

***Religatio* as Shift from *Scientia* to *Sapientia*: Augustinian Process of Interiorization**

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“Alibi non invenies quam penes te ipsum.”

De Trinitate, 14. 5. 8.

All his life St. Augustine was *homo religiosus*.¹ It is the best description of his persona. The only extant writings of his were written after his conversion. Even as a Christian, Augustine did not forget his neoplatonic heritage. Yet as a Christian, he judged all the influences that he received in the light of his definitive faith. He judged them from the experiential perspective of his interiority: “Consideret se unusquisque vestrum, intret in semetisum, adscendat tribunal mentis suae, constituat se ante conscientiam suam, cogat se confiteri.”²

Augustine, the religious man, did not distinguish between philosophy and theology. He knew that what was natural pertained to man and what was supernatural came from God but was offered to man. Philosophy was “love of wisdom,” but wisdom was not what pertained to man or what man gained by his own merits. There was a truth superior to man, yet offered to man, which could give man true happiness.

¹ Cfr. My book: *Augustinus, Homo Religiosus* (Manila: San Agustín Museum, 2005).

² In *Ioannes Evangelium*, 33, 5.

Because of this, our author undertook a lifelong religious search. He viewed "religatio" as a search. Augustine viewed his religious search, which culminated in the Christian faith, as a research on the truth. To know the truth meant to know how to live. Because the possession of the truth signified the attainment of the "beata vita," the happy life. For Augustine, "religio" opened up itself as a search, as an encounter of "veritas," which meant "beatitudo." The attainment of "beatitudo" was the attainment of "sapientia." But the starting point was man's nature³ and what man could know "scientia."

"Religio" opened up a path, which could be labeled as "religatio," a way of relinking. It is not an easy way. It is a journey. It is a difficult adventure: "Nihil est facilius, mi carissime, quam non solum se dicere, sed etiam opinari verum invenisse; sed quam reipsea difficillimum sit, agnosces, ut confido, his litteris meis."⁴

"Religio" meant "verax cultus, veri Dei," true worship of the true God. This meant knowing God: "Deum cognoscendi." The true God was the truth in itself. This true God was to be found in the true religion: Christianity. To be a Christian meant "amor sapientiae," love of wisdom, philosophy.

Status Quaestionis

Much has been said or written about Augustine's concept of *religio* and the act of *religatio* or relinking, in relation to Augustine's notion of interiority. However, all these have not been interpreted in terms of a shift, epistemological in nature. This is the pretension of the propedeutic reflections that follow.

St. Augustine was a Christian. He had always been a Christian. Even during his years of "flirting" with other religious and philosophical traditions, he never totally abandoned his Christian heritage, which he received as a young catechumen.⁵ He used

³ Cfr. F.-J. Thonnard, "La notion de nature chez saint Augustin. Les progrès dans la polémique antipélagienne" *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 11 (1965), 238-265.

⁴ *De utilitate credendi*, 1, 1.

⁵ *Confessiones*, 1, 9,14; 1, 11, 17.

neoplatonic, stoic, skeptical and epicurean influences to express better his Christian convictions in as much as these elements agreed with his Christian faith. All of these philosophical and religious schools were part of his existential itinerary to the port of the Christian faith, in which he found the *vera religio*.

For Augustine, as well as for any religious man, history is hinged on a Reality that is Real in itself, from whom existence develops as a history: the history of the cosmos in its self-realization. Such a process is shared, communitarian. It implies openness to society and transcendence, as well as communication and the context of such a communication, commonly called tradition. Man is a communicating being. Man creates culture, from which his search for that Reality that is Real in itself emerges. This search is carried out as tradition, as a culture that is transmitted, taught, passed on from one thread of the narrative of history to another.

Augustine clearly parts from this premise. Religion is something shared within a community and is hinged on one's interior beliefs. The fusion of this two dimensions is the plane of experience, the plane of the mediation of Supreme Reality in as much as it is Real in itself and of the Real in itself in as much as it is the Supreme Reality. The plane of experience opens itself in the narrative we call history whose primary content is the itinerary towards the Supreme Truth identified with the Supreme Reality and that which is Real in itself.

