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St. Augustine and the Rhetoric of *De ordine*

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ST. AUGUSTINE AND THE RHETORIC OF DE ORDINE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Natalie N. Gigliotti

December 2018

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ABSTRACT

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Dissertation supervised by Ronald C. Arnett

This study contributes to scholarship on the question of Augustine and rhetoric by considering Augustine's use and understanding of rhetoric in *De ordine*, one of his early philosophical dialogues composed during his transition from a life in rhetoric to a life in philosophy. The author studies the text through consideration of Augustine's rhetoric in relationship to three major rhetorical authorities of the time, particularly their cultural applications: sophistic rhetoric, Ciceronian rhetoric, and Christian rhetoric. Through study of these relationships, one perceives Augustine's ingenuity at work as he integrates diverse authorities into his rhetoric of order (*ordo*) and its corresponding philosophical culture, an approach Augustine grounds on the first principle of the unity of all things. Augustine demonstrates the authority and reasonability of Christian teaching on this principle, namely that one God creates and orders all things. In response to this principle, Augustine seeks to cultivate a

moral and intellectual means by which one may recognize the divine order in all of creation, and, through the dialogue, he seeks to persuade others to follow this order of teaching. Augustine's rhetoric of order particularly invites reconsideration of the significance of the liberal arts in the discovery and expression of divine order. Consequently, Augustine reorders the art of rhetoric (*rhetorica*) to teach, delight and move one's soul and the souls of one's audience toward the goodness, truth and beauty of divine relationship.

DEDICATION

In gratitude,

to my family and the faculty of Communication and Rhetorical Studies

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St. Augustine and the Rhetoric of *De ordine*

In addition to Saint Augustine's intellectual contribution to a variety of disciplines, he has also left an enduring impression on the subject of rhetoric as the study of the artful means and practices of persuasion. Although interest in Augustine's understanding of rhetoric has been steady since his own historical moment, scholars have recently renewed their attention to Augustine's contribution to the discipline with particular respect to the relationship between rhetoric and religion, and with predominant attention to the first of Augustine's works to be printed, Book IV of *De doctrina Christiana* (Hermanson, Loewe, et al. 2). The aim of this project is to inform the line of inquiry on Augustine's religious rhetoric by examining rhetorical categories present within a text that has been mostly unexamined by rhetorical scholars, namely *De ordine*,¹ one of Augustine's early philosophical dialogues. Understanding Augustine's use and treatment of rhetoric within this text as one discursive liberal art among others, all ordered toward the fullness of Christian happiness, may help to illuminate some of Augustine's discussions about rhetoric in two of his major post-conversion works related to the subject, *De doctrina Christiana* and *Confessiones*.

Three major metaphors offer guideposts for this study: rhetoric as *responsive*, *metarhetoric* and *order*. To describe Augustine's rhetoric as responsive proposes the primacy of approaching Augustine's understanding of the subject as deeply embedded within the complexities of his historical moment, particularly tensions among diverse rhetorical authorities. Addressing this responsive character permits one to consider how his discussion of rhetoric reflects a distinct ability to mediate historical and cultural constraints in a way that consequently allows him to appropriate existing rhetorical sources for new, emerging purposes. This metaphor

¹ The author is using the Latin title of Augustine's text throughout the project. The English translation consulted is Russell's *Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil* (1942).

also permits us to review much of the existing literature on Augustine and rhetoric. Metarhetoric, as defined by rhetorical scholar James J. Murphy, is a term used throughout this project to describe and discuss first principles that fundamentally shape Augustine's developing understanding of Christian rhetoric ("Metarhetoric" 201). The final metaphor, order, is a metarhetorical term used by Augustine that enables a specific transition, or reordering, of rhetoric in Augustine's thought from the secular rhetoric of his early education and teaching career to the religious rhetoric of *De ordine*. Augustine's metarhetoric of order thus acts as a source of appropriation for his developing understanding of a Christian rhetoric designed to meet the demands of Christian discourse within his historical moment.

This proposal details each metaphor in light of Augustine's developing understanding of the significance of rhetoric, from his childhood education in sophistic rhetoric to his post-conversion trans-philosophical rhetoric. The project then proceeds to look at the rhetoric of *De ordine* as a significant source informing the transition in Augustine's thought from secular to religious rhetoric. Augustine develops a metarhetoric of order that in turn permits him to propose a rhetoric that is appropriate for use in Christian education and discourse, both of which ought to be directed toward the final end of Christian life, the fullness of happiness found in the enjoyment of God. Studying Augustine's metarhetoric of order from this early period of his life, between his final conversion and formal resignation of his secular teaching position in rhetoric, may also shed light on his later writings on rhetoric, including Book IV of *De doctrina Christiana* and *Confessiones*.

Augustine's Rhetoric as Responsive

Since the inception of the discipline, teachers of rhetoric have acknowledged that for practices of rhetoric to be persuasive, i.e., to be rhetorical, they must in some way be responsive

to the circumstances within which they are used (Jost and Hyde xv; Silver 165; Pernot 202). This quality of “receptivity,” whether termed *kairos*, *decorum*, or *sprezzatura*, is essential to rhetorical competence, to the ability of a rhetor to find and express arguments appropriate to the complexities of a given moment. This talent may be intuitive to the rhetor or learned as a principle within rhetorical education. The responsive character of rhetoric is thus typical for the subject as orators put it into service according to the demands of a particular society (Vickers, “Medieval” 214). This rhetorical process, however, is one of opportunity and one of constraint, for as rhetors meet the kairotic needs of the moment, they must attend to both emerging and traditional elements of a historically situated rhetoric, in theory and in practice (Leff 246). Effective rhetors must therefore learn and apply latent as well as new rhetorical categories to topics in a way that gives appropriate credence to both.

St. Augustine’s prominent position within the history of rhetoric is held with particular reference to two of his major texts, *De doctrina Christiana* (begun in AD 396; completed in AD 426) and *Confessiones* (AD 397–401), each of which represents responsive elements of his use and understanding of rhetoric. Each text also contributes to the history of rhetoric in a distinct way, the first presenting in Book IV Augustine’s rationale for Christian eloquence (Murphy, “Debate” 217) and the second detailing Augustine’s critique of rhetorical abuses as well as proper use of the subject in relation to divine wisdom (Sutherland 142–43; Troup 28–32; Tell 392–396). Utilizing these two works, scholars study Augustine’s explicit discussions of rhetoric and rhetoric-related categories in addition to the historical, cultural and personal contexts that inform his use of eloquence. Indeed, the political, religious and educational environment in which Augustine’s writing emerges is central to considering the fullness of his understanding of the significance of rhetoric (Leff 236; Murphy, “Debate” 206; Baldwin 188). Scholars can more

fully appreciate the depth of Augustine's contribution to the history of rhetoric against the backdrop of his fourth century life. This is the case for study of his rhetorical practices as well as study of his discourse on the role of rhetoric for culture and within education, as especially exemplified in *De ordine*.

Augustine's use and understanding of rhetoric is particularly responsive to tensions among rhetorical authorities and their underlying assumptions. He demonstrates this responsiveness in multiple ways, but one means to consider it is through his use of diverse terms in reference to the subject. In *De ordine*, *De doctrina Christiana*, and *Confessiones*, he uses a number of terms in addition to the Latin *rhetorica* to discuss traditional rhetorical categories and topics, e.g., *eloquentia*, *sermonem*, *disertus*, *locutio*, etc. While scholars have argued for the importance of contextual elements to inform Augustine's understanding of a given term (Sutherland 141–142; Press, "Subject" 112–118; Fortin 225–228; Cavadini 165), no major study considers Augustine's use of such terms across the breadth of his work.² Based predominantly on readings of *De doctrina Christiana* and *Confessiones*, scholars generally seem to use "eloquence" to describe Augustine's post-conversion understanding of the subject and "rhetoric" for that which he left behind. Others use these terms more interchangeably.

Eloquentia ("eloquence) and *ars dicendi* ("art of speaking") were the preferred Latin terms for rhetoric (Pernot 102), and it would seem that Augustine's use of the term *eloquentia* in *De doctrina Christiana* and *Confessiones* reflects Cicero's understanding of the term, particularly its interdependence with *sapientia* ("wisdom"). Augustine, however, also uses *rhetorica* ("rules of rhetoric") and *artem rhetoricam* ("art of rhetoric") to denote the rhetoric that

² Drobner notes the importance of looking at Augustine's work collectively to frame his understandings of a given idea, particularly due to Augustine's use of polemical language in making rhetorical arguments of doctrinal importance (19–20). See also Topping (*Happiness* 66).

he learned and taught. Of particular interest to this study is the fact that Augustine uses *rhetorica* within his list of prescribed liberal arts for Christian study in *De ordine* even while using the same term to later criticize certain sophistic rhetorical practices.³ Although it would seem that Augustine's choice of words frequently depends on the purpose of his argument as well as his audience, thorough analysis of Augustine's terminological use would inform discussion of the differentiation between these terms and the nuance of Augustine's responsive writing.

