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Mirabilis Ordinatio.
Soul and Body in Augustine's *Sermo de Providentia Dei*
(S. Dolbeau 29, 4-5)

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The following paper aims to analyse the central chapters of Augustine's *Sermo De Providentia Dei*, dedicated to the description of the human body's order and the human being's general structure, consisting of soul and body. This topic builds up the central argument for the existence of Divine Providence in this text. It can also be called "micro-cosmological proof", connecting with the ancient philosophical description of man as a "little world". This expression recalls the ancient and widespread idea of man as a "microcosm", which entails that the laws of the world are mirrored in the human being, yet on a smaller scale.¹

Augustine's *Sermo Dolbeau 29*, also called *Sermo De Providentia Dei*, was discovered by François Dolbeau, who published it in 1995.² The complete version of the text has survived only in a single manuscript, which dates to the first half of the 12th century and comes from the San Benedetto Po's abbey (on the outskirts of Mantova, in Italy).³ Dolbeau was able to find this text by stringing together the fragmentary history of its indirect tradition.⁴

¹ This theory is implicitly present in the fragment of the most important Greek philosophers prior to Plato, in Plato's dialogues and in Aristotle, who opposed the expressions "small" and "large world" in a single passage of the *Physica* (*Phys.* VIII,2,252 b 26-27). Stoicism and Neoplatonism inherited and certainly transmitted this theory to the Greek Fathers (Aller 1944: 321), while the Latin Fathers derived this idea mainly from Macrobius. However, Chalcidius' commentary on the *Timaeus* also seems to have played an important role in the Latin transmission of this concept (Aller 1944/2: 321). About the history of this idea s. Conger 1922: 1 ff.; Hommel 1943: 56 ff.; Kurdzialek 1971: 35 ff.; Muñoz Valle 1975: 210 ff.

² Dolbeau 1995b: 267-289. So far, there are some translations of the text (in Italian: Tarulli 2002: 762-781; Vignini 2003; in Spanish: Añoz 2001: 17-27; in Dutch: Gehlen-Springorum et al. 2012), but there has been no complete commentary.

³ Today the manuscript is kept in the Municipal Library of Mantova: Mantova, Bibl. Comunale 213 (B III 9), ff. 99-103, s. Dolbeau 1995b: 268 f.

⁴ Essentially, it can be divided into two independent lines: the first depends on Eugippius' *Excerpta Ex Operibus S. Augustini*, transmitting a long fragment, which includes the entire actual eighth chapter and a part of the tenth one. The second line of the indirect tradition depends on the *florilegium* of St. Nikolaus in Passau, at present kept in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich (Clm. 16057, ff. 34-98v.). It dates back to the 12th century. This anthology transmits the *incipit* of the *Sermo De Providentia Dei*, which is absent in Eugippius' text, and a part of the tenth chapter. The other

Compared to Augustine's other sermons, the *Sermo De Providentia Dei* is peculiar with respect to style and content. The style of our text shows complex prose, marked by long and well-composed sentences, common in philosophical argumentation.⁵ The lecture of Paul's letter to the Romans (*Rm* 2,3)⁶ is the starting point of Augustine's argumentation in favour of Divine Providence. The argument is developed here primarily in philosophical terms and the theological concepts join-in the argument's structure only at the last part of the text (cc. 11-12, which is a kind of *peroratio*).⁷ Augustine intends to respond to the opponents of Providence, who deny God's concern for human matters (*res humanae*), as they are confused and do not follow a coherent rule. The fact that both good and wicked men at time rejoice and at others suffer, supplies the opponents of Providence with the evidence against divine care and justice.⁸

Augustine's argumentation is addressed to his adversaries and to the public of the faithful as well, providing the last one with a kind of "argumentative material" to oppose the pagan objections against the Divine Providence.⁹ At the end of chapter 3,

manuscripts including the fragments seem to depend on these two lines of the indirect tradition of the text: s. Dolbeau 1995b: 269 f., 1995a: 21 ff.

⁵ This syntactical complexity brings the *Sermo De Providentia Dei* nearer to the *genus submissum* or *humile*, which aims to teach or prove something (*docere* or *probare*) rather than to the *genus grande*, marked by powerful rhetorical strategies (*vehementia*), which aim to move the public (*flectere* or *movere*). The first of these is typical for the apologetic works, like the *De Civitate Dei*, the second is preferred for the sermons, which aim to move the public. Augustine's theory of the *genera dicendi* is explained in the fourth book of the *De Doctrina Christiana*, s. Norden 1986: 622 f.; Olivar 1991: 363 ff.; Pieri 1998: 255 ff. Moreover, the fragment transmitted by Eugippius presents three *variae lectiones* (*sermo, liber, expositio*) of the genre's text from which the fragment is derived: s. Dolbeau 1995a: 22, 1995b: 281 (apparatus). In *ep.* 231,7, Augustine mentions a *Liber De Providentia*, together with other treatises. We do not have a correspondent work of the Bishop. Therefore, Dolbeau assumes that the *Sermo* could be the work mentioned in Augustine's letter (Dolbeau 1995b: 268).