Openness thus is the fundamental element of the philosophical and religious search. Openness implies mutuality, relationality. Man's historical search and process is a personal question, not in the individualist sense but in the sense of personality in terms of being experiential, of being the fulchrum of the metaphysical mediation of Reality in itself as the Real and of the Real as Reality in itself.

Epistemological Preliminaries: *Fides et Ratio*⁶

Aware of the insufficiency of reason (better said, the unaided reason of the pagans), as expressed in the pagan philosophical

⁶ Cfr. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998).

traditions, Augustine found in the Christian faith, the fullness of his philosophical search, characterized by the search for truth. "Quod intelligimus, debemus rationi, quod credimus, auctoritati."⁷ In other words, Augustine found his rest in the possession of the truth, revealed by faith.

This faith penetrates into the very root of man's reasoning faculty, without annulling its own merits. "Desideravi intellectu videre quod credidi."⁸ Yet, human reasoning alone is not sufficient: "Ubi defecerit ratio, ibi est fidei aedificatio."⁹ In the same vein, "Quod humana ratio non invenit, fides capit. Ubi ratio deficit, fides proficit."¹⁰ This is true with regards to the knowledge of God, revealed by Jesus Christ: "Nisi aliud esset credere et aliud intelligere, et primo credendum esset quod magnum et divinum intelligere cuperemus, frustra propheta dixisset: nisi credideritis non intelligetis (Is. 7, 9); ipse quoque Dominus et dictis et factis ad credendum primo hortatus est quos ad salutem vocavit; sed postea cum de ipso dono loqueretur quod erat daturus credentibus, non ait: Haec est vita aeterna ut credant, sed: haec est, inquit, vita aeterna ut cognoscant te solum Deum verum et quem missisti Iesum Christum. Deinde iam credentiubs dicit: Quaerite et invenietis, nam neque inventum dici potest quod ingnitum creditur."¹¹

For Augustine, faith and reason are complementary in the itinerary towards the truth: "Intellige ut credas. Crede ut intelligas."¹² Reason prepares man for faith. This is the true merit

⁷ *De utilitate credendi*, 11. Here is another significant Augustinian text on this regard: "De qua (scientia) volumine tertio decimo disputavi, non utique quidquid sciri ab homine potest in rebus humanis, ubi plurimum supervacanea vanitatis et noxiae curiositatis est, huic scientiae tribuens, sed illud tantummodo quo fides saluberrima, quae ad veram beatiudinem ducit, gignitur, nutritur, defenditur, roboratur; qua scientia non pollent fideles plurimi, quamvis polleant ipsa fide plurimum. Aliud est enim scire tantummodo quid homo credere debeat propter adipiscendam vitam beatam quae non nisi aeterna est; aliud autem scire quemadmodum hoc ipsum et piis opituletur et contra impios defendatur, quam proprio appellare vocabulo scientiam videtur apostolus.," *De Trinitate* 14, 1, 3.

⁸ *De Trinitate*, 15, 28.

⁹ *Sermo* 248, 3.

¹⁰ *Sermo* 109, 2.

¹¹ *De libero arbitrio*, 2, 2,6.

¹² *Sermo* 43, 7.

of reason. It is an aid in the search for truth: "Quare vide, obsecro, utrum aliquid invenire possis quod sit in natura hominis ratione sublimius? – Nihil omnino melius invenio."¹³

