuity between the tangible reality and the spiritual reality. As already intimated, the movement from one level of reality to the other obviously suggests a triangular structure (cf. 1.1), though the overall sense of recuperation is perhaps better conveyed in employing a circular rather than a linear perspective (cf. 1.2).



1.1



1.2



cf. dualistic perspective

It is this circular representation that permits us to envisage the *di*-stinction between the using process and its completion not only as one of a gradual ascending – from the circumference towards the summit and the center of the circle – but also as a process of interiorization based on a trajectory “from here” “to there”. Here, at least to my mind, is to be found the key to understanding Augustine’s painstaking efforts in distinguishing between the instrumentality of the parts and the final end in itself: his conscious effort to present an analysis of deconstruction is in reality aimed at the eventual restoration of unity rather than providing for a mere opposition through differentiation.

Now it might reasonably be asked, where is all this supposed to be taking us? To try and make the matter a bit clearer, let us examine in some more depth the aspects of continuity between these two categories of reality. In *De Doctrina Christiana* I, v, 5, Augustine defines the underwriting reality of “that” spiritual world in terms of the Trinity. Yet given that all of the sensible and visible order was itself created in Trinity, this implies that the whole of this temporal world not only serves as a reminder of that transcendent order which lies behind, one of Measure without Measure, Number without Number, and Weight without Weight, in short one that is itself incomprehensible to the human mind, but it also serves to allow us to grasp something of the continuity, or even better the simultaneity, between the pleasure of

the outward and corporeal and the delectation of its inner form. Specifically in this perspective, we thus come to see the coherence of elaborating *frui* in terms of an independent absoluteness and finality, such as is indicated in the terms *per se ipsum* and *ad*, while *uti* is rather associated with *per* and *de*, thus letting us discern its instrumental function as part of this whole process of fulfillment.

II. 2. *The instrumentality of the sensible measure-number-weight:* What kind of *ancilla*?

Reflecting the Greek notion of exactitude (cf. μέτρον), *mensura* suggests the idea of a proportional justice since any comparison without exactitude would fail to be a just measure²¹. In thus raising the idea of proportional justice, Augustine defines God as Measure who both provides for existence, as for the mode (*modus*) of that being in assigning a just measure to each creature. This just measure is to appportion to each that which is seemly with reference to the whole, the overall purpose of the creator. Thus each category of being exists according to its own proper mode and with its own limitations, which contains a double meaning of a reduced or confined status, as well as a 'defined' as opposed to an indeterminate form. Since the motive of creation is not to be found in the insufficiency but rather in the fullness of God,²² so the limitation imposed on man is in fact a call to fulfillment in living out to its fullness the proper measure accorded by God, something that can only be understood in 'relational' terms with the Creator²³, who continues to distribute a just measure to each²⁴.

This ontological dependence provides an insight into the intimate relationship between the limited means and the indefinable end going beyond the simple functional relation between the controlling and controlled. At this point, it becomes apparent that the very sense of being proportionally small and functionally restricted in relation to one's creator is itself the cause of wonder at belonging to the whole body of creation²⁵. It is precisely here that the limitation of the parts can be understood as constituting their 'specificity' and thus their irre-

²¹ Cf. "mensura", "mens-metior", Ernout/Meillet; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1983), vol. IV, 632-634.

²² *Conf.*, XIII, iv, 5.

²³ W. J. ROCHE, "Measure, Number, and Weight in Saint Augustine", *The New Scholasticism*, 15 (1941) 353.

²⁴ *De gen. ad litt.*, IV, v, 11.

²⁵ Cf., *Conf.*, I, i, 1: "Et laudare te uult homo, aliqua portio creaturae tuae [...]".

placeable value. It is only thus that we can appreciate our limited condition as creature without any pejorative overtone.

It is against this background that we might turn to consider Augustine's views on the subsidiary yet supportive role of visible number. While *mensura* assigns to each creature a limited and thus definable existence, *numerus* supplies a proper form to that existence by giving it a distinctive form. Within this perspective, *numerus*, *species* and *forma*²⁶ are interchangeable, reflecting the platonic notion of archetypal form, εἶδος. It should perhaps be noted that according to the commonly accepted theory of number at the time, the reference was not to an abstract concept but rather to the surface or space defined by a specific number of points, thus one refers to a single point, two to a line, three to a surface and four to the simplest definition of a solid, etc.²⁷ It is in accordance with this Pythagorean idea that Augustine provided the following classification of the five degrees of numbers: i) sounding numbers; ii) heard numbers; iii) pronounced numbers; iv) remembered numbers; v) judging numbers²⁸. Without going into the often complex theory that lies behind each of these categories, it will be sufficient in the context of the present paper to note that these too were considered as standing in some sort of hierarchic relationship.