Scholars have repeatedly acknowledged this responsive quality of Augustine's use and understanding of rhetoric in reference to the rhetorical authorities of his time, particularly as they consider Augustine's arguments in *De doctrina Christiana* (henceforth *DDC*). Prominent among this scholarship is the 1930 translation and commentary of Book IV of *DDC* by Sister Thérèse Sullivan, which provides thorough analysis of the classical basis of the text as well as Augustine's Christian adaptation of rhetorical precepts ("Appendix" 330–363). In her summary, Sullivan describes the value of Book IV in three points. According to her evaluation, the text contributes to the history of rhetoric by repudiating sophistic abuses of rhetoric, re-introducing Ciceronian standards for the subject, and presenting a distinctly Christian ideal of those classical standards (362–63). As a mature bishop, Augustine sat down to add final thoughts to the doctrinal text that he had begun many years earlier, and to do so he still utilized many classical rhetorical categories even as he added Christian content to his understanding of eloquence and its usefulness.

Sullivan's summary reflects the responsive character of Augustine's rhetoric in *DDC* Book IV by highlighting Augustine's engagement with major rhetorical authorities of his time.

³ According to Riley's analysis of Augustine's educational curricula, Augustine uses the term "rhetoric" in *De ordine* and *Retractions*, "eloquence" in *De quantitate animae*, and the "art of speaking" in *Confessiones* (132).

Rather than discarding one for another or rejecting the study of rhetoric *in toto*, as had some of his contemporaries (Murphy, “Debate” 206–213), Augustine employed sophistic, Ciceronian and Christian elements to articulate an understanding of eloquence especially for Christian speech while utilizing latent rhetorical authorities of his time. These three categories thus not only demonstrate the historical significance of Book IV but also provide imperative categories for scholars as they approach the broader question of Augustine and rhetoric. By examining sophistic, Ciceronian and Christian aspects of Augustine’s rhetoric, scholars situate Augustine’s work more deeply within the intellectual complexities of his time. All three rhetorical authorities – sophistic, Ciceronian and Christian –valuably contribute to the character of Augustine’s rhetoric, but not without imperative distinctions. Let us then consider more closely the significance of each rhetorical authority for Augustine’s understanding of the subject.

Augustine’s Response to Sophistic Rhetoric

Many studies of Book IV of *DDC* and early chapters of *Confessiones* highlight Augustine’s arguments against practices of sophistic rhetoric that were prevalent during his time, particularly as present within the Roman education system. These scholars situate Augustine’s use of the term *rhetorica* (“rhetoric”) within the historical period known as the Second Sophistic, a period generally known for ornamentally excessive forms of speech taught in rhetoric schools and practiced by orators (Baldwin 187–190; Murphy “Christianization” 25–29; Sutherland 140–142). Such studies demonstrate how Augustine’s negative use of the term “rhetoric” ought not assume his rejection of all rhetorical topics (Sutherland 142) but rather specific forms of rhetorical practice that Augustine eventually considered defective.

Similar to Plato’s critique in the *Gorgias* (Pernot 47), Augustine rejects sophistic rhetoric on both intellectual and moral grounds. For while the rhetorical pedagogy of Augustine’s early

education likely included well-established theoretical and moral elements from Cicero (especially *De Inventione*, *De Oratore*, and *Orator*) and the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* (Troup 18; Farrell 270), greater focus of the time was given to content and forms of speech that simply led students to worldly success within the Imperial system, teaching what Dodaro has termed a “rhetoric of glory” designed to maintain an empire (83). Philosophy and rhetoric were opposed in the Roman schools rather than conjoined (Troup 16–17), the former assumed to be inapplicable to public pursuits. While this tension between the disciplines had existed since Greek antiquity, some thinkers within the Hellenistic Age, such as Cicero’s teacher, Philo of Larissa, had sought to integrate the two (Pernot 69). The marriage between philosophy and rhetoric promoted even by the great Cicero was, however, predominantly ignored during the Imperial Age, and as a result the goal of rhetorical education for most students was solely political and legal achievement. Education did not include the search for a comprehensive and unified set of knowledge, as classical philosopher-orators, like Isocrates, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, had long insisted (Murphy, “End” 230). This rhetoric thus diminished most theoretical and philosophical thought and instead centered predominantly on imitation of rhetorical formulas as a means to acquire power (Farrell 270; Dodaro 81–82; Pernot 190–191). While critiques of this rhetorical form (often pejoratively termed “sophistic”) are familiar to students of the history of rhetoric, Augustine also has concerns about sophistic rhetoric that are representative of his own emerging thought and personal experiences.

Pivotal to Augustine’s critique of certain sophistic practices is the misapplication of rhetoric primarily for worldly success (Farrell 269). By the time Augustine writes *Confessiones*, he has found an outlet he considers more fitting for his rhetorical skills. Rather than using his talent for a profession that loves vanity and seeks after lying (*conf.* IX.4.9), Augustine speaks

and writes to serve the truth (I.15.24). He redirects rhetoric toward an end that will serve all people as it expresses reality through a Christian lens. Thus in his evaluation Augustine describes not only the misappropriation of rhetoric solely for material and political gain but also the inadequacies of a rhetorical pedagogy that support such application, such as the teaching of immoral (pagan) content and the practice of rudely competitive speaking tournaments (*conf.* I.16.26; I.18.28–29). As Augustine is critical of the study of rhetoric isolated from theory and philosophy, he is equally perturbed by its misappropriated use for social and political display isolated from a conception of the common good (Dodaro 123, note 44). In *DDC*, Augustine therefore warns against “sophisms,” or captious conclusions of the reasoning process as well as “sophistical” discourse, which exceeds the rhetorical needs of a given moment by being ornamentally excessive and inordinately focused on expression (*DDC* II.31.48). The issues that Augustine thus takes with sophistic pedagogy and practice revolve around the misuse and misconception of philosophical rhetoric, specific abuses of “rhetorical activity” (Pernot 189), rather than the discipline of rhetoric itself.

Acknowledging these substantial ways that Augustine rejects sophistic practice, he does, however, find particular precepts of sophistic rhetoric valid for his new rhetorical purposes. He accepts the traditionally sophistic emphasis on the function of the orator, imitation as the primary means of learning rhetorical skill, and certain sophistic elements of style (Kennedy, *Classical* 181–182). Augustine seems willing to retain such aspects of his early rhetorical education as long as he can situate them within a Christian understanding of eloquence. Within these constraints, some sophistic principles may be useful to the communication of Christianity. This assessment would seem all the more accurate if we acknowledge Kennedy’s argument that, historically, “the devices of sophistic rhetoric had become the cues to which [Christian]

audiences responded and by which [a Christian orator's] purposes could be best accomplished" (*Classical* 166). Still, while Augustine may have found some sophistic elements acceptable for Christian speech, his tolerance of such devices seems remarkably limited compared to the common rhetorical practices of his time.

Common although it was, sophistic rhetoric as it was practiced in the Late Roman Empire was not the only available authority for rhetoric students (Farrell 271). Close at hand was the established work of Cicero, who, although acknowledged more for his political style than theoretical substance (Kennedy, "Attitudes" 68), was readily accessible to the young Augustine. Although Augustine had already been exposed to rhetorical concepts of Cicero in his formal studies (Troup 18–19), the Roman senator took a much more prominent position in Augustine's thought on his reading of the *Hortensius* at age 19. As Augustine describes the impact of this text on his youthful mind in the *Confessiones*, he writes, "This book changed my affections. It turned my prayers to you, Lord, and caused me to have different purposes and desires" (*conf.* III.4.7). Cicero's exhortation to the philosophical life in the *Hortensius* turned Augustine away from "vain hopes" and toward a desire, a love, for "undying wisdom." While Augustine was accustomed to appreciating and evaluating such a text on the basis of its eloquence alone, this text impressed itself on Augustine's heart not predominantly "by its way of speaking but rather by what it spoke." A closer look reveals Cicero's work as a significant step in Augustine's cultural formation and in the direction of his conversion to Christianity.

Augustine's Response to Ciceronian Rhetoric

Augustine's reflection on this encounter with Cicero's philosophy conveys the pivotal nature of the event. For him, it is a move away from worldly standards of success toward an inherently valuable search for wisdom and truth. Although Augustine does not find within

Cicero's writing the object of his seeking (for as a skeptic, Cicero sought truth without indicating if it could in fact be found), he is enflamed at this time with the desire, the motivation in his heart to pursue what he considers to be a higher purpose (Riley 92). Although this event is sometimes referred to as Augustine's conversion from rhetoric to philosophy (125), such a description is misleading. For contrary to what might be assumed, Cicero's philosophy brought *more* to bear on Augustine's understanding of the significance of *eloquentia*, not less. As he eventually came to reject elements of sophistic rhetoric, the work of Cicero presented a different set of standards for the subject, perhaps most importantly the interdependence of philosophy and rhetoric toward wisdom within a more general (liberal) method of study.