Faith illumines and directs reason, even to the point of purifying our minds, our reason: "Et ideo est necessaria purgatio mentis nostrae, qua illus ineffabile ineffabiliter videri possit: qua nondum praediti fide nutrimur, et per quaedam tolerabiliora, ut ad illud capiendum apti et habiles efficiamur, itinera ducimur."¹⁴ Such a process of purification eventually leads to Christ: the Supreme Authority, the Supreme Criterion of all Truth: "Mihi autem certum est nusquam prorsus a Christi auctoritate discedere; non enim reperio valentiorum. Quod autem subtilissima ratione persequendum est."¹⁵ Christ is the incarnation of the uncreated wisdom who is God Himself.¹⁶ Faith leads man to the summit of the Truth in itself, in as much as it can be known by man's rational faculties: "Si autem iam fidelis rationem poscat, ut quod credit intelligat, capacitas eius intuenda est, ut secundum eam ratione reddita, sumat fidei suae quantum potest intelligentiam."¹⁷

Vera Religio Vera Philosophia Est:

Augustine identifies the true philosophy (*vera philosophia*) with the true religion (*vera religio*).¹⁸ This identification presupposes the elevation of reason into faith. For Augustine, reason and faith do not constitute two distinct epistemological spheres, unlike the scholastics. Both are the two wings of man's intellectual and voluntary activity. Augustine's posture is not fideism, but a criteriological elevation from the realm of logic and empiricism to a transcendental level of certitude of the possession of truth

¹³ *De libero arbitrio*, 2, 6, 13.

¹⁴ *De Trinitate* I, 1, 3.

¹⁵ *Contra Academicos*, III, 20, 43.

¹⁶ *De beata vita*, 4, 34.

¹⁷ *Epistola*, 20, 4.

¹⁸ *De vera religione*, 5, 8-9. Also: Sic enim creditur et docetur, quod est humanae salutis caput non aliam esse philosophiam, id est sapientiae studium, et aliam religionem," Ibid. 5.

rooted in the interiority of man, which speaks of man's profound totality, projected towards transcendence (or metaphysically projected). This projection is the very dynamism of *religatio*, leading to the Christian God, which is the true God for Augustine.

When Augustine was a Manichean for around nine years, faith for him was viewed in terms of submission to authority. The Manichean sect was very skilled in offering a dialectics and rhetorics of their teaching, which appealed to the young Augustine. But everything was hinged on authority. The skeptics placed authority in doubt. Practically everything was doubtful. This caused a profound crisis in Augustine. Thus he went over to the academics. The academia that Augustine knew was not purely platonic. It was a religious version of the ancient academic school. It was the platonism of Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblicus. This was the platonism which influenced Augustine when he finally met St. Ambrose, passing through Rome and Milan.¹⁹

The religious man Augustine found in neoplatonism the religious element in the search for truth. Neoplatonism made Augustine see that philosophy was not just purely intellectual. It was deeply religious. In fact, it enriched Augustine's understanding of the Christian God and religion: "Apud platonicos me, interim quos sacris nostris non repugnet, reperturum esse confido."²⁰ Philosophy was the knowledge of God and man.²¹ This was for him what constituted the happy life.²² But this happy life is to be found in an act of transcendence, in an ascensional act, rooted in the neoplatonic metaphysical tradition.²³ This is the root of what we could label as Augustinian metaphysics.

¹⁹ Cfr. J.J. O'Meara, *The Young Augustine. The Growth of St. Augustine's Mind Up To His Conversion* (London, 1954); P. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les "Confessiones" de Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1950); P. Alfarié, *L'évolution intellectuelle de saint Augustin*, Vol. I (Paris, 1918); V. Bourke, *Augustine's Quest of Wisdom* (Milwaukee, 1945).

²⁰ *Contra academicos*, 3, 20, 43.

²¹ *Soliloquia* I, 2, 7; I, 15, 27; 2, 1, 1.

²² *De beata vita* 1, 1; 1, 5; 4, 34; *Confessiones*, X, 20-23; *De Civitate Dei*, XIX, 1, 3.

²³ Cfr. R. Holte, *Béatitude et sagesse. Saint Augustin et le problème de la fin de l'homme dans la philosophie ancienne* (Paris, 1962).

