

LIMITATIONS TO *EXERCITATIO MENTIS*: (I) CHANGES IN RHETORICAL STYLE IN AUGUSTINE'S DIALOGUES.

'When then Apollo says: 'Know thyself,' he says, 'Know thy soul', For the body is as it were a vessel or a sort of shelter for the soul: every act of your soul is an act of yours.'¹

Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* I.22.52

Augustine must have been familiar with this text and with the rich tradition of reflection on the self, forthcoming from the Socratic exegesis of the Delphic command. As his ancestors, Cicero in his *Tusculan Disputations* addressed the problem of the introspection and the self-knowledge. Difficulties arise, because when we turn the focus of the eye of our soul from the exterior objects towards the inner self, we 'see by means of the soul alone' (*animo ipso animum videre*). Cicero studies the nature of the soul 'as it were in a house that is not its own', which is 'more doubtful than the conception of the nature of the soul when it has quitted the body'. The immediate context of this discussion of the possibility of self-knowledge is an argument to proof the soul's immortality. This, for Cicero, leads in the end to the conclusion that there must be a fifth (material and immortal) essence of both gods and souls. (I.26.65) An epistemological problem concerning self-knowledge rises: 'the soul does not see its own shape' (*non videt formam suam*; I.27.67)

In the past, Augustine's earlier works sometimes have been contrasted with his later works because of the prominent presence of philosophical topics and the presumed absence of scriptural and doctrinal language.² More recently, scholarly attention focussed on Augustine's biographical liminal situation in Cassiciacum: his position

¹ M.T. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, I.22.52, Transl. J.E. King (Cambridge Mass. 1950), 63. This article is an extended version of a paper read at the XVth International Conference on Patristic Studies at the University of Oxford 2007. It is part of a research project at Utrecht University on Augustine's reception of self-knowledge, Therapy and *exercitatio animi* which I hope to finish with a dissertation on this subject. I am grateful to my supervisors Willemien Otten and Paul van Geest for their advices and to Rob Brouwer and Simon Paul for their comments on draft versions of this article.

² See Carol Harrison's refutation of a presumed dichotomy between the earlier and the later Augustinian works in C. Harrison., *Rethinking Augustine's early Theology. An Argument for Continuity.*, (Oxford 2006).

between a secular career as a professor in rhetoric and the baptised Christian who later became ordained as a priest and would occupy the seat of the bishop of Hippo.³

What attracts the attention in this article is Augustine's pedagogy in his earlier works, which I will argue being a rhetorical pedagogy, which serves Augustine's purpose to teach a Christian philosophy. This should not surprise us, because Augustine was educated as a professor in rhetoric, which combines his interest in teaching and his interest in rhetoric. In what follows we will study and compare elements of the rhetorical structure of dialogues written in the Cassiciacum period and in the year after his leave from Cassiciacum in Rome, *De ordine*, *De beata vita*, *De Magistro*, *Contra Academicos*, and *De quantitate animae*. We will see how the rhetorical structure supports Augustine's peculiar and specific view on topics, treated by Cicero, such as self-knowledge, nature of the human soul and the happy life. The rhetorical structure of the Cassiciacum dialogues expresses a fine rationality which points the reader to the necessity of the acceptance of the path of the authority of faith and church in addition to the path of reason, which has been explored by Cicero and many other philosophers.

Augustine and Selfknowledge

Augustine's special sensibility for the *topos* of the inner self and self-knowledge has been noticed by scholars⁴ and can be traced in many works, but especially in his dialogues, in the *Confessiones*, and especially in *De Trinitate*.

As Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault, and recently also Richard Sorabji have shown, a tradition of reflection on the self and care for the self has been productive in the intellectual environment which directly or indirectly might have influenced Augustine.⁵

Pierre Courcelle has described a rich diversity in tradition and reception of the Delphic 'know yourself' from Plato's dialogues until

³ St. Cooper, 'Scripture at Cassiciacum: I Corinthians 13:13 in the Soliloquies.' In: *Augustinian Studies* 27/2 (1996) 21-46., and more recently C. Coneybeare, 'The Duty of a Teacher: Liminality and disciplina in Augustine's *De Ordine*', in *Augustine and the Disciplines. From Cassiciacum to Confessiones.*, K. Pollmann and M. Vessey (eds.), Oxford 2005., 49-66. Further C. Coneybeare, *The Irrational Augustine* (Oxford 2006).