⁶ This is the only reference to the concrete homiletic situation, so we do not have helpful elements for the dating of the text (we can only observe that there are not any references to sack of Rome of AD 410, which should be connected with the topic of Divine Providence). Dolbeau assumes the period between AD 405 and AD 415 for the preaching of this sermon (Dolbeau 1995b: 274). Hombert 2000: 231, n. 5, confirms this assumption: a right dating of the text can be the period of Pelagian controversy. Therefore, Hombert dates the *Sermo De Providentia Dei* after AD 412.

⁷ Chapter 8 (on the theodicy problem) and chapter 9 (on an interpretation of a Paul's verse: I *Cor* 9,9; cf. *Dt* 25,4) are also dedicated to Christian themes.

⁸ S. Dolbeau 29,2: *...omne, iniquunt, quod providentia gubernatur, ordinatum oportet esse atque dispositum. Quid est autem, aiunt, inordinatus et perturbatus rebus humanis, ubi plerumque mala tanta felicitate praepollent, ut insuper etiam dominantur bonis, boni vero miseria conteruntur et malis subditi esse coguntur?* In the second chapter of the sermon, Augustine's adversaries play the role of fictitious interlocutors and the Bishop of Hippo holds a dialogue with them - a rhetorical strategy arising from the diatribe (Bultmann 1910: 10 ff.; Norden 1986: 141).

⁹ Madec 1995: 307 f., but any doubt also assailed the faithful: 'Dans sa prédication, Augustin a souvent eu l'occasion d'évoquer les difficultés que les pauvres humain de tous temps peuvent éprouver à l'égard de la Providence' (Madec 1995: 302).

Augustine affirms that the adversaries of Divine Providence should stay for a while in themselves (*in se paululum remorentur*), so they could see the greatness of the natural order in themselves in spite of their vices.¹⁰ Augustine's demonstration is also based on the natural order, mirrored in the human being (4: *praeclari ordinis pulchritudinem monstrant*).¹¹ Through self-observation Augustine's audience can also recognise the presence of divine order in the world and therefore the existence of Divine Providence:¹² the Bishop means to be immediately understood by the public and develops his reasoning in a very coherent way.¹³

The description of the human being follows a very rigorous hierarchical structure, moving from the general to the particular. Its first step is the consideration of the human being as a composite of soul and body, the former being superior to the latter. Augustine goes on to explain how the soul has an internal orderly structure, because the rational part rules its other parts. Finally, Augustine describes the order of the human body and specifically the rational disposition of the sense organs and of the limbs. He aims to demonstrate the priority of the rational element, so the description follows a very hierarchical order. He also tries to show that every single limb is perfect in relation to the function that God assigned to it. As Dolbeau briefly remarked in his introduction to the sermon,¹⁴ that description of the human body can be located within a Stoic tradition, illustrated by Cicero's second book of the *De Natura Deorum* (133 ff.). However, Platonic topics can also be seen in Augustine's exposition. Dolbeau assumed, therefore, that Augustine may have remembered or consulted a Platonic handbook.¹⁵ In Cicero's passage, we find a description only of the human body, while in Apuleius' first book of the *De Platone et Eius Dogmate* (cc. 13,207 to 16,215) the section about the human soul and the primacy of its rational part precedes the description of the body. Moreover, there is an analogy between the general structures

¹⁰ S. Dolbeau 29,3: ... *in se paululum remorentur ac seipsos aliquanto diligentius inspicere non dedignentur, et videant etiam in tanta labe vitiorum quantus sit in eis ordo naturae.*

¹¹ The whole passage is quoted at p. 4 (s. n. 19 for the translation).

¹² Augustine's argumentation follows an ascensional way: from the observation of order in the world it is possible to come to the comprehension of higher realities, according to the Augustinian philosophical schema *a corporalibus ad incorporalia*. On the Varronian origin of this schema, reinterpreted by Augustine in a Neoplatonic way, s. Cipriani 2000: 212.

¹³ After the description of the human being, Augustine's demonstration continues with a description of order in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, so the section from chapter 4 to chapter 7 reflects the hierarchy of beings.

¹⁴ Dolbeau 1995b: 272, n. 28.