Augustine was not merely after human knowledge (*scientia*). He was after wisdom (*sapientia*).²⁴ God alone is the Supreme Wisdom: "Sapientia perfecta est colere Deum secundum mandatorum illius veritatem..." Christ, who claimed to be the Way, the Truth and the Life is "Dei virtus et Dei sapientia... Accepimus autem etiam auctoritate divina Dei filium nihil esse aliud quam Dei sapientiam. Quid putatis esse sapientiam nisi veritatem? Etiam hoc dictum est: Ego sum veritatis."²⁵

Supreme Wisdom is Divine Wisdom. Divine Wisdom is contained in Divine Revelation and Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life towards the possession of Divine Wisdom." Ipse (Christ) nobis fidem de rebus temporalibus inserit, ipse de sempiternis exhibet veritatem. Per ipsum pergimus ad ipsum, tendimus per scientiam ad sapientiam."²⁶ Through Christ, we pass through science towards wisdom.

Philosophy is the port of entry. In its pagan manifestations, it was the initiation into the search for truth. Then this philosophy, in the case of Augustine, "matured" and became identified with religion, not out of sheer fideism, but under the category of the true religion and philosophy. The true philosophy identified with the true religion, which is Christianity, finds the summit of the truth which is God Himself.

Augustine, as stated, did not separate *fides* from *ratio* as two distinct epistemological realms. However, he seemed to be a forerunner of this distinction with his subtle differentiation between *scientia* and *sapientia*. His originality stems in that for him *sapientia* is both *vera philosophia* and *vera religio*.

It is worth noting here that Aristotle's notion of *sapientia*, from the Greek *sophia* which becomes certain knowledge or *episteme*, is bereft of any religious inclination or dimension. It is aesthetic, it starts with perception. The aesthetic level, which consists of the changeable and observable developing into the

²⁴ H.I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris, 1938), 280.

²⁵ *De beata vita* 4, 34; *Retractationes* 1, 1.

²⁶ *De Trinitate* XIII, 19, 24.

logical²⁷, is the starting point for the ascent to the eternal and unchanging, a notion which Augustine inherited from neoplatonism: "Cum anima per seipsam nihil sit... quidquid illi esse est a Deo sit, in ordine suo manens ipsius Dei praesentia vegetatur in mente atque conscientia. Itaque hoc bonum habet intimum. Progredi in id extima quid est aliud quam intima proicere id est longe a se facere Deum? ...Quod enim in illo anima quaerit constantiam scilicet aeternitatemque, non invenit, quoniam rerum transitus completur infima pulchritudo."²⁸ From Aristotle, Augustine also inherited the notion that everything naturally tends to its proper place (*eiz ton oikeion topon*).²⁹ For Augustine, the logical basically follows the law of cosmological and teleological attraction.³⁰ The logical, which Augustine renders in terms of love ("pondus meum amor meus")³¹, is a result, the epistemological derivation of this teleological and cosmological notion.

Love, the sublime metaphysical force of attraction, becomes the epistemological differentiating standard. But Augustine tended to view love as a unifying factor for philosophy (*amor sapientiae*) is in effect love of truth (*amor veritatis*) and is a discourse on the true God (*theologia*), identifiable with the true religion (*vera religio*). In effect, wisdom or *sapientia*, for Augustine in the light

²⁷ Cfr. R. J. Hankinson, "Philosophy of Science" in Several Authors, *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle* (Cambridge-New York, 1995), 109-139.

²⁸ *De musica* 12, 40-64. Also: *De Trinitate* 12, 14, 22; 13, 19, 24. F. Moriones, parting from *De doctrina Christiana*, 3, 4-5, interprets the distinction *scientia* and *sapientia* in the following terms: "Se trata, en definitiva, del concepto básico del *uti* y *frui*. A la ciencia corresponde el *uti*, a la sabiduría, el *frui*. De ahí el carácter místico de la teología de San Agustín, que se puede sintetizar en su doctrina de la restauración de la imagen de Dios en el hombre, renovación, que se efectúa por la iluminación, la sabiduría, la caridad, por las cuales el alma se remonta del conocimiento y amor de lo temporal, 'ciencia' (*uti*) al gozo de las cosas eternas, 'sabiduría' (*frui*)." *La teología de San Agustín* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2004), 8.