⁴ Ch. Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity* (Harvard 1989), and recently R. Sorabji, *Self. Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life and Death.* (Oxford 2006), esp. 212-33.

⁵ P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Oxford 2005); M. Foucault, *History of Sexuality* vol. 3. 'The Care of the Self' (Paris 1984); R. Sorabji, *Emotions and Peace of Mind. From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford 2005). P. Rabbow, *Seelenführung. Methodik der Exerzitien in der Antike* (München 1954)

early Christian theologians.⁶ Pierre Hadot has elaborated extensively on the aspect of exercise and self-knowledge in ancient philosophy and explained the element of exercise in early Christianity in its continuity with the existing tradition of exercise: Christianity as a *philosophia christiana*.⁷ Michel Foucault has studied in his third volume of his *History of Sexuality* the archaeology of an existing practice of the care of the self, especially in the stoic tradition and its continuation in early monasticism.⁸ Richard Sorabji, in his *Emotion and Peace of Mind* has deepened these insights with his study of Epictetus, Evagrius and Augustine.

Among early Christian theological reflection on the *topos* of the self-knowledge – often in the context of allegorizing commentaries on the book Song of Songs⁹ – Augustine takes a distinctive and personal position in his interpretation and expression of the reflection on the self. It was Johannes Brachtendorf who noticed the vital function of the disciplines for the faculty of reason in the quest for the self-knowledge.¹⁰

As Michael Foley has pointed out, several Cassiciacum dialogues were written in response to works of Cicero.¹¹ Augustine's *Contra academicos* reacting on Cicero's *Academica*; *De beata vita* on Cicero's *De finibus* and on the *Tusculan disputations* and *De ordine* as a response to Cicero's *De natura deorum* and *De fato*. Despite his admiration for Cicero, Augustine did not copy Cicero straightaway, but – probably inspired by Cicero's example of borrowing and transforming ideas – transformed Ciceronian thought to serve his own (rhetorical) purpose: the introduction of Christianity in the Roman Empire.¹²

⁶ P. Courcelle, *Connais toi-même. De Socrate à Saint Bernard* (Paris 1974-1975).

⁷ Hadot, o.c. 107

⁸ For an evaluation of Hadot's and Foucault's view on self and identity, see Richard Sorabji's recent *Self, Ancient and modern Insights about Individuality. Life and Death*. (Oxford 2006) 48-53. and A. Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*, (Berkeley 2000)

⁹ See Origin (Hom. in Cant., Comm. in Cant) and Ambrose (in Ps. 118). See Courcelle o.c. 97-163. The passage commenting on is Cant. Cant. I.8. In this passage the soul is invited to learn to recognize her likeness to the divine after which she was created. (Genesis) The *gnoti seaton* is an invitation for the bride to recognize in wherein her beauty consists. Beauty, on its turn, incites in the soul a desire for the celestial and intelligible things. Therefore, the soul must recollect itself, concentrate itself and – far from the sensible things – comprehend itself and adhere itself to the Truth.

¹⁰ J. Brachtendorf, 'Self -knowledge and the Sciences in Augustine's early Thinking,' Paper read at the 20th World Congress of Philosophy.

¹¹ M. Foley, 'Cicero, Augustine, and the Philosophical Roots of the Cassiciacum Dialogues,' in: *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 45 (1999), 51-77.

¹² Foley, 76.