A notable breach occurred between philosophy and rhetoric at least as far back as Greek antiquity, foremost in the work of Plato, who, in criticizing the moral relativism of some rhetoricians of the time, claimed study of the truth for philosophy alone (Vickers, "Territorial Disputes" 249–251). Such "territorial disputes" have a long tradition within the history of rhetoric, typically stemming from binary oppositions, e.g., *episteme* ("knowledge") versus *doxa* ("opinion") (259, 263). Distinct from this line of thinking, however, Cicero claimed in *De Oratore* that the ideal orator must master both subjects. In his exposition of the Latin term *ornatus* Cicero argued for the interdependence "of wisdom and eloquence, of the tongue and the heart, of education in thinking and in speaking, of the life of activity and of leisure" (DiLorenzo, "Ciceronianism" 173). He understood wisdom to be "knowledge embodied in speech," thus maintaining the integrity of both philosophical speculation and rhetorical action in pursuit of the happy life ("Critique" 258). On Augustine's reading of the *Hortensius*, he discovers this inseparability of wisdom and eloquence, of matter (*res*) and words (*verba*) ("Ciceronianism" 174–75). Furthermore, he accepts Cicero's method by which wisdom may be sought, namely that

of philosophy and the liberal arts (Troup 23; Topping, *Happiness* 80–83). Thus in *Confessiones* III.4.8, Augustine writes, “I was delighted with the exhortation only because by its argument I was stirred up and enkindled and set aflame to love, and pursue, and attain and catch hold of, and strongly embrace not this or that sect, but wisdom itself, whatsoever it might be.” From this point on, Cicero’s recommended method of general education in search of wisdom informs Augustine’s understanding of culture.

Augustine’s association with Cicero lasts throughout his career, and he often consults Cicero’s thought on major questions (Troup 21). Yet this association occurs with many nuances as Augustine embraces, rejects, revises or expands on Cicero’s thought for his own purposes. Indeed, Augustine has a great talent for reformulating the ideas of his predecessors (25), and he often demonstrates the originality of his thought through such examples of rhetorical ingenuity. Thus while Augustine retains important elements from Cicero on the nature and practices of the rhetorical art (including the integrity of philosophy and rhetoric), his move toward Christian first principles also leads to certain divergences. Two critical points must be noted. First, on his conversion Augustine rejects the skeptical nature of Cicero’s philosophy (Fortin 226), arguing in *Contra Academicos* that such a position is not only epistemologically erroneous but that it ultimately leads adherents to serious moral and educational deficiencies (Topping, *Happiness* 96–97). In contrast, the truthful character of Christian revelation penetrates epistemological categories of authority and reason while providing wisdom as “wholesome food” for the salvation of all souls (*conf.* V.6.10). In a Christian context, the sweetness of eloquence accompanies wisdom to serve a transcendent truth rather than a merely plausible one.

Secondly, the nature of Christian content is such that it provides its own examples for imitation as well as its own distinct kind of eloquence (*doc. Christ.* IV.20–21; IV.6.9). While

speech was driven toward the socio-political persuasion of elites in Cicero's rhetorical project, Christian eloquence prioritizes clarity for purposes of teaching truth to a universal audience (IV.9.23; IV.12.28). Clarity of thought and expression is of the utmost importance, although Augustine also acknowledges that Christian orators may appropriately exercise all three rhetorical styles (subdued, moderate and grand) to inspire their audiences to action, as demonstrated by Church leaders like Paul, Cyprian and Ambrose (IV.22.51). Just as Christian eloquence is given distinct qualities, so Christian wisdom is also given a "radical reorientation" (Troup 26). Divine wisdom as reflected in the order of creation, in the mysteries of the Church, and in the teachings of Sacred Scripture becomes the primary source shaping Christian thought and speech, providing new topics and new forms of argument for rhetorical uses (Tracy 274). As a result, Augustine's post-conversion rhetoric and his Christian educational project are modeled not only on rhetorical and philosophical terms but also on distinctly theological ones.

Between his reading of the *Hortensius* and his final conversion, Augustine perseveres in his search for wisdom and eloquence. Throughout this period, Augustine's life seems to continue to be at least partially defined by rhetorical signs, as evidenced by his initial dismissal of Scripture due to its lack of artistry (*conf.* III.5.9) and his dissatisfaction with the Manichaean Faustus, who lacked a certain fullness of cultural excellence (*conf.* V.6–7). At this point, Augustine is also teaching in the rhetoric schools of North Africa. For several years, Augustine professes sophistic rhetoric and is eventually promoted to a rhetoric chair in Milan. There in a Milanese church, however, Augustine discovers Ambrose, the Christian bishop who seems not only to embody both wisdom and eloquence but who also resolves many of the philosophical problems with which Augustine has been struggling in his search for wisdom. The preaching of Ambrose, which Augustine at first finds contemptuous, begins to demonstrate certain "coherence

between the exalted matter and the lowly style of Scripture,” and as a result, Augustine gradually comes to accept the authority of Christian revelation (DiLorenzo, “Ciceronianism” 175–76).

Augustine thus finds the Ciceronian ideals that he first encountered in the *Hortensius* fulfilled in Ambrose as well as the final object of his search, that is, true and lasting happiness in God.

Augustine makes a significant change in his life at this point. He has found the sophistic eloquence of his youth to be misdirected toward aims of self-promotion and deception. Inspired by Cicero’s call to the philosophical life, he has explored various intellectual communities as he searched for a wisdom that would satisfy all the desires of his restless heart. Throughout this time Augustine has managed the tensions inherent in his sophistic teaching position and his developing understanding and acceptance of Christianity. Augustine describes the growing disdain he possessed for his profession between chapters two and five of *Confessiones* Book IX. Reflecting the cries of the Book of Psalms, he writes, “How long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity and seek after lying?” (*conf.* IX.4.9). Experiencing a strange and terrible pain in his mouth (IX.4.12), Augustine resolves to resign his teaching position at the same time that he makes known his intention to enter into the Christian Church in Milan. His heart’s search for happiness has found its final object.

Augustine’s Response to Christian Rhetoric

While Cicero instigates Augustine’s desire for the happy life, its final end is found within a Christian understanding of happiness that not only seeks wisdom but also promises to possess it (Gilson 8). As Mallard describes, Cicero’s philosophy “[illumines] what clearheaded Christianity truly [affirms],” that eternal truth alone endures and provides a happiness that cannot be lost (44). Augustine’s developing understanding of Christian doctrine leads him both to theorize about the significance of discourse in the divine destiny of humanity (e.g., *De ordine*,

De magistro, *Confessiones*, *De catechizandis rudibus*) and to make practical use of his rhetorical talents for Christian purposes as opportunities emerge. Therefore, although Augustine resigns from his sophistic rhetoric profession, continuity remains in his use of rhetoric for teaching, writing and speaking within the new circumstances of his life, such as within his spiritual community, his priesthood and his eventual bishopric.

Augustine's understanding of rhetoric also develops through his conversion. Central to his maturing theology of discourse is his understanding of the incarnation as the Word of God. As Troup states, although "this speaking Word functions theologically...[it also] resonates rhetorically, meeting and exceeding the standard of embodied speech required for Cicero's ideal orator" (2). As a result of his understanding of the incarnation, Augustine eventually grounds his post-conversion rhetoric within his deepening understanding of divine speech. The "sweetness" communicated through Christ becomes for Augustine the only true eloquence that can lead humanity to the fullness of happiness available in this life and the next (Cavadini 165–66). As his theology develops, Augustine regards Christ as "the condition, the author and the method of all his thinking," such that he could ask, "How can we think or talk about anything in heaven or on earth apart from Christ?" (Drobner 29). By the time Augustine provides his rationale for use of the rhetorical art in Book IV of *DDC* as well as in Book IX of *Confessiones*, he has already reinvented the subject of rhetoric in profound ways by imbuing it with Christian significance and directing its proper use toward eternal happiness.

Augustine's theological thought also eventually shapes his understanding of the limitations of language. The reality of human sin is for Augustine a pivotal roadblock to humanity's possession of the fullness of divine truth, and one's ability to effectively communicate this truth is always susceptible to error and misinterpretation. Yet neither human

sin nor the ineffability of God distracts Augustine from the urgency of expressing what he knows (Colish 22), for the incarnation also “guarantees the efficacy of divine communication” (Dodaro 108) and moves Augustine to both teach and preach the word of God. Thus Augustine responds to the contemporary debate over whether or not rhetoric ought to have a place in the emerging Christian order with a resounding “yes,” and as Murphy notes, the historical debate ends with his articulation of Book IV of *DDC* (“Debate” 218). In *Confessiones*, Augustine not only demonstrates his own mastery of rhetorical narrative but also advances a Christian understanding of “confession” as a premier form of Christian speech (Farrell 283–84; DiLorenzo, “Divine Eloquence” 76), one that decenters the speaker and invites the topic of humility into the public forum (Dodaro 92, 94). Furthermore, within Augustine’s proposed curricula for Christian education (*De ordine*, *De quantitate animae*, *Retractiones*, *Confessiones*) (Riley 132), *rhetorica* retains a place of importance among the arts as they are directed toward the ultimate purpose of human life, possession of the eternal wisdom that confers happiness. Augustine is therefore able to offer a genuine Christian alternative to the deficient sophistic pedagogy of his early life and to suggest a means by which important elements of classical thought might be reordered for appropriate Christian use.