Yet how should this relationship be understood? Once again the overriding idea must be seen as that of ascending from the lowest degree of perception to the highest degree of comprehension. In fact it is this process which takes us closest to the reality as opposed to the sensibly perceived image or "shadow" of the object concerned. Here sounding number is the lowest form, since its production is dependent on the use of corporeal, spatial and temporal means.

The number perceived by the sense of hearing is in so far superior in that it requires the exercise of the human soul, which in turn is directly responsible for the production of numbers through the coordination of various parts of the body to produce the phonetic effect. The superiority of remembered numbers lies in the fact that they are interiorized and thus no longer dependent on these categories of time and space. Even so, the captured numerical form in memory can fade away with time and is thus in no sense imperishable. Only the highest degree, which is the number of judgment can be seen as exempt from this limitation and it thus constitutes the referent for all of the others.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, iii, 7.

²⁷ F. Coplestone, *A History of Philosophy* (New York, 1993), vol. I, 34.

²⁸ *De mus.*, VI, ii, 2-viii, 22.

It is in the light of the foregoing that we can begin to grasp the significance of Augustine's description of the Son of God as the "Number without number". Not only is this to establish his role as the ultimate referent of all existence, but more particularly it accords to each creature its proportionally just form, as well as its capacity for fulfillment.²⁹ Yet this aspect of Augustine's thought also serves to stress the necessity of a process of interiorization in the ascent to a fully enlightened state of knowledge. The fallen condition of humanity requires the recovery of its true form through a constant 'turning' towards the inner Light, the Form of all form³⁰. In thus purifying the *homo interior*, we come nearer to our proper form of spirituality and come to (re)adjust ourselves to receive the gift of God's descending *Sapientia*³¹. True to his theory of number, Augustine presents this descent of the formless Form as a conscious embrace of the corporeal through which the exteriorization of the innermost and invisible Light can be achieved. It is this externalized form that must serve as a bridge for the knowledge of the internal light. Here can be seen the real meaning of the Number of judgment which refers to the role of the enlightening servant rather than the agent of a judge-ruler.

A final dimension to his discussion of the instrumentality of form is provided by the concept of weight. As can be seen in his famous expression, "pondus meum amor meus"³², Augustine designates God's Spirit as weight, a universal principle that draws all things to their repose and stability³³, inspiring them with the desire to maintain their proper place in the order of creation³⁴. This compound idea of a guided movement and resulting stability can readily be understood when we think of an oscillating scale settling about its point of equilibrium. Just as the scale will tip one way or another in accordance with weight, so the object of its love will determine the disposition of the human will. Here weight can be associated with love in a relation governed by the attraction of pleasure³⁵. All love produces a desire for union with the object of its affection³⁶, while at the same time generating a sense of stability and repose since its weight is that

²⁹ *De fide et sym.*, II, 2.

³⁰ *De vera rel.*, XXXVI, 66.

³¹ *DDC*, I, xiv, 13.

³² *Conf.*, XIII, ix, 10.

³³ *De gen. ad litt.*, IV, iii, 7.

³⁴ *De Trin.*, VI, x, 11.

³⁵ *De mus.*, VI, xi, 29: "Delectatio quippe quasi pondus est animae. Delectatio ergo ordinat animam."

³⁶ *De Trin.*, VIII, 14; *DDQ LXXXIII*, q. 35, 1.

of a buttress or support³⁷. Moreover, love itself is sustained by the force of desire tending either towards a sense of progression or regression in function of the end to which the relation is destined. It is in the context of this movement of oscillation that Augustine expounds his views on the proper ordering in our objects of love: "There are four kinds of things that are to be loved – one, that which is above (*supra*) us; two, that which we are; three, that which is next to (*iuxta*) us; four, that which is below (*infra*) us."³⁸ Here a simple conceptualization of his position is provided in schema 2.1³⁹, which clearly suggests the relationship between the superior and the inferior turning about its point of equilibrium. This polarity of the high and the low, which has normally been seen to justify an hierarchic conception of order, is in one sense confirmed by the bishop of Hippo's explanation of the necessary order between body and soul, between soul and spirit, and between spirit (*mens*) and God,⁴⁰ all of which refer to the model of the pyramid outlined in figure 2.2⁴¹. Here the sense of the paradigm is provided by the "principle of subordination" on the basis of the functional relation between commandment and submission⁴².

Yet a different understanding of the relation between the governing and the governed becomes apparent if we consider the whole with reference to this potentially unifying force of weight, which serves as an impulse (*impetus*) to draw us towards the face-to-face vision of God, by whom all things are sustained (cf. *tenere*). Here neither of the models previously suggested is adequate, since God must be represented as both the pivot and the summit of the whole. Some form of conical structure⁴³ as represented by the concentric circles of figure 2.3 seems better to correspond to both the ascending and interiorizing

³⁷ This association between weight and stability can best be seen in considering the role of an anchor whose weight serves to secure a boat in a safe haven. The point can be further exemplified through the use of another more pertinent image: since God is fullness, so the love of God must lead to a condition of perfect stability where nothing can subsist to disturb this state of unity and accord, a point noted by Augustine on several occasions such as *Conf.* II, i, 1: "serenitas dilectionis"; *ibid.*, II, vi, 13: "tu es autem plenitudo et indiciens copia incorruptibilis suavitatis".