Oratio perpetua in Augustine's early work

What attracts our attention now is Augustine's use of rhetorical instruments in his Cassiciacum dialogues and also in some works from the year 388 and 389, the year Augustine had to wait in Rome for his journey to Africa and his actual return to Africa. These dialogues show towards the end of the work a change of the dialogue style, *ratio obliqua* to a monologue, which in literature has been denoted as *oratio perpetua*.¹³

These rhetorical alterations occur in a majority of the dialogues, but most distinctive in *Contra Academicos* (386-87), *De beata vita* (386-87), *De ordine* (386-387) *De Magistro* (389), and *De quantitate animae* (388).¹⁴ As a professional rhetorician, we can expect Augustine to use his rhetorical skills intentionally. Therefore, we also expect these rhetorical alterations to have significance in structure and argumentations. Consequently, we now will have a closer look at the context of these alterations.

(For an outline of the discourses of the dialogues and the relative position of the start of the *oratio perpetua* figure, see Table 1)

Augustine's dialogues

In *Contra Academicos* the change occurs after a request of Alypius, who quotes Cicero's *De finibus*, at the point when Augustine asks Alypius to defend the position of the Academics. They agree that

¹³ Heinrich Lausberg describes *oratio perpetua* in contrast with the interrupted *oratio concisa* and quotes Quintilianus 2.20.7 who compares oratory with the manual fight of the dialectics: *duo ... genera orationis: altera perpetua, quae rhetorice dicitur, altera concisa, quae dialectice, quas ... Zeno adeo coniunxit ut hanc compressae in pugnum manus, illam explicatae diceret similem*. Cf. H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, (München 1973) esp. §920, p. 456. For a detailed study of Cicero's tactical use of the *oratio perpetua* in the persecution of the Roman governor from Sicily Verres (70AD), see Thomas D. Frazel, 'The Composition and Circulation of Cicero's *In Verrem*.' In: *The Classical Quarterly* 54.1 (2004) 128-42. (Thanks to the advises from Rob Brouwer and Karin Salomons)

¹⁴ *Contra Academicos* III.7.15; *De ordine* 10.30; *De beata vita* 33, *De Magistro* 10.32-33, *De quantitate animae* XXXII.69-XXXIII.70. *De musica* and *De libero arbitrio* also expose the switch from dialogue towards a monologuous teaching style. These changes occur in the last books of these works, which are from significant later date as the before mentioned works: resp. 391 and 395. Therefore we excluded them from the scope of this article which concerns Augustine's works from the Cassiciacum period and immediate after.

at this moment the burden for Alypius' intellect is too heavy, and Augustine decides to continue in monologue. He explains to Alypius the defects of the (exoteric) Academic position and the presumed esoteric Platonic doctrine of the Academics which culminates in an account of the 'philosophy of the other, intelligible world'. Augustine refers to the crucial role of self-knowledge when he points out that 'truth about the intelligible is refined and brightened in the soul that knows itself.'¹⁵ It is only with help of incarnation that we can reach the realm of the intelligible world: 'Yet the most subtle chain of reasoning would never call back to this intelligible world souls that have been blinded by the manifold shadows of error and rendered forgetful by the deepest filth from the body, had not God the Highest, moved by a certain compassion for the multitude, humbled and submitted the authority of the Divine Intellect even to the human body itself.'¹⁶ The monologue finds its climax when Augustine points to the path of the authority of Christ: 'I'm resolved not to depart from the authority of Christ on any score whatsoever: I find no more powerful authority.'¹⁷

In *De beata vita* it is an anti-Academic agenda which underscores the dialogue. With help of the *topos* of the banquet the discussion develops towards the conclusion that the happy life is a living with God (17). Augustine alters direct speech in *oratio perpetua* when they discuss the virtues *temperantia* and *modestia* (31). The conclusion is that happiness is the possession of God's wisdom. It is divine authority which discloses that God's wisdom is the Son of God who proceeds from a highest Measure (34). Monnica recognizes and identifies in this Neo-platonic idiom a reference to the Trinity and – as a reaction – she recites a line of Ambrose's hymn to the Trinity. She concludes that only a person who lives according to the theological virtues faith, hope and love, can live a happy life. Once more the path of faith and authority is a necessary condition for a happy life. This conclusion does not deny the value of the path of reason but makes clear that, chronologically, a first phase of formation needs the path of the authority of the Bible and faith in the Trinity.¹⁸

De ordine shows an analogous modification of style in II.30 when Augustine starts his monologue on eternal reason as a path

¹⁵ *Contra Academicos* III.17.37, transl. P. King (Indianapolis 1995). See also K. Schlapbach, *Contra Academicos Buch I. Einleitung und Kommentar*, (Berlin 2003), 192-3, and C. Coneybeare, *The Irrational Augustine*. (Oxford 2006), 38-9.