In summary, Augustine’s ingenious response to these three major rhetorical authorities of his time likely influenced the persuasive success of his own projects. According to Cameron, such apprehending and appropriation of diverse cultural authorities into the emerging, Christian worldview greatly contributed to the eventual dominance of Christian discourse over its classical counterpart (*Christianity* 5). Such appropriation of non-Christian thought was acceptable, argued Augustine, for this intellectual “gold and silver” was not instituted by the pagans themselves but was actually dug up from mines of divine Providence, which were “everywhere infused” (*DDC*

II.40.60). And “when the Christian separates himself in spirit from their miserable [pagan] society, he should take this treasure with him for the just use of teaching the gospel.” Augustine thus contributes to a distinct Christian rhetoric for public orators, teachers and preachers of his time. He utilizes sophistic and Ciceronian elements of rhetoric as “an authoritative platform” on which he can cultivate eloquence for Christian significance and culture (Conley 63). In light of such receptivity, one may suggest that Augustine is simply practicing good rhetoric as he offers acceptance, critique and revision of certain sophistic, Ciceronian and Christian rhetorical elements that were coexisting and competing within the rhetorical instabilities of his historical moment. In Book IV of *DDC*, he responds to all three traditions as he appropriates each within his understanding of Christian discourse.

While Sullivan’s study of *DDC* Book IV particularly demonstrates Augustine’s responsiveness to these predominant rhetorical authorities of his time, additional categories inform scholarly understanding of the depths of his distinctly Christian rhetoric. As Fortin suggests, one must look at the subtleties of Augustine’s post-conversion rhetoric to appreciate the fullness of his contribution to the history of rhetorical thought (220). While his assimilation of classical rhetorical principles demonstrates their potential within his Christian worldview, they were significantly insufficient in and of themselves (Murphy, “Forward” xi). Augustine’s Christian understanding of wisdom and eloquence demands more of rhetoric than its strictly secular account can provide.

Central to the study of Augustine and rhetoric then is the fact that although all three rhetorical authorities continue to inform his rhetorical theory in *DDC*, they are all subjected to a distinctly Christian account of terms. Each has its appropriate place within Augustine’s rhetorical perspective, and each has specific limitations. The highest authority is given to a distinctly

Christian rhetoric that is informed by Christian topics and sources, but scholars have yet to address precisely how the authority of Christian rhetoric comes to the fore in Augustine's thought. We have already acknowledged that Augustine does not resign from his teaching position just to leave rhetoric behind after his conversion. Neither does he simply give Christian arguments for the adoption of Ciceronian precepts. Rather, as Troup notes, Augustine utilizes a philosophically eclectic approach to "remodel and invest [classical rhetoric] with a Christian sense" (26). If Augustine's more original contribution to rhetoric lies in his "Christianization" of the subject (Murphy, "Christianization" 24), a closer look can consider how this process occurs in the development of his thought.

Cameron's book *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* makes several arguments concerning the gradual Christianization of the Roman world. Rather than a simple process of conversion, Cameron suggests the complex transformation involved not only the impact of Christian discourse on society but also "how [Christian discourse] was itself transformed and shaped in the endeavor" (*Christianity* 4). Christian writers, such as Augustine, utilized existing literary devices and techniques to create a distinctly Christian "intellectual and imaginative universe" that was responsive to both theological categories and changing intellectual and cultural trends of the time (*Christianity* 6). In studying the process of Christianization, Cameron stresses the importance of theological content and forms, both established and emerging, as a source of insight concerning the stages of the formation of the Christian worldview (*Christianity* 8). Perhaps then, one can better understand Augustine's own contribution to the Christianization of discourse, specifically Christian discourse about rhetoric, by more closely considering the theological categories shaping

Augustine's rhetoric of Christian eloquence, or in other words, his theological practice and theorizing of the discipline of rhetoric.

As argued above, Augustine provided a persuasive response to the question of the status of rhetoric within his historical moment. Although many of his Christian contemporaries were reluctant to acknowledge the value of rhetoric due to its pagan past (Murphy, "Debate" 213), Augustine found a means to reconcile the classical art with a Christian understanding of communication. Within the scholarship on Augustine and rhetoric, some scholars have specifically considered the influence of theological categories on his "redeemed rhetoric." Three examples include Sutherland's "Love as Rhetorical Principle: The Relationship between Content and Style in the Rhetoric of St. Augustine", Tracy's "Charity, Obscurity, Clarity: Augustine's Search for a True Rhetoric" and Troup's *Temporality, Eternity and Wisdom: The Rhetoric of Augustine's Confessions*. In each of these works, the author addresses the relationship between Augustine's theological thought and his rhetorical assumptions. Tell's study "Augustine and the 'Chair of Lies': Rhetoric in *The Confessions*" also offers an example of both philosophical and theological categories inherent to Augustine's rhetoric. In discussing such categories as central to Augustine's understanding of eloquence, all of these works highlight the interdisciplinary unity of theological, philosophical and rhetorical elements in Augustine's thought and, as this study suggests, potentially point in the direction of a metarhetorical framework.

Although none of these authors specifically describes Augustine's Christian eloquence as "metarhetorical," their conclusions may be said to fall within the boundaries of this term. For metarhetoric, according to Murphy, consist of "first principles, either stated or left implicit, on which a rhetorician bases his whole activity" ("Metarhetoric" 202). In other words, metarhetoric inquires into those topics that a rhetorician needs to know in order to be a rhetorician. For

Augustine, good speakers ought to have fitting rhetorical skills, but more fundamentally, they must first have an understanding of what “the good” is itself (Topping, *Happiness* 28–29).

Augustine’s Christian understanding of the significance of rhetoric thus depends on additional terms that situate and order the subject for his new purposes as well as elucidate his criticisms of earlier classical rhetorical forms, i.e., sophistry and Ciceronianism.

In his 1971 article, Murphy proposes Augustine as a metarhetorician and argues that his sign (*signa*) theory is one particular avenue for consideration of his metarhetoric (“Metarhetoric” 205–209).⁴ The four works mentioned above (Sutherland, Tracy, Troup and Tell) address the centrality of such additional terms as *caritas*, “self,” and “wisdom,” each of which invites consideration of a kind of metarhetoric within Augustine’s work. Without using the term “metarhetoric,” these authors suggest that an understanding of such concepts, each expressing some element of Christian reality, is essential to the study of Augustine’s rhetoric. This proposal suggests that such metarhetorical terms, many of which are interconnected in Augustine’s thought, directly inform his use and understanding of rhetoric and are central to appreciating his contribution to rhetorical history.

Augustine’s Response as Metarhetorical

These authors’ understanding of such terms as “love,” “self” or “wisdom” points to a kind of metarhetoric that grounds Augustine’s reinvention of rhetoric for Christian use. In other words, they act as a metarhetoric within which Augustine may criticize the immorality of sophistic rhetoric, question the validity yet incompleteness of Ciceronian rhetoric, and still articulate a distinctly Christian understanding of rhetoric ordered toward eternal happiness.

Although each of these terms has, in the broadest sense, a historically situated “rhetoric” of its

⁴ Augustine’s use of the term *signa* in *De ordine* would further inform Murphy’s assumption (see for example *ord.* I.8.25).

own, or a history of discourse concerning its use and meaning, metarhetoric suggests that a given set of rhetorical assumptions may be informed by discourse from a variety of disciplines rather than only within the boundaries of a given historical understanding of rhetoric. Such an approach seems particularly relevant to Augustine's cultural milieu, when conditions for Christian truth were assumed to be found outside of the rhetorical discipline (Cameron, *Christianity* 35) and classical reliance on the pragmatic and relative had moved toward the contemplative and absolute (Leff 236). Although this particular point has led some scholars to critique Augustine's contribution to rhetorical history, such as Walker's accusation that Augustine strips rhetoric of its inventive power and reduces it to the art of correct dialectical reasoning (314), such a claim fails to consider the full grounding and possible originality of Augustine's rhetorical approach. Such an accusation also denies the responsive character of the discipline of rhetoric itself and opts to project classical expectations for the subject on a distinctly different time and place. Furthermore, to discuss Augustine's metarhetoric as informative to his developing understanding of the significance of rhetoric is not to suggest that metarhetoric is a subject standing "above" rhetoric *qua* rhetoric ("Metarhetoric: An Editorial Foreword"), but rather that this term permits us to explore the tensions that persist between, in and through Augustine's use of theological, philosophical and rhetorical topics as situated within the context of Late Roman thought.

As Cameron argues, the process of Christianization entailed a complex matrix of philosophical, rhetorical and theological discourses that were frequently put into service for one another (*Christianity* 9). Augustine's intricate approach to the intellectual and cultural problems of his time can escape our notice if we presume to think only within the current constraints of a given discipline. In rising to meet the demand for "a philosophical reconsideration of rhetorical theory" (Leff 236), Augustine utilized categories that are rhetorical as well as traditionally

philosophical and theological. Through an approach that Johnson describes as “mysticism” (229), Augustine puts them all to use in his understanding of a universal Christian discourse.