²⁹ Aristotle, *Physica*, IV, 8, 215129; *De Caelo*, I, 2, 268b12; *Ibid.*, IV 4, 311a15-30.

³⁰ Cfr. *Confessiones*, 13, 9, 10; *De Civitate Dei* 11, 20.

³¹ Cfr. *Confessiones*, 13, 9, 10; *Epistola*, 157, 2, 9; *Ibid.*, 55, 10, 18; *Enarrationes in Ps.*, 9, 15.

of the Christian and neoplatonic influences received, necessarily transcends the Greek-Aristotelian mundaneness of philosophy.³²

Despite, Augustine's unifying stance, the posterior scholastic view of separating the two realms of *fides* (*theologia*) and *ratio* (*philosophia*) took effect. Philosophers, especially after Augustine, have maintained and insisted on its Aristotelian non-confessional (unchurched, humanist) and secular (enlightened modernity) autonomy, especially with regards to the notion of "subjectivity."³³ It has remained a science on "*rerum humanarum*," with the merits and acquisitions of the reasoning power.

The Opening of the Path to the Supreme Truth: The Truth of *Sapientia*

The Augustinian distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia* and the eventual identification of *vera philosophia* and *vera religio*, all in the line of the relationship between *fides* and *ratio*, opens up a path to the Truth in itself: God. The true philosopher could only be *amator Dei*.³⁴

However, this truth dwells in man's profundity, in man's interior. We all know the Augustinian dictum: "Noli foras ire, in teipsum redi; in interiori homine habitat veritas; et si animam mutabilem inveneris, transcede te ipsum."³⁵ The inward path is an inward journey towards self-transcendence.

The Augustinian interiority is not spatial. It is a metaphysical direction. It is geared towards *religio* through and as *religatio*. *Scientia* qualifies itself as *sapientia* in an act of total and integrated assimilation, directed towards God in terms of love.

The knowledge of God and of self, in a relational manner, is metaphysical for it proceeds from the depths of man's being.

³² Cfr. J.F. Callahan, *Augustine and the Greek Philosophers* (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1967); A.H. Armstrong, *Saint Augustine and Christian Platonism* (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1967).

³³ Cfr. my study: "Memory, Interiority and Subjectivity: Explorations on Augustinian Modernity" *Augustinian Legacy* 8 (2006), 21-41.

³⁴ *De civitate Dei*, 8, 1, 1.

³⁵ *De vera religione*, 39, 72.

Augustinian interiority is above all relational: first to the self, then to the cosmos, and ultimately to God. *Religatio* is this path of relational experience, predominantly cognitive (intellect) and voluntary (will), in as much as it is an interiorizing process. And it remains within this interiorizing process through the memory. As such, it is a metaphysical process that involves and culminates in the interior, as stored by the memory, i.e., in the totality of the human subject, without being epistemologically subjective, but spiritual: involving the total man in relation to the Absolute: the Supreme Reality which is Real and the Real in itself which is the Supreme Reality, mediated in experience, in the fallibility and culpability of human subjectivity, which realizes itself through "religatio," shifting from *scientia* to *sapientia*.

This metaphysical process proceeds from the notion of auto-gnosis, the knowledge of self, something very clear even in the earliest of Augustine's works: "Ut se noscat, magna opus habet consuetudine recedendi a sensibus et animum in seipsum colligendi atque in seipso retinendi. Quod ii tantum assequuntur, qui plagas quasdam opinionum, quas vitae quotidianae cursus infligit, aut solitudine inurunt aut blialibus medicant disciplinis."³⁶

Augustine's religious search is a process of interiorization. The search for truth, which in effect is the search for true happiness, is a critical process which lead our author to various sects and religions. Our author committed errors on this regard, as evidenced by a detailed study of his intellectual evolution, but he always thought of this search as an interiorization process.³⁷

Interiorization is a search, a relinking search. It does not offer ready-made solutions, but inevitably entails a path with curves, setbacks and failures. It demands persistence, the involvement of man's whole being opened to the realm of spirit. This is the very starting point of *religatio*: man's interiority, the guarantee of the involvement of man's totality.