¹⁵ Dolbeau 1995b: 272, n. 28.

of the two descriptions.¹⁶ Between Augustine's and Apuleius' texts, however, there are also several differences, to which we will now turn.

In the first part of chapter 4, Augustine affirms that the human being is composed of soul and body: *Primum quod homo ex anima constat et corpore*.¹⁷ For Augustine this bipartition is an assumption which does not need any demonstration. The body is the ideal partner of the soul: we find this concept of man as an "entire person" regularly in Augustine's philosophy.¹⁸ The "vertical" relationship between soul and body, the domination of the first one and the subjection of the second one, is emphasised several times in our text: *Primum quod homo ex anima constat et corpore invisibili potiore substantia subiectam visibilem mouet, nempe naturale imperium, quod est anima praedita, et naturale servitium, quod est caro subdita, praeclari ordinis pulchritudinem monstrant* (c. 4).¹⁹ It is a common topic in Ancient Greek philosophy.²⁰ In Latin, the Middle Platonist Apuleius affirms, at the beginning of the thirteenth chapter of his handbook, the soul's domination over the body: *esse animam corporis dominam* (*Plat.* 1,13,207).²¹ The antithesis between the soul as master and the body as slave is also found in two passages of Sallust and Cicero, both quoted by Augustine.²²

In Augustine, man is composed of a duality, and his soul rules his body, so that the body is an integral part of the human being. Body and soul are complementary; they have a relational order, in which every single element of a complex makes sense through its relation to the other parts. Unlike in Platonism, in which the soul is

¹⁶ Perhaps it is not a coincidence that these topics follow a section of Apuleius' handbook, dedicated to the concept of the Divine Providence.

¹⁷ Translation at n. 19.

¹⁸ *Beata v.* 2,7; *an. quant.* 1,2: *sic cum quaeritur ex quibus sit homo compositus, respondere possum, ex anima et corpore*; *mor.* 1,4,6; *doctr. chr.* 1,26: *homo enim ex animo constat et corpore*; *c. Faust.* 22,27: *Constat enim homo ex anima et corpore*; *trin.* 15,7,11: *homo est substantia rationalis constans ex anima et corpore*; *C. adv. leg.* 1,6,9; *c. lul. imp.* 3,46; cf. *mor.* 1,27,52: *Homo... anima rationalis est mortali atque terreno utens corpore*. On the relationship between body and soul, s. O'Daly 1987: 40 ff., 1994: 331; Masutti 1989: 80 ff.; Cipriani 1996: 385 ff., 2000: 208; Rego 2001: 73 ff.; Horn 2007: 479 ff.

¹⁹ 'First of all, the human being is composed of soul and body and moves the visible and subjected substance through an invisible and more powerful substance, namely the natural power given to the soul and a natural slavery - the subjection of the flesh -, these show the beauty of a marvellous order'. When not otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

²⁰ E.g. *Plat. Tim.* 34 c 5 (translated by Cicero *Tim.* 21); *Plotin.* 1,1,4; 4,7,1. S. Miles 1996-2002: 7 ff.; Corrigan 2006: 61 ff.

²¹ 'The soul is the master of the body'. On this formula, s. Beaujeu 1973: 275; Moreschini 1966: 96 f.

²² *Sall. Catil.* 1,2 (= *civ.* 9,9); *Cic. rep.* 3 frg. 36 (= *civ.* 19,21,2).

considered the prisoner of the body,²³ in Augustine's mind, the soul was given to the body in order to arrange it. In Apuleius' *De Platone* we do not find any phrase corresponding to the first assertion of Augustine. The reason for this lies in the fact that Apuleius, according to the *First Alcibiades*' (130 c) definition of man as anything other than his soul, affirms in the second part of this chapter that the whole human being is in his head and face (*Totum vero hominem in capite vultuque esse*; 1,13,207).²⁴ This is different from Augustine's anthropology, which is unitary: *Hoc quidem verum est, quod non totus homo, sed pars melior hominis anima est; nec totus homo corpus, sed inferior hominis pars est; sed cum est utrumque coniunctum simul, habet hominis nomen* (civ. 13,24,2).²⁵ His concept of man is certainly derived from Varro, as we can read in civ. 19,3²⁶ as well as from the Bible.²⁷

Man is a particular kind of being, neither divine nor animal, and has a complex structure. For Augustine, the soul lies in an intermediate state (*medietas*) between God and body.²⁸ The soul should be dominated by God and it should dominate the body. The soul can, therefore, lose its position depending on its moral behaviour. The voluntary element means that the body cannot be a negative element *per se*, but that its value depends on what use the soul makes of it. The soul is responsible for every vital aspect (from vegetative functions to knowledge, perception, memory, imagination and free will)²⁹ and a body without soul would be nothing more than a

²³ Therefore, in the early Augustinian works also the Platonic image of the body as the soul's prison is present (*sol.* 1,14,24; *mor.* 1,22,40). On this tradition, s. Courcelle 1965, specially 430 ff. about Augustine.