Metarhetorical terms may thus help scholars to consider more seriously the role of Christian categories within Augustine’s understanding of rhetoric as well as his original contributions to rhetorical history. As Murphy suggests, the study of metarhetoric invites scholars to examine questions that are essential to the enterprise of rhetoric as a whole (“Metarhetoric” 213). Even if we disagree with the given assumptions of a particular metarhetoric, the approach at least clarifies the purposes and ideals of a given, historically situated understanding of rhetoric (212). The aim of this particular project is to inquire into Augustine’s immediate post-conversion thought, specifically his work at Cassiciacum, and to consider what metarhetorical categories are represented there and how they might inform Augustine’s developing understanding of Christian rhetoric at that time. Addressing this transitional period in Augustine’s life, as he was preparing to leave his rhetoric chair and be initiated into the Christian Church, may additionally shed light on Augustine’s later rhetorical assumptions as articulated in *DDC* and *Confessiones*.

This formative period of Augustine’s life, immediately following his conversion yet prior to his formal resignation, has been mostly unexplored by rhetorical scholars. While Augustine was preparing his formal letter of resignation in AD 386, he was also composing three philosophical dialogues. Of these three works, this project centers on *De ordine*, a text that, although written at an early time of Augustine’s life, “contains the elements of the entire Augustinian philosophy” (Russell, “Introduction” iii). Most importantly for our purposes, *De ordine* addresses the use and order of the arts toward eternal happiness, rhetoric among them.

In *De ordine*, Augustine employs sophistic, Ciceronian and Christian elements in his rhetoric, but as mentioned above, his assimilation of secular elements is constrained by a specifically Christian understanding of certain terms. In *DDC* Book IV, Augustine argues that secular rhetoric can be accepted in so far as it is useful for the expression of Christian truth (IV.2.3). Augustine's rhetoric thus has "theological and ethical meaning" in addition to its more technical use (Murphy, "Metarhetoric" 209). While rhetoric as a subject is neutral, "every use of it is either in virtue or in vice" (208). The purpose of Augustine's rhetoric is therefore central to his understanding and use of it. While Augustine's mature reflections on the significance of eloquence in Book IV provide a rationale for Christian use, his earlier writings may inform the transition in his thought from the rhetoric of his childhood education to the one that he articulates in *DDC*.

This particular text, *De ordine*, captures Augustine's arguments in favor of the liberal arts, including rhetoric, as imperative means toward Christian truth and ultimately toward happiness. The contemporary debate among Christians over education was inherently tied to the question of the primacy of Roman secular rhetoric (Cameron, *Later Roman* 152), for the discussion of education was essential to "defining the intellectual base for a culture which would permit the Church to perform its duty of leading men to salvation" (Murphy, "Debate" 207). This concern led some of Augustine's Christian predecessors to reject Roman education entirely and to propose alternatives in its place, such as the study of Christian topics alone (207–213). This response was particularly fitting for a Christian understanding of knowledge, which assumed universal rather than elitist access to an eternal truth that was originally communicated through simple stories to fishermen and not highly trained thinkers and speakers.

But many of these Christian thinkers, like Augustine, had themselves benefitted from classical education and still utilized their rhetorical skills in a number of ways to advance the Christian cause, even while emphasizing strong differences between their own Christian discourse and their pagan contemporaries (Cameron, *Christianity* 85). Their writings thus demonstrate a definite tension between similarities with pagan writing and their desire to disengage from it, or more specifically, the necessity they had for using primary rhetoric while rejecting Roman forms of secondary rhetoric (Schaeffer 296). But the Christian debate also included those who found some classical education necessary, even while they offered critique of the specific use of pagan literature (Murphy, “Debate” 210). Although this latter position promoted classical education as propaedeutical to Christian truth, it also acknowledged distinct qualities of Christian knowledge compared to the conventional wisdom of the world.

When Augustine sat down to write Book IV of *DDC*, the vitality of Roman culture “had already begun to suffer from the questionings of the new Christian element within it” (Murphy, “Debate” 214). As Murphy notes, “it was an age of selection, a time to examine the *sapientia saeculi* to extract from a thousand-year-old heritage whatever would aid in the work of the Lord.” Augustine’s *DDC* was a positive response to this historical dilemma, but his discernment on the question of Christian education had already begun much earlier. Concurrent with his resignation, Augustine’s philosophical dialogues from Cassiciacum, and *De ordine* in particular, are the first source that we have of his thoughts on this pivotal topic, and thus also of his engagement with the question of rhetoric. Within this text, Augustine’s metarhetoric of order informs his transitioning, or reordering, of the subject from his classical background to its use for distinctly Christian purposes.

The Metarhetoric of Order

Augustine's metarhetoric in *De ordine* situates the discipline of rhetoric in a way that gives it the highest purpose Augustine can possibly give it from within his developing Christian worldview – as one valuable liberal art among others, all directed through reason to the beauty, truth and goodness of God. In this text, rhetoric is re-purposed toward the highest Christian end – beatitude, the good that confers true happiness. Each of the seven disciplines that Augustine explicates is tied to this final end, and only in unified form may the arts lead the willing student through reason toward wisdom and happiness (*ord.* II.16.44). This endeavor is both practical and contemplative, moving from the fruits of earthly creation, i.e., nature and reason to divine realities, preparing “the way for the enjoyment of God” (Gilson 9). But to proceed on this path, the reader must follow a given order, according to Augustine, an order “by which God governs all things” (*ord.* II.1.2). Each art must be ordered toward the highest good and together they must be ordered to achieve their shared purpose. Augustine acknowledges the role given to the study of rhetoric within this higher form of education, but its use is necessarily (re)ordered to Christian ends.

“Order” then may be considered a significant metarhetorical term that grounds Augustine's understanding of all of the arts, including rhetoric, at this point in his thought.

Augustine begins *De ordine* with these words:

To perceive and to grasp the order of reality proper to each thing, and then to see or to explain the order of the entire universe by which this world is truly held together and governed...is a very difficult and rare achievement for men...And yet there is nothing that the most gifted minds search out more eagerly, nothing that those who, with heads uplifted as much as they may, still see the rocks and storms of this life below – there is

nothing that these are more desirous of hearing and learning than how it is that God has a care for human affairs...(ord. I.1.1).

Within this introduction, Augustine directs his thought to the problem of evil in a world governed by a good, loving and all-powerful God.⁵ But in just these few lines we gather two important points of Augustine's project: that there is an order of reality proper to each thing and that this modest order is significant within a universal order. Augustine's metarhetoric of order then has two particular implications that draw our attention: the order proper to each individual art, i.e., its given place among the arts as well as its distinct contribution to culture and the universal order toward which they all ought to be directed. In both cases, the order reflects divine purpose and the ultimate good toward which all humanity is striving. The ultimate end is wisdom, which is the Augustinian word that describes the knowledge that leads to happiness (Gilson 16), and this end is also what Augustine implies in *De ordine* by *philosophia* as the love of wisdom. The arts are a means to cultivate and order one's soul toward this end. Each art plays a distinct and vital role, yet their unity is what brings about the fullness of reason toward truth and happiness. Augustine finds value in both the method of *perceiving* this order and the drive to teach, or *explain*, it to others.

Although the order of the arts is not original to Augustine but rather reflects indebtedness to his predecessors, particularly Varro (Topping, *Happiness* 3), Augustine is redefining and reordering classical education for Christian purposes, thus demonstrating again his talent for rhetorical invention. He assimilates a method of secular learning as he directs it toward Christian ends and imbues its content with Christian meaning. As a result, the arts are given the highest

⁵ While Augustine implies these attributes of God in *De ordine* (I.7.18; II.7.21; II.7.23;), Ayres and Barnes note that it is his understanding of God as "immaterial, infinite and the source of all existence" that is particular to Late Roman Christian thought (384).

purpose that Augustine can possibly designate – a place within the divine order of providence. Augustine is in the process of leaving an educational system that cherishes the rhetorical art for worldly, lower-ordered purposes. In *De ordine*, he argues that the redemption of rhetoric must be found within a Christian understanding of its divinely ordered significance.

In this chapter, we have discussed how Augustine’s responsive engagement with the major rhetorical authorities of his time informs his use and understanding of rhetoric. He engages sophistic, Ciceronian, and Christian elements to propose a distinctly Christian rhetoric for universal use. This point has been widely acknowledged within the literature on Augustine and rhetoric. Augustine, however, also employs a specifically Christian understanding of old and new rhetorical terms in his appropriation. The process by which he “Christianizes” rhetoric in his developing thought is thus likely to be a significant source of insight concerning his eventual conclusions on the subject in his later writings. *De ordine* is a valuable text for exploring this transition, specifically as it discusses the metarhetoric of order and consequently an ordered rhetoric.

Using Murphy’s understanding of metarhetoric, this project proposes the metarhetorical term “order” as a means to situate Augustine’s understanding of rhetoric in his immediate post-conversion thought. At this point in his writing, Augustine seeks to both unify aspects of classical education with his developing Christian thought and distinguish immoral and erroneous elements from Christian culture. Applying his ingenuity, Augustine finds the inventive means to bring elements from his predecessors into his recommended structure of Christian education. He utilizes old and new categories of thought from multiple disciplines to do so, providing an order of life and study directed toward humanity’s ultimate end, happiness in the enjoyment of God.