³⁸ *DDC*, I, xxiii, 22.

³⁹ Cf. *infra* p. 194.

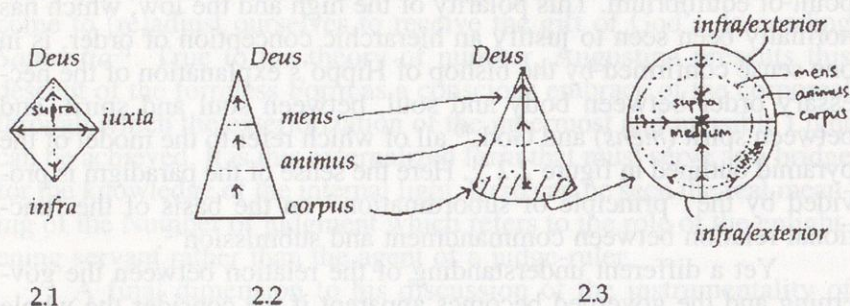
⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, I, viii, 8; xxvii, 28; *Io. eu. trat.*, XXXII, 3.

⁴¹ Cf. *infra* p. 194.

⁴² P. CAMBRONNE, "La *Iustitia* chez s. Augustin. *Cité de Dieu*, IV, iv. Des Philosophies helléniques à la Théologie", *Cahier RADET*, 5 (1986-1987) 18.

⁴³ I am here deeply indebted to P. Cambronne, whose helpful and perceptive remarks on a preliminary version of this research concerning the configuration of *ordo* in Augustine's thought are reflected in much of what follows.

movements that Augustine clearly has in mind. It is in the final figure 2.3 that the different aspects of the initial two models are taken up. Seen from the base of the cone, the movement of ascending is also one of interiorizing, while the unity of the whole is maintained by the central point. Moreover, the equidistance from any point on the circumference to the summit faithfully embodies Augustine's notion of divine Justice, where the responsibility of the judge is to act as the referential point of the circle in maintaining a perfect equilibrium between extremes.⁴⁴



Despite the earlier impression that he sought to draw a rigid distinction between the finality of fruition and the temporality of use, this idea of the life-giving and sustaining role of the governing principle is to suggest a model much closer to that of maternal love as essential to the ordered development of the child. Augustine's choice of words is here important, since he seeks to conjure up this sense of the nurturing role of the Holy Spirit through the use of such terms as "kindling" and "glowing" (cf. *in-ardescere*)⁴⁵ to describe this aspect of implanted love.

Even though a literal reading of *seruire*⁴⁶, *regnare*⁴⁷ and *dominari*⁴⁸ might suggest a return to the image of an hierarchic pyramid,

⁴⁴ As regards the ancient understanding of the circle representing the plenitude, thus perfection, cf. Plato, *Tim.*, 33b; "Cercle", *Vocabulaire d'esthétique*, dir. A. SOURIAU, (Paris, 1990); K. SVOBODA, "Les idées esthétiques de Cicéron", *Acta Sessionis Ciceronianae* (1960) 111.

⁴⁵ *Conf.*, XIII, ix, 10: "Dono tuo accendimur et sursum ferimur; inardescimus et imus. Ascendimus ascensiones in corde et cantamus canticum graduum. Igne tuo, igne tuo bono inardescimus et imus, quoniam sursum imus ad pacem Hierusalem, [...]".

⁴⁶ *DDC*, I, xxiii, 23.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, I, xxiii, 22.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, I, xxiii, 23.

this can in no way represent the architectonic unity about the pivot (*cardo*) that has here come to be Augustine's main concern. The overriding importance of unity, as opposed to any notion of polarity between the world of sense experience and the spiritual realm, is most strikingly evident in his adherence to the Trinity. In its application to the original idea of *uti/frui*, this is likewise to define a new paradigm for man's relation to the created order, where the image of the cultivator is less that of the sower than that of the nurturing mother concerned with the fructification of the crop. Moreover, it is to suggest that the normative structures of power as reflected in human relations must be rethought to take account of the ancillary sense of service normally associated with the mothering image, which might otherwise be defined as that of fostering domestic stability.