¹⁶ *Contra Academicos* III.19.42.

¹⁷ *Contra Academicos* III.20.43.

¹⁸ For an excellent analysis of Monnica's crucial role in *De beata vita*, see Catherine Coneybeare's reading in *The Irrational Augustine* (Oxford 2006), 64-92.

towards God and into the self. Augustine describes an abstracting ascent of the intellect from temporal objects towards the intelligible realm. This ascent presupposes reason as its fundament, but Augustine criticizes the exclusive focus on the path of reason. The reason is that for most people this route is fallacious, as 'only a rare class of men is capable of using [reason] as a guide to the knowledge of God or of the soul; either of the soul within us or the world-soul' (*quae aut in nobis aut usque quaque est animam*). This is due to nothing else than the fact that, for anyone who has advanced toward objects of sense, it is difficult to return to himself.¹⁹ Only when reason is self-restrained and discovers the order in itself, it can focus its attention towards God, 'the source of all truth.'²⁰ Augustine makes it clear that the path of authority is indispensable in addition to the path of reason.

In *De magistro* 10.32-33, the switch from dialogue to monologue happens at the moment when the topic of the discussion moves on from a debate on signs to a discourse on the nature of learning without signs. Within this discourse the function of the conventional teacher – who teaches with help of signs – is explained as a stimulus for the student to return into his self in order to consult his inner Teacher. Augustine identifies this Teacher as Christ. It seems, in this case the switch from *oratio obliqua* to *oratio perpetua* warns the reader that a shift to a different style of pedagogy occurs. The first part of the dialogue concerns learning from signs, while in the monologue Augustine clarifies how we can learn without signs in the interiority from the inner Teacher when we turn into our selves.

De quantitate animae was written in 388 during Augustine's second stay in Rome before he was able to return to Africa. It is a conversation with Evodius. After having discussed the (divine) origin of the soul, Evodius and Augustine discuss the magnitude of the soul and function of the memory. They conclude that the soul cannot be divided as a body can be divided.²¹ At the end of XXXII.68 Augustine refers to deficiencies in Evodius education in order to address the complex question of the (neo)platonian theory on the division of the soul at the *momentum* of in its connection with the body. Augustine's conclusion is that the magnitude of the soul is not determined by extension or time, but by its strength and power. They decide to postpone the discussion of the question of the number of souls. The change from

¹⁹ *De ordine* II.11.30, transl. R.P. Russell, 'Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil', (New York 1948).

²⁰ *De ordine* II.19.51.

²¹ *De quantitate animae* XXXI.62-XXXII.66.

dialogue towards *oratio perpetua* occurs immediately after this conclusion.

Augustine starts to explain to Evodius the value (*valeam*) of the soul and decides with a reference to the topic of self-knowledge to restrict his speech on the human soul, for 'it is only for her that we should care if we care for our self' (*quam solam curare debemus, si nobismetipsis curae sumus*).²² In a seven staged ladder Augustine describes the ascent of the soul. First the level of biology, the senses, the memory, purification of the soul, continuation of purification and self-awareness, cleansing of the eye of the soul, and the last stage which is not a stage but a house (destination): the stage of *frui* and *delectatio*.²³ In the latter stage Augustine explains the path towards God (Christ) and explains why we are fed well by the *lac parvulorum* of the church²⁴, and he summarizes main topics of the Rule of Faith: incarnation and resurrection. The relationship with the main topic of this dialogue – the nature of the soul becomes clear, when Augustine clarifies the intermediate position of the human soul. He concludes that the magnitude of the soul is reconstituted by the reconciliation of the soul with God with help of the *vera religione*, which will liberate the soul in the service to God.²⁵ Faith is therefore a indispensable element in the ascent of the soul. The ascent of the soul is explained in terms of the path towards contemplation, of the turn inwards, which simultaneously is a movement upwards. But Augustine also uses the metaphor of participation in beauty. Despite the free will only the *vera religione* reconciles the soul with God, which has been divorced from God because of sin. Faith guides the soul, purifies and reforms her, and feeds the soul. Love and merits of good works can strengthen the soul. The conclusion is ambivalent: the soul suffers death because of sin, but this does not destroy the power to excel in moral virtue. Truth, the vision of God himself is the reward for a virtuous life, which respects meticulously Gods commands.