This project thus proceeds as follows. Each subsequent chapter considers explicit and implicit coordinates in *De ordine* that signify Augustine’s dynamic relationship to one of the three major rhetorical authorities discussed above, that is, sophistic rhetoric (Chapter II), Ciceronian rhetoric (Chapter III) and Christian rhetoric (Chapter IV).⁶ Each chapter enters the text of *De ordine* through the texture of a term that corresponds to a particular rhetorical authority. Chapter II uses the term *schola* to demonstrate a nuanced relationship in Augustine’s thought between the rhetoric of the Roman sophistic school and the rhetoric of his new “school” at Cassiciacum. Laura Holt’s essay “Wisdom’s Teacher: Augustine at Cassiciacum” is insightful for the arguments of this chapter. Chapter III focuses on Augustine’s use of the term *philosophia* to demonstrate a complementary relationship between philosophy and rhetoric that he learned from his reading of Cicero. The scholarly works of Calvin Troup and Raymond DiLorenzo inform the approach of this chapter. Lastly, chapter IV considers Augustine’s treatment of the term *ordo*, which he grounds on the Christian doctrines that he has learned through authoritative teaching. This chapter draws on the work of Ryan Topping.

Having reflected on the significance of these three rhetorical authorities for the text of *De ordine*, Chapter IV concludes with discussion of how Augustine’s rhetoric of order ultimately frames a transition of *rhetorica* in his thought at this pivotal time. As a metarhetorical term, the intellectual knowledge and moral exercise of “order” essentially arranges one’s epistemological understanding and ethical use of the rhetorical art (*rhetorica*) toward the fullness of truth and beauty and the highest possible rhetorical good, praising God. Through order, one discovers and expresses a *rhetorica* that leads us to know and to serve God. In this way Augustine’s rhetoric of order, which includes knowledge from multiple disciplines and authorities, leads one to God

⁶ Troup notes the significance of considering both explicit and implicit coordinates within a text to more broadly inform one’s scholarly reading of a rhetorical discourse (9). See also 55, 60.

through an ordered understanding and use of rhetoric. Augustine discusses and demonstrates this kind – this quality – of ordered rhetoric throughout *De ordine* as he both criticizes and creates new opportunities to apply existing rhetorical authorities in light of the particular question of Christian education. Augustine’s text offers much “wholesome” food for thought to teachers of today (*conf.* V.6.10), if they are willing to make themselves a part of the very order of which he writes.

Sophistic Coordinates in the Rhetoric of *De ordine*

In *De ordine*, Augustine is responsive to elements of the Roman sophistic school of rhetoric. The sophistic school is the major educational institution of the Roman world and provides Augustine with the rhetorical education that he receives and that he later teaches. This education includes particular teaching methods, theories, texts, and practices, all directed toward popular applications of rhetoric in the Imperial Age. Although Augustine eventually retires from his rhetoric chair in AD 386, he continues to find elements of this rhetorical education useful as he applies them to his discussion of order in *De ordine*, thus demonstrating some continuity with his sophistic past. Yet, in this same text, Augustine also criticizes particular vices that are common to the Roman school and incompatible with his turn toward philosophy, exhibiting some severance from the sophistic school and its rhetorical practices. This chapter examines the rhetoric of *De ordine* to study these sophistic coordinates and to consider their significance for Augustine's use and understanding of rhetoric at this pivotal time.

This study follows Holt in focusing on Augustine's teaching activity in the text through his use of the term *schola* and considers how these scholastic coordinates inform our understanding of the status of the sophistic school in Augustine's thought at this time. Augustine uses the term *schola* three times in reference to the sophistic school of his past and once in reference to the informal school that he is establishing while on retreat at Cassiacum. This chapter examines each use of the term as a coordinate: *Coordinate One: From the Sophistic School*, *Coordinate Two: Toward a New School*, *Coordinate Three: Uses of the Sophistic School*, and *Coordinate Four: Abuses of the Sophistic School*. Together these coordinates demonstrate both continuity and severance with practices of the sophistic school, adding texture to Augustinian scholarship that sees his post-conversion thought as a "clean break" from his

sophistic past. Since Augustine does not use the term “sophistic” in the text, the first section introduces the term and explains its relationship to Augustine’s rhetoric. The final section considers the significance of the sophistic coordinates in the text, particularly their rhetorical implications.

In this early dialogue, Augustine finds elements of sophistic rhetoric redeemable to his Christian conversion and philosophical life, but he also has strong criticism for vices of the sophistic school that are detrimental to his new teaching purposes. His response demonstrates a philosophical rhetoric that reconsiders as well as redeploys available rhetorical elements for new purposes, in this case for a Christian defense of divine order. This is his rhetorical ingenuity at work, a skill from the sophistic rhetoric school that he applies to his Christian teaching at Cassiciacum and that exemplifies his dynamic responsiveness to his rhetorical milieu. Augustine’s rhetoric thus demonstrates both continuity and change with regard to his early rhetorical education. Furthermore, Augustine’s rhetoric invites scholars, including those “on retreat” from traditional rhetorical studies, to seriously consider their use and understanding of rhetorical categories and practices, particularly for their ethical implications. Even at this intensely “philosophical” moment in Augustine’s life, he finds rhetoric to be a fitting means to serve the wisdom that brings happiness primarily because he conceptualizes it through an ethical lens.

The Roman “Sophistic” School of Rhetoric

Rhetorical scholars use the term “sophistic” to describe the school in which Augustine learned and taught rhetoric (Baldwin 188; Troup 13–14). This sophistic school was the premier institution for Roman education, the pinnacle of which was the political and legal practice of oratory (Troup 4). The Imperial Age had brought significant changes to Roman discursive

practices, but the educational system continued to value rhetorical skill above all others (Pernot 145). Across the Empire, teachers trained students to be successful orators through a shared set of practices, demonstrating a great “homogeneity of Greek and Roman education during the period” (147). As Brown describes, referencing Augustine, “The ideal product of this education was the orator, a man that is, who could ‘give pleasure throughout his argument, by his vivacity, by the feelings at his command, by the ease with which words came to him, perfectly adapted to dress his message in style’ (*conf.* V.6.11)” (24). This was the education and school of Augustine’s young adult life and early teaching career. In *De ordine*, he refers to it as “that school,” *schola illa*.

Scholars generally characterize the Roman school of Augustine’s time as “sophistic” due to the rhetorical practices and pedagogies that were dominant during the Imperial Age (Murphy, *Rhetoric* 35; Pernot 187; Troup 13–14). By rhetorical practices, scholars often refer to the lavish use of verbal ornamentation used by orators in public discourse, sometimes for the sole purpose of entertaining audiences (Murphy, *Rhetoric* 35; Pernot 155). By rhetorical pedagogies, scholars refer to the associative teaching practices used by rhetoric instructors to cultivate this focus on rhetorical ornamentation, especially through the exercise of declamation (Pernot 151–57). Rhetorical theory, with its conceptual and philosophical dimensions, was present and growing among sophists throughout the period (157–59), but the majority of Roman teachers often minimized it in their instruction, perhaps because of a particular practicality expected by the Romans (Brown 24; Troup 15). Widespread use of these practices and pedagogies, however, reflected the preeminence of rhetoric for Roman culture and curriculum as sophists deployed them for purposes suited to Imperial life.

Yet, there is also greater complexity to the term “sophistic” as it appears within antique sources. The Greek orator and professor of rhetoric, Philostratos (170–240 AD), coined the term “Second Sophistic” to describe a collective movement among orators of his time. In his analysis, Philostratos particularly drew out a “logical” connection between contemporary orators, or “sophists,” and antique orators of the “First Sophistic,” who discussed the nature and function of discourse as well as the relationships between rhetoric and philosophy (Kirby 1932). Although the “Second Sophistic” was predominantly a Greek phenomenon, the West experienced the acclamation of Greek culture and rhetoric as students and teachers travelled between Rome and Athens (Pernot 191). Rhetorical activity was at the core of the sophistic movement, including the teaching of rhetoric, public performances, political prestige, and ties to Greek philosophy (189–191). Orators and teachers throughout the Imperial period followed in these “sophistic” traditions.

Sources within this historical epoch characterized the sophistic movement with strong words of praise *or* criticism. The praise of sophistic claimed a resurgence of “philosophical” rhetoric that emanated from the culture of Imperial leadership (Pernot 130). Criticism of sophistic argued that a defective, artificial rhetoric had replaced a more substantive, deliberative rhetoric in both the political arena and the Roman schools due to Imperial power (129). These two “fundamentally opposing theses,” of the “renaissance” or “decline” of rhetoric during the Empire (Pernot 131), demonstrate the complexity of changes occurring in the use and understanding of rhetoric at this time and into the Christian Era (Cameron, *Christianity* 83–84). In studying this period, some modern scholars adopt an either/or perspective on the discipline in the Imperial Age – rhetoric was either undergoing a “decline” or a “renaissance” – but Pernot suggests that consideration of *all* source material demonstrates a “redeployment” of rhetoric in

the transition from the Roman Republic to the Empire (Pernot 133). Consequently, “The Empire did not provoke a radical mutation [of rhetoric], but a series of transformations, of changes of emphasis and innovation that make up a different landscape, even though the elements may not all be new.” One example of this transformation of rhetoric is that while theoretical and philosophical elements remained in the Roman rhetorical schools across the changing political circumstances, opportunities for their application in Late Antique society appear truncated (129), or at least “specialized” (Cameron, *Later Roman* 153), as society and the schools adapted to the needs of Imperial culture. Consequently, epideictic rhetoric continued to flourish while practices of deliberative and judicial rhetoric were more constrained.