²⁴ 'The whole human being consists in the head and face'. Beaujeu 1973: 275. On the success of the *First Alcibiades*' formula, s. Pépin 1971: 55 ff.

²⁵ 'It is indeed true that the soul is not the whole man, but the better part of man, and that the body is not the whole man, but the inferior part of man; and it is when both are joined together that they received the name of man' (Translation by Dyson 1998: 575).

²⁶ O'Daly 1987: 56 ff. Even if Augustine is also influenced by the *First Alcibiades*' tradition (*mor.* 1,52), he does not assert that "the soul is the whole man". He 'understands the definition of the *First Alcibiades* in the light of the Varronian alternative. Man is indeed the composite of body and soul, but if we consider man in terms of his dominant part, man is his soul, with the body as a possession or tool of the soul' (O'Daly 1987: 57).

²⁷ 'It was through his struggle to understand and integrate scriptural teachings on creation, the Incarnation and the resurrection of the body that Augustine came to a new appreciation of the human body as the condition of present trial and learning and the future fulfilment of the resurrection' (Miles 1996-2002: 13 f.). On the development of Augustine's interpretation of the resurrection, s. Miles 1996-2002: 11 ff. (with a rich bibliography).

²⁸ *An quant.* 36,80: *deus igitur summus et verus lege inviolabili et incorrupta ... subiicit animae corpus, animam sibi*; civ. 19,4,4: *... in ipso homine quidam iustus ordo naturae, ut anima subdatur Deo et animae caro et per hoc Deo et anima et caro*; O'Daly 1987: 38 ff., 1994: 330 f.

²⁹ Civ. 5,11: *et animae irrationali dedit [sc. Deus] memoriam sensum appetitum, rationali autem insuper mentem, intelligentiam, voluntatem.*

cadaver: ...*discedente* [sc. *anima*] *qui regebat, cadit quod regebatur* [sc. *corpus*]: *et quoniam cadit, cadaver vocatur* (s. 241,2).³⁰ This means that the body in itself cannot be a negative element.³¹

In the second sentence of chapter four, Augustine continues his description of the hierarchical structure of the human soul: he says that its rational part dominates its other parts. In Apuleius' handbook, we can find the same topic:

In anima porro quod naturae excellentia ratio valet At enim cum tres partes animae ducat esse, plurimum et ceteris eius partibus [eius] praestat, rationabilem, id est mentis optumam portionem, quid aliud quam ordo clarescit? hanc ait capitis arcem tenere...

Aug. S. Dolbeau 29,4

Apul. Plat. 1,13,207

'In the soul because reason is powerful primarily as result of a natural superiority and as it excels the other parts of the soul, what else could shine best part of the soul, occupies this fortress of the other than order?'

head.'

However, Apuleius mentions explicitly three parts of the soul and says that its best part (the *pars rationabilis* 'rational part'), is situated in the head. Apuleius also describes the position of the other two parts of the soul (called *irascentia* 'anger', namely the spirited part of the soul, and *cupido* or *adpetitus* 'desire', namely its appetitive part): they are situated far away from the rational part because of their vileness. In Augustine we do not find such localisation of the soul's parts. He speaks more generally of a natural superiority of the *ratio* over the other parts of the human soul. The right relationship between soul and body just consists of this supervising function of the human soul's rational part (*ratio ... ceteris eius partibus [eius] praestat*). Augustine normally prefers the antithesis between rational and irrational to the Platonic tripartition,³² as underlined by the antithesis between *temeraria cupiditate*

³⁰ 'By leaving of the ruler [sc. the soul], the ruled [sc. the body] falls and when it falls, it is called cadaver'. S. also *lo. ev. tr.* 23,5; 6: ... *animam rationalem non beatificari nisi a deo, corpus non vegetari nisi per animam, atque esse quamdam medietatem inter deum et corpus, animam...*; 8,2.

³¹ O'Daly 1987: 8 ff, 1994: 317 f.; Masutti 1989: 97 ff.; Miles 1996-2002: 6 ff.