Returning to the question of the change to *oratio perpetua* in XIII.70, it seems that it marks Evodius' deficiency in education in front of the ascent of the soul. Augustine's description of the ascent of the soul in terms of the ladder, and the subsequent explanation of major articles of the creed, makes it clear that the *lac parvulorum* of

²² *De quantitate animae* XXXIII.70

²³ *De quantitate animae* XXXIII.71-76

²⁴ See T.J. van Bavel, 'L'humanité du Christ comme *lac parvulorum* et comme *via* dans la spiritualité de saint Augustin.', in: *Augustiniana* (1957) 7, 245-281.

²⁵ *De quantitate animae* XXXIV.78

the church is indispensable for the soul on its journey towards God, which is closely connected with a turn inwards.

In 1972, Bernd Reiner Voss noticed the structuring framework of reason and authority in the dialogues. According to him, the rhetorical changes have a rhetorical function in the dissolving of the literary distance between the 'dialogue-author' and the 'dialogue-speaker'.²⁶

We have seen that the *oratio perpetua* starts at crucial stages in the dialogues: the moment where Augustine (or Monnica) employ arguments and insights which exceed the regular use of reason and, which sometimes culminate in the name of Christ or in an explanation on the Rule of Faith (*De Magistro*, *Contra Academicos*). *De ordine* closes with an account of the divine presence in the order, and in *De beata vita* Monnica concludes with a prayer to the Trinity. In *De quantitate animae* the change to *oratio perpetua* occurs when the question of indivisibility of the soul is at stake. This question immediately touches Augustine's view of the self and the individuality, which was one of the issues on which Augustine must have felt urged to develop his own position, possibly in reaction on a platonic view on the self, which allowed, or even assumed a multiple self, as the embodied souls are divided selves from the unified intelligible self.²⁷ Augustine's reply is a description of the ascent of the soul in seven grades and an explanation of major articles from the Creed. This was followed by a description of the present intermediate position of the soul, reconciled with God with help of the *vera religione*. This appears to be a theological reply to a contemporary question concerning the human soul and the nature of the self, amplified with help of Augustine's rhetorical skills in service of his new born mission.

These observations support the impression that Augustine with help of his characteristic ambivalent philosophic-Christian idiom, his scriptural references, prayers to the Trinity and the mentioning of the name of Christ had a refined apologetic agenda, which he implemented with help of his rhetorical skills. Augustine's position does not exclude the path of reason – why would he otherwise spend pages on the discussion of the disciplines – but rather adds a new discipline to the familiar disciplines: the discipline of Christian faith in the authority of Christ. This Christian doctrine requires an attitude of intellectual

²⁶ B.R. Voss, *Der Dialog in der frühchristlichen Literatur* (München 1970), 217-20.