This argument of “redeployment” is particularly relevant to this study, for Augustine seems to be using as well as transforming rhetoric as he transitions at this point from a public rhetorical life toward a more discernibly philosophical one. Rhetorical scholars agree that Augustine has strong criticism of some rhetorical practices, including some historically considered “sophistic” (Baldwin 188; Sutherland 142; Troup 13–14). This is evident in Augustine’s explicit critique of rhetorical abuses in *De doctrina Christiana* (DDC) (II.31.48). Yet, in *De ordine*, one also sees him implicitly using rhetorical practices characteristic of the “sophistic” school. Furthermore, his criticism of the sophistic school in this text is specific – rather than indicting sophistic rhetoric for its general practices and pedagogies, Augustine appears to be most concerned with the inordinate motivations that the school inculcates within its students. This vice is a consequence of a rhetoric centered on self-aggrandizement – a love of praise directed back upon the self rather than fittingly directed outward, or more specifically upward, toward the divine first cause, God. As he does in *Confessiones* and Book IV of *DDC*, Augustine turns toward a more “philosophical” rhetoric to teach eloquence and wisdom in *De*

ordine. Yet, rather than making a complete severance with the sophistic rhetoric school, Augustine appears to reconsider the significance of sophistic rhetoric as he redeploys it for new purposes in his immediate post-conversion thought.

Therefore, although “sophistic” typically describes Augustine’s rhetorical schooling and teaching career in a pejorative sense within rhetorical scholarship, the term here has greater texture. “Sophistic” does refer to the rhetorical milieu within which Augustine learned and taught rhetoric, but Augustine’s redeployment of sophistic rhetoric in *De ordine* invites a more nuanced understanding of how “sophists,” such as he, applied elements from the rhetorical school as they responded to the complexities of the transitioning Roman culture. This term, “sophist,” is also wrought with complexity (Pernot 187–88; Schiappa 1994–95), but this project follows Murphy in considering Augustine a practicing “sophist” as he taught and practiced rhetoric within a “sophistic” period of the rhetorical tradition (Murphy, “Christianization” 26). Augustine’s early and young adult life was “imbued with the sophistic spirit of the age,” and some of these practices and pedagogies continued to be present within his later work. This project thus suggests that, for a period, Augustine was a sophist as he followed many of the conventions of the sophistic movement of the time, including the teaching of rhetoric, occupation of an imperial chair, and the performing of political speeches for the emperor. His exposure to the popularized philosophies of the Platonists may have even been a consequence of his sophistic connections (Brown 85; Pernot 191), as sophists often drew the disciplines of rhetoric and philosophy together.

Furthermore, Augustine’s rhetoric in *De ordine* is in some measure representative of the sophistic school in his implicit practice of rhetoric in the text as well as in his pedagogical approach to the topic of order. Study of *De ordine* thus informs our understanding of the

dynamics between Augustine's sophistic background and his transition away from the sophistic school and toward a new and converted life in philosophy. Rather than moving directly to an explicit rejection of all sophistic rhetoric, including its theories, practices and particularly its pedagogies, the text of *De ordine* demonstrates elements of continuity and refined practices. By focusing on Augustine's use of the term *schola* in the text, one can more closely consider how Augustine makes the transition from his rhetorical teaching career to his philosophical retirement. Rather than suggesting, as Baldwin does, that Augustine made a "clean break" with the pedagogical tradition of the sophists as he responded to the rhetorical needs of his historical moment (187–88), one can see in *De ordine* a gradual refinement of teaching practices as well as a more specific critique of the limitations of sophistic education. The point of using the term "sophistic" is therefore not primarily to label Augustine but rather to provide a term that situates him within his rhetorical milieu. Scholars agree that he is responding to sophistic in his later writings on rhetoric, but *De ordine* permits us to see with greater texture how his response plays out in this particular period of his life and thought.

The Sophistic *Schola* in *De ordine*

Augustine's use of the term *schola* is a way to consider sophistic and rhetoric related coordinates in *De ordine*. The term *schola*, used four times in the text, provides a hermeneutic entrance for discussing dynamics of the relationship between Augustine's past at the sophistic rhetoric school and his pedagogical endeavors at Cassiciacum, specifically as he and his companions treat the topic of order. The chapter proceeds by chronologically addressing each occasion of *schola* and offering an interpretation of the text with particular attention to rhetorical categories. Since Augustine composed the dialogue in a way that invites the reader into the discussion as it unfolds between the participants and him (Douglass 40), a chronological

engagement seems suited to this study of the text. An introduction precedes each coordinate, providing some context for Augustine's use of the term *schola*.

Four coordinates guide the discussion of this term: *From the Sophistic School, Toward a New School, Uses of the Sophistic School, and Abuses of the Sophistic School*. These coordinates capture the complex dynamics of Augustine's use of *schola* in the text and the inherent relationship between Augustine's rhetorical and philosophical practices at this point in his thought. He finds elements of the sophistic rhetoric school useful to his teaching at Cassiciacum even while he rejects certain abuses of this school. Putting his ingenuity to work, Augustine finds a way to reconcile his treatment of order with his new philosophical life by directing his rhetorical efforts toward a new purpose, in this case moving from a lower expression of praise toward a higher one.

Coordinate One: From the Sophistic School

Augustine dedicates his dialogue to a friend and reputable politician named Zenobius with whom he had previously discussed the general question of evil and its relationship to divine order. Augustine previously encountered the topic when he was a Manichaean (*conf.* IV.15.24; VII.3.4), but he shapes his discourse in *De ordine* according to his conversations with Zenobius, as the two had lacked adequate time to carefully and completely address "the order of things" (*ord.* I.7.20). Zenobius is "a man of good character" (*ingenium*), "a gifted mind, enamored with beauty in every form without the excesses of lewdness and its defilement" (I.2.4). Nevertheless, according to Augustine, his mind lacks proper learning, and needs to be "cleared and cultivated," "for a divine planting." Augustine dedicates his dialogue to Zenobius for three reasons: "It is due to him," "It is fitting that the present mode of life be made known to a man of such benevolence," and "Because he is second to none in rejoicing over the fair promise (*ingenii*) of

Licentius” (*ord.* I.17.20). Licentius is the son of a mutual friend, Romanianus (who is also Augustine’s benefactor), and one of the young men that accompanies Augustine to Cassiciacum. Augustine wishes that Zenobius could be present there (I.9.27), but in his absence, they record the discourse for his benefit.

Within the introduction of his topic, Augustine tells Zenobius,

As you well know, when pains of the chest (*stomachi dolor*) had compelled me to give up school work (*scholam*), I was already planning even apart from that emergency, to betake myself to philosophy (*philosophiam*). I then went directly to the villa of our dear friend, Verecundus. (*ord.* I.2.5)

This first mentioning of the sophistic *schola* highlights some of the personal transitions that were occurring during this time, including an illness that affected Augustine’s ability to teach rhetoric and his plan to leave the sophistic school. Augustine had taught rhetoric for twelve years now, beginning in his hometown of Thagaste and then moving to Carthage, Rome and finally Milan, where he took an Imperial professorship (*conf.* V.13.23). During his career Augustine “sold a skill at speech designed for victories in court,” a description of his profession reflective of the predominant use and understanding of rhetoric at the time as connected to political and legal success (IV.2.2). Augustine’s position in Milan was particularly prestigious as he not only taught rhetoric to his students but also composed and performed speeches for the emperor (VI.6.9). Augustine taught in Milan until late summer of AD 386, when he decided to leave his post.

According to *Confessiones*, Augustine had recently experienced his final conversion to Christianity, which meant, “That [he] would seek neither wife nor ambition in this world,” but rather become “a servant [of the Lord]” (VIII.12.30, IX.1.1). When Augustine decided to leave his job, he waited until the upcoming summer months to avoid “a great deal of talking” among

his colleagues as to his intentions (*conf.* IX.2.3). Augustine writes, “In your sight [my Lord God], I resolved not to make a boisterous break, but gently to withdraw the service of my tongue from the language marts” (IX.2.2). Additionally in these summer months, Augustine became ill, “because of too much literary work” (IX.2.4). Thus, he refers above to his “pains of the chest.” Indeed, teaching rhetoric was a physically demanding profession. Particularly since imitation was the central method of teaching at the sophistic school, physical wellness, including good voice, strong lungs, and endurance, was required (Clark 14). Augustine’s ill health may have compromised his natural talent for teaching rhetoric.