³² S. *Acad.* 1,3,9: *beatus est ... qui secundum eam partem animi vivit, quam regnare ceteris convenit, et haec pars ratio dicitur...*; *imm. an.* 16,25; *Gn. adv. Man.* 2,13,18: *inferiorem animi partem, quam prudentia rationalis regit, div. qu. 35,2;46,2: ea sui [sc. animae] parte qua excellit, id est, ipsa mente atque ratione; c. Faust. 22,27: Nulli autem dubium est animam corpori naturali ordine praeponendam... sicut anima corpori, ita ipsius animae ratio ceteris eius partibus, quas habent et bestiae, naturae lege praeponitur; civ. 9,4,3, 19,21,2: serviens autem Deo animus recte imperat corpori, inque ipso animo ratio Deo Domino subdita recte imperat libidini vitis que ceteris; cf. civ. 14,19: ...iram atque libidinem vitiosas animi partes esse confessi sunt [sc. philosophi]... Quam partem animi tertiam [sc. mentem atque rationem] velut in arce quadam ad istas regendas perhibent collocatam, ut illa imperante, istis servientibus possit in homine iustitia ex omni animi parte servari.*

(‘blind desire’) and *ratione atque consilio* (‘reason and purpose’ c. 4) in the sentence quoted in the next paragraph. Moreover, Augustine thinks that the whole soul lies in every part of the body: there is a symbiosis between body and soul, which cannot be divided.³³

The evidence of reason’s pre-eminence is the main concept in the second part of the chapter. Augustine’s reasoning becomes here more concrete, one might almost say empiric. It is based on an intuition derived from the experience. Apuleius’ reasoning about the positions of irrational parts of the soul becomes a moral nuance in Augustine, where the appetitive part of the soul becomes a vice:

Nemo enim est ita libidinibus deditus qui dubitet ...irascentiam vero procul a ratione ad domicilium quid respondeat, si interrogetur utrum sit melius cordis deductam esse obsequique eam in loco quod [sit] temeraria cupiditate fertur, an quod respondere sapientiae, cupidinem atque ratione atque consilio gubernatur; ac per hoc et appetitus, postremam mentis portionem, infernas quisquis imprudenter, non rationabiliter, vivit, abdominis sedes tenere...

respondet tamen quid horum sit melius, etsi non actione correctus, certe interrogatione commonitus; itaque nec in homine qui perversos mores gerit, vox ordinis perit, cum vitium natura redarguit.

Aug. S. Dolbeau 29,4

Apul. Plat. 1,13,207

‘Nobody is so attached to desires that he could doubt what he should answer, if questioned, whether it is better to be steered by a blind desire or to be ruled by a rational purpose. Therefore, anybody living in a foolish, irrational way is yet able to respond which choice is better. Even if he will not be corrected in his demeanour, he certainly will be reminded of [this warning] by the question. Thus the voice of order does not die even in the man who behaves perversely, when nature reproaches the vice.’

The Bishop asserts that nobody can be so addicted to desires to think that it is better to be steered by blind desire. The sinner knows what is good, even if his behaviour represents the reversal of the order (*perversos mores*), therefore he maintains a trace of the natural order, because he is conscious of his moving away from God.

³³ S. n. 18.

The fifth chapter deals with the human body.³⁴ Its description follows the top-down direction as well, starting with the description of the head's position. It is placed between the shoulders (*interpositum*) and over the other limbs of the body (*superpositum*) at the same time: *Quis dignis laudibus praedicet caput humeris interpositum et tamquam ceteris membris eminentius honorandum reliquo corpori sicut vehiculo superpositum...* (c. 5).³⁵ The reason for this spatial hierarchy within the body is that limbs should honour the head as the latter is superior to the other corporeal elements.³⁶ Augustine makes clear that the body has a peculiar transport function as well: it is the vehicle of the head (*sicut vehiculo*). This topic arises from Plato's *Timaeus* (44 d-e). We also find it in Apuleius: the phrase *cetera... membra ancillari et subservire capiti* (*Plat.* 1,13,208)³⁷ underlines the subordinate position of the limbs to the head. For Apuleius, they have two functions: to get food and all that the head needs (*cibos et alia subministrare*) and to transport the head (*vectare*); the second function is the same as that of Augustine's sermon.³⁸

In the head, Augustine continues, the senses are evident (*conspicui*) and every one of them lies in its own place. The description of the senses and of their location on the head is rich in images, derived from the second book of Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*:
*...in quo [sc. capite] isti conspicui ...sublime positum [sc. caput] ut Sensus autem **interpretes ac sensus**, locis propriis sedibusque dominum atque rectorem **nuntii rerum** in capite tamquam distincti, **velut in altiore specula** providentiaque eius a periculis in arce mirifice ad usus pro custodia salutis invigilant, et vindicari. Sed *machinamenta*, *necessarios et facti et conlocati quae foris aguntur uel forinsecus quibus ad sentiendas et sunt. Nam oculi tamquam ingeruntur seu laeta seu tristia diiudicandas qualitates sensus **speculatores** altissimum locum interiori menti in quodam suo instructi sunt, ibidem erga optinent, ex quo plurima**

³⁴ S. Dolbeau 29,5: *Corpus quoque ipsum quam mirabili ordinatione in universa sua mole disposita membra contineat, quis sufficiente cogitatione consideret?*

³⁵ 'Who could celebrate with suitable praise the head, placed between the shoulders and over the rest of the body limbs, like its vehicle, as worthy of greater honour than the other limbs?'