²⁷ For a discussion of individuality in Platonism and Neoplatonism, see Richard Sorabji, *Self, Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life and Death*. (Oxford 2006), esp. Ch. 6: Is the true self individual in the Platonist tradition from Plato to Averroës?, pp. 115-53.

modesty in the approval of the authority of the Bible and the teaching of the church in the Rule of Faith, which obviously formed the context of interpretation for Augustine in his earlier and later scriptural exegesis.²⁸

Augustine probably expresses this attitude of intellectual modesty as a contrast to the attitude of pride which irritated him in philosophical debate as well as in the praxis of the Manichean religion. Obviously, this did not withhold him from using their knowledge and skills for his own purpose: the defence of the faith as a true philosophy. What could be characteristic of Augustine's true philosophy? Augustine's contribution to the eudaimonistic discourse is a presentation of Christ as a mediator of real happiness. (*De beata vita*) Reacting on Manichean ideas on the nature of evil, Augustine develops his own ideas on divine order and the function of the *disciplinae* in this order. (*De ordine*) In *De quantitate animae*, Augustine's reaction on the current discussion of the nature and essence of the human soul is an ascent of the soul and an exposure on the faith of the church. In *Contra academicos*, Augustine discusses incarnation as a necessary intermediate for the soul who wants to acquire knowledge of the self, in addition to his enthusiast plead for the secret history of Platonism.

In his view, Augustine does not exclude the path of reason, but he modifies current ideas on the ascent of the soul with its special position of the study of disciplines as training for the soul (*exercitatio mentis*).

It seems Augustine's rhetorical changes of style signalize limitations to the capacity of human reason and of the principle of *exercitatio mentis*. He warns the reader that from that point on, the argument presupposes the recognition of the path of the discipline of Christian doctrine. The noticed switches of 'rhetorical gear' also alarm the reader that it is Augustine (or Monnica) personally who explain their view on the topics and no longer a variety of opinions and thought as expressed in the variety of voices in the dialogue.

What could be the significance of Augustine's focus to include the authority of faith and scripture in his pedagogical framework? Augustine's thought is much too refined to explain his rhetorical changes in a simple reason – authority dichotomy as (pagan) philosophy versus (Christian) theology.

²⁸ F. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*. (Cambridge 1997). For a discussion of the presence of Augustine's theme's of grace and providence in his early works, see Carol Harrison's *Rethinking Augustine's early Theology*, o.c.

Michael Foley in his article noticed the close correspondence between Augustine's *Cassiciacum* dialogues and Ciceronian works. Augustine thus imitates Cicero in his capacity to transform intellectual and literary concepts from the past.

As the concept of self-knowledge is a major structuring topic in the dialogues, it can be assumed that Augustine intended to express his view on the topic of the self-knowledge, possibly as a reaction on the traditional treatment of the topic of self-knowledge, which he could have read in Cicero and other authors.

Origin and nature of Augustine's concept of self has recently been the subject of scholarly attention. Some ascribed to Augustine the invention of the concept of inner self which has dominated centuries of western philosophy and theology.²⁹ Others, as recently Richard Sorabji, suggest a similarity in Porphyry's account of the self and the epistemological suppositions for knowledge of the self, or awareness of the self, and Augustine's so called *Cogito*-arguments in *De Trinitate*, but also from an earlier date. Sorabji showed that not only (neo)platonistic discourse, but also in sceptical and stoic schools, the discussion on the epistemological conditions for knowledge of the self was a major topic. As Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault both have shown, the consequential ethical practice was a practice of exercise. Certain existing practices of religious life matched very well with this concept of exercise, such as forms of monastic life, in the solitude of the desert as well as in the communal monastic life, which later became Augustine's ideal. As the reception of the Delphic command has been complex, the discussion on the knowledge of the self was itself an expression of a variety of practices and (mystical) theories. Seneca prescribed practices of self-examination³⁰, Gnostic, platonic and Christian interpretations which took the shape of the quest for the divine presence in the self in mysticism, but also materialistic interpretations of the soul such as in the *Tusculan Disputations* of Cicero. What the exact shape and nature was of these 'techniques de soi' remains object of discussion, but the mere presence of them shows that Augustine very well could have known about these exercises.³¹ As self knowledge was one of the major topics of philosophical debate, Augustine very well could – in whatever form – have felt an impulse

²⁹ Taylor o.c.