³⁶ *De ordine*, 1, 1, 3.

³⁷ Cfr. W. Beierwaltes, *Regio Beatitudinis. Augustine's Concept of Happiness. The Saint Augustine Lecture 1980* (Villanova, 1991).

Religatio is a relinking process that starts from within. It has been, in effect, an examination of conscience of Augustine wherein he learns of his finitude and culpability vis-à-vis the Infinity of God: "Cognosce quod es, cognosce te infirmum, cognosce te hominem, cognosce te peccatorem, cognosce te maculosum."³⁸ But relinking can only be verified if there is an experiential and existential paradigmatic shift, so to speak, from *scientia* to *sapientia*, from knowledge to philosophy, which is identified with religion.

Said shift has epistemological consequences because they constitute not only a new way of viewing reality (from a transcendental or metaphysical viewpoint), but indicate an experience of certitude on the part of the religious man. *Sapientia* is a transcendental criteriological notion that goes beyond the verification criteriological mode of certain knowledge through demonstration or *scientia*.

Sapientia goes beyond logical and empirical demonstration. It rests on a higher authority, which is assimilated in the profundity or interiority of the religious man who has found the *vera philosophia*, which is the *vera religio*.

God alone, for Augustine, the Trinitarian God of the Christians is the radical hinge and horizon of the truth. He alone is the object of philosophy. The cultivation and the craft of wisdom, which necessarily implies the search for the happy life, must be based, rooted on an unshakable metaphysical principle from which all Truth emanates.

The possession of this Supreme Metaphysical Principle, who is the Supreme Reality who is Real in itself and is the Real in itself as the Supreme Reality, can provide that certitude which goes beyond the logical and empirical limits of mere human science or reasoning.

For Augustine, religion is the search for *sapientia* parting from *scientia*. In his critical examination of all false religions, which are deformations of the truth, our author effectively sees all them as *scientia* and not *sapientia*. *Scientia* only contains

³⁸ *Sermo*, 137, 4, 4.

similarities with *sapientia*. The truth cannot be found in other religions, but only elements similar to it.³⁹

Sapientia is identifiable with *veritas*, with *the vera philosophia* and *vera religio*, which in effect is the supreme criterion of truth. It is a life of *fides*, which does not deny the merits of *ratio*, but elevates it, makes it transcendental, makes it fully experiential. For *ratio* alone is theoretical. *Fides* is practical and rational, it is the fullness of living. *Philosophia* is *religio*. Pagan philosophies in effect are only rational religions: they involve assent with reason, even entering into the irrational with myths. Christianity alone is *vera philosophia*, *vera religio*. For it goes to the truth in itself, which is the Trinitarian God, who transcends everything, even the controlling or grasping powers of reason which Augustine, in *De vera religione*, labels as “mens.” God is “ipsi menti supereminet.”⁴⁰

Final Reflections

Much more can be said on the theme of the present essay. For the present, we are satisfied that these notes have been able to interpret the classical theme of Augustinian *religatio* and interiority in a new light, not perceived or explicitly explained by previous scholars: in terms of a shift from *scientia* to *sapientia*, which is a shift from *ratio* to *fides*, from the reasoning power to man's totality as spirit, as a spiritual subjectivity.

This fascinating theme and novelty, which has always been inherent in Augustinian texts, with which scholars have long wrestled, indeed calls for more reflection. It is enough for the author of these pages to call the attention of scholars and researches to this hermeneutical perspective and, for the meantime, await their consensus. □

³⁹ *De vera religione*, 39, 72.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 36, 67.