³⁶ In Paul's interpretation of the body, the head symbolises Christ, in as much as the other body limbs symbolise the Church (*Col* 1,18; *Eph* 4,15; *1 Cor* 12,12 ff.). However the Pauline metaphor does not arise from our passage. On Paul's "theology of the body" s. Schlier 1957: 437 ff.; Schweizer 1964: 1071 f.; Robinson 1966. On Augustine's interpretation of Church as Christ's body, s. Soiron 1951, at least.

³⁷ 'The other limbs serve and submit to the head.' Beaujeu 1973: 275 f.

³⁸ S. also Aug. *ep.* 13,2: *...corpore, quod a nonnullis etiam dici vehiculum recordaris; civ.* 9,9; s. 223/A,4: *Tu certe vivis: habes corpus, habes animum... corpus vehiculum, animus utens vehiculo; corpus quasi vehiculum quod regatur, animus auriga corporis tui.*

secretario de omnibus iudicanti regiam capitis constituta esse in conspicientes fungantur suo tamquam ministri alacres conspectu rationis, ut munere.

nuntiant. intellegendi ac persentiscendi Cic. Nat. Deor. 2,140

Oculi enim nuntiandis formis veritas adiuvetur. ...tu autem etiam membra ipsa atque coloris...

14. *Sensus* vero ipsi ad ea quae sensusque considera, qui tibi ... sunt sensibilia apte conposita non comites solum virtutum, sed intellegentiam cognatam ministri etiam videbuntur. tenent...

Aug. *S. Dolbeau* 29,5

Apul. *Plat.* 1,13,208 f.

Cic. *Fin.* 2,113

'...the senses are visible in the head, they are distributed each in his proper place and in its distinct seat. Like in a watchtower, they survey to defend the [body's] health. Like quick servants, the senses reveal to the inner mind, judging everything like in a secret retreat, what happens outside [the body] or what is brought in from outside, both happy and sad. Moreover the eyes have to reveal forms and colours...'

'... the head is situated in a higher position in order to rescue [the other parts of the body] from dangers with its foresight, as a ruler or a master. However, the structure and position are the outer world, both in the marvellously adapted to their necessary service. The eyes, as watchmen have the highest station, to give them the widest outlook for the performance of their function.'³⁹

'But I would also have you consider our actual members, and our organs of sensation, which [...] will esteem [you] not as the comrades merely but actually as the servants of the virtues.'⁴⁰

14. The same senses maintain the intelligence related to sensible things, which are composed in a proper way [for each sense].'

Cicero says that the high position of the senses, like a fortress (*in capite tamquam in arce*), is coherent with the former's functions. In Apuleius, this metaphor is referred to the rational part of the soul, as we have just seen, while Augustine varies it with another Ciceronian image. The Bishop describes the senses' position as a watchtower (*velut in altiore specula*). In Cicero, this image is related only to the eyes, which are near the top of the head, compared to watchmen or watchtowers (*Nat. Deor. 2,140: tamquam speculatores*). With the phrase *pro custodia salutis invigilant*, Augustine expresses the aim of the sense organs. A similar concept is expressed in

³⁹ Translation by Rackham 1933: 259.

⁴⁰ Translation by Rackham 1914: 205 f.

Apuleius (*a periculis vindicari*) and in Cicero (*in capite tamquam in arce*) by a military metaphor as well.

Through their high position the senses must survey the health of the body, but they also fill the function of messenger: like prompt servants, the senses refer the external events to the mind (Aug. s. *Dolbeau* 29,5: *tamquam ministri alacres nuntiant*). We find senses as *ministri* in Cicero's *De Finibus* (2,113) and senses as intermediaries and messengers (*interpretes ac nuntii rerum*) in the *De Natura Deorum*.⁴¹ In Augustine's view, the senses are like the windows of the mind.⁴² Their function is to make known to the mind what happens outside the body, as underlined in our sermon by the opposition between outside (*foris; forinsecus*) and inside (*interior mens*). For Augustine, perception is a psychological process, produced by the balanced, active interaction between body and soul (*intentio; contemperatio*).⁴³ The inner sense distinguishes and judges the external sensations.⁴⁴

Thereafter, Augustine describes briefly the function of each sense organ.⁴⁵ The eyes must reveal forms and colours, the ears sounds and voices, the nose smells, and the mouth tastes.⁴⁶ Cicero describes the sense organs as well, following slightly different

⁴¹ S. also Cic. *Tusc.* 1,46 *quinque nuntiis*; *Leg.* 1,26.