³⁰ e.g. Seneca, *De Ira* III.36

³¹ On the discussion between Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault, and Martha Nussbaum's criticism on both of them see, J. Sellars, *The Art of Living. The Stoics on Nature and Function of Philosophy*. (Burlington/Ashgate 2003) 116-18; 174-5.

as a new born Christian to articulate the intellectual framework of his view on *philosophia christiana*. It is likely that this included a reaction or even a reply on the existing discourse on self and self-knowledge or even self-awareness.

What can we refer to as characteristic of Augustine's early account of the complex tradition of self-knowledge? It is clear that both the Socratic account and Augustine's discourse state that a mental state of 'conscious ignorance' is a necessary condition for the start of the process of formation. This is e.g. expressed within the classical tradition in the literary figure of Alcibiades in Plato's dialogues and in its commentaries and reception. Augustine's appreciation of the function of secondary emotions – Alcibiades' grief – in the process of mental growth and formation echoes Cicero's description of secondary emotions in his *Tusculan Disputations*.³²

It is in this context that Monnicás person highlights. As Catherine Coneybeare has shown in her reading of the dialogues, Monnica's role is a very special role.³³ Among authors in Augustine's intellectual environment it was not uncommon to use allegorical literary techniques of personification, often with help of female figures: Varro's personifications of the *disciplinae*, Augustine's Reason in the Soliloquies, Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis*, and – later – Boethius' Lady Philosophy.³⁴ Danuta Shanzer has pointed to Varro's influence on Augustine's style. Monnica's role seems to be too special and crucial in Augustine's dialogues to be a mere literary convention. Augustine's use of rhetorical skills, especially of the *oratio perpetua* in his early works suggest that Monnica's literary person – her presence and her role – somehow must have served Augustine's rhetorical purpose to explain essential aspects of his reply to the classical heritage of reflection on the self. The Monnica from the dialogues incorporates elements of Augustine's concept of 'humble wisdom', which adds to the path of reason the discipline of the authority of Christ, faith as *exercitatio mentis*, as a religious exercise.³⁵ This included a virtuous life according to, and with help of, the theological virtues.

³² J. Brachtendorf, 'Cicero and Augustine on the Passions,' in: *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 43(1997) 289-308, especially 294-5 and 300-3.

³³ C. Coneybeare, *The Irrational Augustine* (Oxford 2006).

³⁴ D.R. Shanzer, 'Augustine's Disciplines: *Silunt diutius Musae Varronis?*' in K. Pollmann/M. Vessey (eds), *Augustine and the Disciplines. From Cassiciacum to Confessions* (Oxford 2005), 69-112.

³⁵ W. Otten, *Exercitatio mentis: religie als denkoefening*. Diesrede van de Universiteit Utrecht 2007.

These observations suggest that Augustine used his rhetorical skills to highlight the overarching framework of reason **and** authority in his early works.

It seems the above-mentioned observations do support Johannes Brachtendorfs reported observations in his lecture at the World Conference of Philosophy. Concerning the function of the *disciplinae* they also support to a large extent Catherine Coneybeare's observations in the staging and construction of the Cassiciacum dialogues and Augustine's fashioning of Monnica's role. Simultaneously the discussed observations suggest that Augustine's rationality was a rhetorical rationality which presupposed the act of faith. Perhaps this could be evaluated as a philosophical weakness or irrationality, but the straightforwardness of the use of the rhetorical techniques suggest that for Augustine himself this (already) was obvious, as early as the Cassiciacum period.³⁶ This eventually would support Carol Harrison's observations concerning the presence of theological topics such as grace in the earlier work of Augustine. Augustine's rhetorical pedagogy shows a rhetorical rationality, which simultaneously imitates and transforms classical intellectual heritage.

Augustine suggests in his reaction on the classical and contemporary variety of opinions in the discussion on knowledge of the self that the path of the disciplines (reason) alone is not sufficient. Augustine adds the path of faith and of the authority of Christian discipline, which will later finds its more developed expression in *De Doctrina Christiana* and *De Trinitate* as a scriptural hermeneutics and as possibly also as a reply to the tradition of reflection on the self.

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³⁶ Coneybeare, *The Irrational Augustine* o.c. 38 and 40.