II. 3. *The oneness of will*

Bearing this point in mind, let us now consider the development of Augustine's reflections in q. 30 of the *De diuersis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*, where the Trinitarian onto-esthetic-ethical structure implicit in the distinction of *uti/frui* is all the more apparent. Here the idea is raised with reference to Cicero's distinction between *utile* and *honestum*⁴⁹. Notable is the fact that Augustine makes it clear from the outset that *honestum* or moral goodness, and *utile*, which refers to the expedient, are not mutually exclusive, even though they might be defined in a "distinctive" way: *frui* consists in the enjoyment of "what is desirable for its own sake" (*quod propter se ipsum expetendum est*) while *uti* designates "what has to be referred to something else" (*quod ad aliud aliquid referendum est*). When we think of Cicero's definition of *honestum* in his *De finibus* III, xi, 36: "Omne autem quod honestum sit, id esse propter se expetendum [...]", it is not difficult to recognize a homology in distinguishing between *honestum/utile* and *frui/uti*, as can easily be seen in the identification of *propter se ipsum* with the self-sufficient Good, while the conditional stature of the contained benefit is implied by *ad*.

In an earlier passage of question 30, Augustine describes the capital importance of disposition, *ordinatio*, which is described as the suitable arrangement of the means with a view to the ultimate state of pleasure (cf. *capere uoluptatem*) through the perception of intelligible

⁴⁹ Here the term "distinction" is only one of convenience and doesn't imply that Cicero really separates "honestum" from "utile" as incompatible, which would be in clear contradiction to his conclusion in *De officiis*.

beauty. It is in this sense of ordering by the proper arrangement of the means adapted to the desired end that Augustine underlines the importance of "using well" the goods of the sensible and material world. All parts of creation are in themselves good and if properly set forth in harmony with divine providence, can lead to the final fruition in God. Yet, it was the bishop's firmly held conviction that as a result of the fall some process of conversion was essential to the recovery of our original inner splendor. One evident consequence of this fallen condition of humanity was the diminution of both the noetic and volitive capacity to know rightly, to choose well and to act justly. It is thus not surprising that the idea of conversion actually forms a key part in Augustine's distinction of *uti/frui*, where it is seen as the means to heal our 'wounded reason' and to recover the oneness from the divided or 'composed' will. And it is also for this reason that the strongly ethical dimension of *uti/frui* as the regulating principle of the temporal world cannot be considered independently from its ontological and aesthetic aspect as has already been shown.

III. Questions in guise of conclusion

All too often, Augustine's distinction of *uti* and of *frui* has been approached from the standpoints either of a monotheistic tradition determined to root out all idols of the human heart or of an anthropocentric preoccupation with the ethical problems associated with an increasingly materialistic society. The result can simply be seen in an artificial polarization between two categories of norm, namely the divine versus the human, the other-worldly versus the this-worldly or even worse the sacred versus the secular. Saying this, my intention is not to underestimate the importance of this approach, which has the advantage of providing for conceptual clarity, nor to denigrate its significance in thus trying to actualize some part of Augustine's thought in our environment of late modernity. Yet it should not be forgotten that his was also a mind whose scope and originality was forged by the circumstances of the time. Not only does this make it a very difficult exercise to dissect the various elements from the whole, but the very attempt has in many ways served to belie the underlying coherence of his thought.

Now in the guise of conclusion, I would like to suggest that we would do well ourselves to make a distinction in our analysis of Augustine's work between what he intended to say and the way and manner of its expression. As a rhetor none was more keenly aware of

the power of words to conjure up images in the mind of the hearer, nor of their capacity to leave a kind of smoke screen behind which the author's real intention could well remain hidden. The *uti/frui* distinction is not necessarily to be taken at face value as an expression of a latent dualism in Augustine's mind, but rather as evidence of a grounding logic within which such ontological dualism would eventually be overcome. Going even further in considering this idea of unity as expressed through dichotomic distinction as one of the basic aspects of Augustine's mind, one might here ponder Maritain's *vera intentio* in distinguishing clearly between the "moyens temporels riches" and the "moyens temporels pauvres"⁵⁰ in the process of the incarnation of the spiritual through the temporal. Isn't there a certain analogy between Augustine's teaching about the importance of the conversion of our entire being as a prerequisite to knowing, choosing and acting justly, where alone the apparent discrepancy between the visibly expedient and the invisible Good can be resolved, and Maritain's equally forceful requirement of spiritual poverty as the proper ground for reforming the temporal reign in accordance with the spiritual order? It seems to me that both Augustine and Maritain pinpoint the necessity of a purifying transformation, not in the sense of the radical elimination of all that might be considered as heterogeneous but rather of a perpetual "adjustment" to the essential form, in other words unifying our will to that of God. It is precisely in this perspective of conformity with spiritual poverty that I would like to suggest it is only through the ancillary spirit of openness and humility that the Church can serve to nurture, cultivate and fructify what it has been granted in usufruct by the Creator.

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⁵⁰ *Religion et Culture* (Paris, 1946) 66-75.