⁴² Aug. s. *Dolbeau* 23,6: *Animus si fit absens, fenestrae corporis, etsi pateant, non habent qui per illas videant. Patent oculi, patent aures: si habitator abest, quid prosunt reseratae fores?*; 223/A,4: *Ecce manifesti sunt sensus tui, tamquam ianuae in corpore tuo, per quas nuntietur aliquid interius habitanti animo tuo: oculi, aures, olfactus, gustus, tactus, membra disposita*; en. *Ps.* 41,7; s. 126,3. On sense-perception in Augustine, s. O'Daly 1987: 80 ff.

⁴³ '[...] the term *intentio* indicates the unifying, teleological way in which the proper form of the relationship between soul and body is expressed. This relationship in Augustine's thought is not spatial, [...]; rather, it is expressed as a vital tension. [...] At the psychological level, *intentio* expresses for Augustine the simple process of interior concentration' (Alici 2004-2010: 662 f.).

⁴⁴ 'The objects of sense-perception, in so far as they are perceived, are discriminated: the concentration involved in perceiving (the *intentio sentiendi*) is a judging activity [...] This ability to judge sensations Augustine calls the 'internal sense' (*sensus interior*) [...] that term is also used by Augustine to describe the rational, discerning faculty peculiar to man' (O'Daly 1987: 88 ff.).

⁴⁵ S. *Dolbeau* 29,5: *Oculi enim nuntiandis formis atque coloribus, aures sonis et vocibus, nares odoribus, fauces saporibus serviunt.*

⁴⁶ Augustine often follows this order in the sense organs' description: *Lib. arb.* 2,3,8; 7,16 ff.; *mor.* 1,12,20; *div. qu.* 58,2; 59,3; *conf.* 10,8,13: *sicut lux atque omnes colores formaeque corporum per oculos, per aures autem omnia genera sonorum omnesque odores per aditum narium, omnes saporibus per oris aditum, a sensu autem totius corporis, quid durum, quid molle, quid calidum frigidumve, lene aut asperum...*; *Gn. litt.* 7,13,20: *ad oculos, sed etiam ad sensus ceteros tenues fistulae deducuntur, ad aures videlicet, ad nares, ad palatum, propter audiendum, olfaciendum atque gustandum; ipsumque tangendi sensum, qui per totum corpus est*; en. *Ps.* 134,23 (cf. *Ps.* 115, 5); 141,18; s. *Dolbeau* 23,6; *civ.* 7,23; *ep.* 187,13,40.

order,⁴⁷ yet both Cicero and Augustine proceed from the highest (the eyes) to the lowest (mouth and touch). We find a description of the senses also in Apuleius' *De Platone* (1,14,209 ff.), but its order differs from that of Cicero's and Augustine's descriptions. The Bishop distinguishes touch from the other senses,⁴⁸ because this sense is not localised in a specific organ, but is rather diffused in the whole body. The same characteristic of touch is pointed out by Cicero:

...tactus autem tamquam generalis* sensus per Tactus autem toto corpore aequabiliter fusus est, corpus diffunditur universum, sed a capite sumit ut omnes ictus omnesque nimios et frigoris et etiam ipse principium... calor adpulsus sentire possimus.

*generalis coniecit Dolbeau: generibus M (= Mantova, Bibl. Comunale 213 (B III 9), ff. 99-103)

Aug. S. Dolbeau 29,5

Cic. Nat. Deor. 2,141

'The sense of touch is diffused all over the body, as it were an overall sense, but it also has its origin in the head.'

'The sense of touch is evenly diffused over all the body, to enable us to perceive all sorts of contacts and even the minutest impacts of both cold and heat.'⁴⁹

Then the Bishop describes the body limbs. After the description of the senses we find also in Apuleius' *De Platone* the same topic,⁵⁰ yet differing very much in content. Augustine says that hands lie below the head and are able to do the necessary, to obtain the useful and to push back adverse things.⁵¹ Then he describes the central part of the body: chest and belly, attached to the back, form a kind of case (*arca*), containing the vital organs, because it would be dangerous to touch them.⁵² The image of the *arca* evokes the secrecy and the sanctity of the inner parts of the body. In *civ.* 22,24,4, Augustine rejects the medical dissection of cadavers, because he thinks that the exploration of hidden parts of the body is a violation of the Divine

⁴⁷ Cicero's description is wider than that of Augustine. He starts, like the Bishop, with the description of eyes (s. above) and goes on with ears, nose, mouth and touch (*Nat. Deor.* 2,141).

⁴⁸ This peculiarity of the touch is also found in other works of Augustine, s., e.g.,: *conf.* 10,8,13 (quoted above, n. 46); s. *Dolbeau* 23,6; *ep.* 187,13,40; *Gn. litt.* 7,13,20: (quoted above, n. 46); 7,17,23: ... *tangendi sensu, qui per totum corpus diffunditur, an. quant.* 21,35: *per totum spatium corporis tactus sentitur ab anima*; s. *Dolbeau* 21,6: *universo corpore tuo potes sentire contactum.*

⁴⁹ Translation by Rackham 1933: 259.

⁵⁰ *Apul. Plat.* 1,15,212: *Sed totius corporis habitus et figura membrorum alia condicione sunt optuma alia longe peiora...*

⁵¹ *S. Dolbeau* 29,5: *subsequuntur manus sub capite collocatae habiles ad operanda necessaria, inferenda utilia, repellenda contraria*; cf. *en. Ps.* 36,2,13; 134,23: *manus habent, et non operabuntur...* s. 277,6 (cf. *Ps.* 115,7).

⁵² *S. Dolbeau* 29,5: *deinde pectus et venter velut arcae quaedam dorso adfiguntur opposito, quibus vitalia viscera, quoniam periculose tanguntur, inclusa portantur*; cf. *civ.* 22,24: *secreta vitalium.*

order.⁵³ Such a conception of the human body is the reason for the absence in Augustine of a physiological description of various organs. This is a remarkable difference from the second book of Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* (133 ff.),⁵⁴ as well as from Apuleius' *De Platone* (1,15, 212 ff.). Finally, we arrive at the feet, which are *ultimi*, i.e. the last in Augustine's description, but also the lowest. They hold up the whole body and move it.⁵⁵

In the whole chapter we can observe that gerunds and passive forms are very frequent. The gerund's meaning of necessity is right for expressing the teleological issue of the human being's limbs.⁵⁶ The passive emphasises the Divine activity, because God is the only subject of the creation, creatures must adapt themselves to the rule, established by God for each of them. In this chapter Augustine applies this idea to the limbs, showing that each of them has a perfect structure and is well-placed according to its function and utility for the whole body. So we can recognise traces of Divine Providence in the human body, in the utility of each part of it and also in its beauty (its symmetrical and harmonic structure), which Augustine will examine in the next chapter.

In conclusion, it should be underlined that this passage of Augustine's *Sermo De Providentia Dei* builds up a very coherent section first about the human being and then about the human body. We can recognise not only a thematic similarity between this section and chapters thirteen to sixteen of Apuleius' handbook, as noted by Dolbeau,⁵⁷ but also an analogy of the general structure of the two texts. Augustine's demonstration follows the same steps as Apuleius (superiority of soul over the body, pre-eminence of its rational part, description of the senses and of the limbs). However, we have also pointed out many differences in content, because Augustine adapts the Apuleian frame to his argumentative target and to his anthropological

⁵³ In this passage, Augustine describes the human body very carefully. For an analysis of the Ciceronian echos (specifically of the second book of the *De Natura Deorum*) in this text, s. Testard 1954: 193 ff.

⁵⁴ In *Nat. Deor.* the section about the human body's structure and limbs precedes that on the senses (2,140 ff.).

⁵⁵ S. Dolbeau 29,5: *Ultimi pedes subiciuntur ferendis omnibus moventurque migrandis*; cf. *en. Ps.* 134,23: *pedes habent, et non ambulabunt*.

⁵⁶ In a similar way, in the second book of Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, 'the numerous *ut*- and *ne*-clauses in this context show its strongly teleological character' (Pease 1958: 920).

⁵⁷ S. above, n. 15.

concept. Moreover, the Apuleian frame is enhanced and also modified by Ciceronian elements, especially in the description of the sense organs. Thus, Platonic elements, mediated by Apuleius, and Ciceronian elements build a complex plot, which is also re-interpreted in a Christian perspective. The above discussed passage from *Sermo De Providentia Dei* could serve as a demonstration of Augustine's philosophical background, as well as his reinterpretation of Classical tradition. In this deep process the outlines of the original models are blurred and can be distinguished merely as vague traces.

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