Yet, Augustine was also thankful for this public “excuse” (*conf.* IX.2.4), because as he states above, he already had in mind to leave the sophistic school for a life of greater leisure (*otium*). Augustine first encountered the concept of *otium* at age 19, when at school he read Cicero’s exhortation to philosophy in the *Hortensius* (III.4.7). However, other desires, like “honor,” “fame,” (*c. Acad.* II.2.5) and “profit,” took precedence in his early years (*conf.* IX.2.4). In the introduction to *Contra Academicos*, Augustine tells his patron, Romanianus, to whom he dedicates this text, that his desire for a philosophical life had been with him for some time but that he was “held back by the heavy burden of [his] dependents whose life was supported by [his] job” (II.2.4). Perhaps despite these circumstances, at the age of 32, Augustine sought a type of retirement suited to his Christian conversion. With his affections altered, he renounced the worldly comforts of his career, his possible marriage, and all sexual relations (Brown 99). Although Augustine’s retirement was in some ways “idiosyncratic” (94), the *otium* that he sought was an option familiar to his colleagues in Milan and the audience of his Cassiciacum dialogues (106). Christian and non-Christian intellectuals of the Late Roman Empire shared in this long tradition of leisure. Thus, Augustine tells Zenobius that he and his companions are

enjoying “a generous leisure” (*liberali otio*) at the villa of their colleague and friend, Verecundus (*ord.* I.2.4), and Augustine wishes to share the fruits of their experience with others who will likely read the dialogue. Augustine publishes *De ordine* with this “expectation of attraction” (McWilliam 137), as he invites his audience to participate in the process of discovery through the narrative.

Augustine’s relationship to the sophistic school demonstrated his close ties to rhetoric, as a teacher and a practitioner. When he decided to leave the school for philosophical retirement, exhausted from teaching rhetoric, what effect did this transition have on his relationship to the discipline itself, as well as the sophistic school that transmitted it? In his study of Augustine’s early dialogues, Topping suggests that Augustine’s retirement demonstrates an incompatibility between teaching rhetoric and the Christian faith (*Happiness* 51). Indeed, his move toward philosophy as a manner of life was a move away from his public life in Late Roman rhetorical culture. However, rhetorical scholars refine this argument and suggest that Augustine’s conflict is not with teaching rhetoric but with the inadequacies of the predominant *sophistic* rhetoric taught and practiced at the time (Baldwin 188; Murphy, *Rhetoric* 47; Sutherland 142; Troup 16). To these scholars, Augustine’s later rhetoric, specifically Book IV of *De doctrina Christiana* and even *Confessiones*, presents a rhetorical art not only compatible with Christianity but suited to its purposes, particularly teaching and preaching.

Augustine does strongly criticize elements of the sophistic school, as well as the rhetoric therein, in *Confessiones*, but this “marginalization of rhetoric” in Augustine’s narrative has also led scholars to neglect possible relationships between Augustine’s “former professional discipline” and his post-conversion thought (Farrell 270). For even when one acknowledges Augustine’s harsh words in *Confessiones* for the education and profession of his past, scholars

debate the precise nature of his criticism (Tell 385–86). The text of *De ordine*, written during the period between Augustine’s resignation from the rhetoric school and his baptism, is particularly insightful to address some of the nuances of the relationship between the sophistic school, and its rhetoric, and Augustine’s developing thought at this time. Augustine’s use of the term *schola* in the text provides one means to consider this relationship. To this end, the first coordinate highlights key shifts that were occurring in Augustine’s life, particularly his decision to leave the sophistic school.

Coordinate Two: Toward a New School

The second mentioning of *schola* also relates to the sophistic school, but as above, likewise demonstrates a transition *from* Augustine’s past *toward* his life in philosophy. While the other three references to *schola* in the text specifically refer to the sophistic school, Augustine’s next use of the term represents “something new” (Holt 48), for he refers to his company at Cassiciacum as a kind of school, *schola nostra* (“our school”). Topping describes this new school at Cassiciacum as “a school of philosophy” (*Happiness* 70), which seems particularly appropriate considering Augustine’s focus on *philosophia* in the text (a topic addressed in the following chapter). Indeed, as Topping suggests, it seems clear that Augustine “had encountered something [in Cicero’s *Hortensius*] that would demand more than his teachers of rhetoric required,” and this encounter was shaping Augustine’s present decisions (*Happiness* 39). As Holt notes, this new school stands in some contrast to the sophistic school, *schola illa* (“that school”) – an essential point to which we will return. Yet, attention to the activities and pedagogical exercises of the group also reveals some continuity with the rhetoric school so familiar to Augustine and his students (Holt 48–49). After addressing his move away from his rhetorical schoolwork at coordinate one, Augustine demonstrates the sort of work he and his students are

doing while at the villa at coordinate two, and this work includes both philosophical and rhetorical elements.

Augustine tells Zenobius that, while on retreat, he and his companions are conducting among themselves whatever discussions seem “useful” (*utilia*) (*ord.* I.2.5). Some of these useful conversations arise because Augustine initiates them as a learning opportunity for “the boys” aside from their other studies (I.3.6). By “boys,” Augustine refers to some of his company at the villa, including Alypius (Augustine’s close friend), Navigius (Augustine’s brother), Licentius (a pupil of Augustine’s and the son of his patron, Romanianus), and Trygetius (also Augustine’s pupil). Only Licentius and Trygetius, however, are present in the text when the discussion on order begins (I.3.7). Still, Augustine sees an opportunity to address this important topic, and he uses the term *schola* to frame his company and their pedagogical treatment of the subject in the dialogue.

The topic of *ordo* arises as follows. Augustine awakes at the villa during the night. He hears the sound of fluctuating water near their baths and begins “to ask [himself] what [is] the cause” (*ord.* I.3.6). Such wandering of the mind, which Augustine describes as “love of finding the truth,” had become a habit for him while on retreat. However, on this occasion, he realizes that Licentius and Trygetius are also awake. The dialogue then recounts,

Therefore, when I saw that *our school (scholam nostram)*— as much as was left of it, for Alypius and Navigius had gone to the city – was not in slumber even at that hour, the running of the waters reminded me to say something on the subject. What, I ask, seems to you the reason why this sound varies in that manner? (*ord.* I.3.7.)

Augustine poses this issue of cause to his young students, to which Licentius gives a probable (*probabile*) solution, i.e., leaves have accumulated then dislodged to interrupt the water’s flow.

Augustine praises the ingenuity (*ingenium*) of the boy's answer and then states, "I acknowledge that, though I had long sought the reason, I had not found why it was so." Marveling at the broader implications of their particular inquiry, that some things seem "apart from the evident order" of causes (I.3.8), Augustine sees an opportunity to treat the general topic of order.

Augustine refers above to himself and his present company as a kind of school, one in which "so important a point" as order can be addressed (*ord.* I.3.8). Thus, two questions arise relevant to our study: What kind of school is it, and how may it stand in relation to the sophistic school of Augustine's past? These questions merit thorough study, including close consideration of pedagogical content, methods and practices across all three of Augustine's Cassiacum dialogues, but this project must be limited to drawing attention to a few specific details in *De ordine* that demonstrate aspects of the relationship between Augustine's *schola* at Cassiacum and the sophistic school.

What kind of school is it? Consideration of the pedagogical activities mentioned in the dialogue suggests that the common events of *schola nostra* appear both structured and spontaneous, and three particular activities are prominent. Throughout the day, the students are studying books, training their minds in quiet contemplation, and engaging in extemporaneous disputations (*ord.* I.3.6). The first activity, which was common in the grammar and rhetoric schools, is the treating of classical texts, such as Virgil's *Aeneid* (*ord.* I.4.10; II.12.37; II.20.54). Augustine is leading exegetical discussions (*tractare*) of these texts at Cassiacum in a way typical of a grammar/rhetoric teacher (Topping, *Happiness* 69; Marrou 279). His response to the practice, however, demonstrates nuance, for he encourages his students to "rise far above" these texts (*ord.* I.3.8), even as they seem to serve some purpose within his pedagogy.

Augustine also offers some instruction on the second activity, to “train the mind to be at home with its own thoughts” (*ord.* I.3.6). This method of “self-knowledge” includes “a constant habit of withdrawing from things of the senses” (I.1.3), which Topping describes as a “familiar Plotinian theme” (*Happiness* 130). The goal of this exercise is to “mark out in solitude the impressions of opinion which the course of daily life has made or [to] correct them by means of the liberal branches of learning (*ord.* I.1.3).” The latter approach, which Augustine recommends to his students in Book II of *De ordine*, utilizes the liberal arts as a means to move through “an ordered sequence of contemplation,” from material reality to “the eternal and unchanging cause” (Topping, *Happiness* 136, 127). While this kind of philosophical thinking was accessible to sophists (Pernot 191–194), it was not typical of Roman rhetorical education.

The third activity, *disputatio*, is the one in which Augustine provides the greatest instruction (*ord.* I.3.6). Consequently, disputation is the main activity occurring in the dialogue between Augustine and his young students. For example, once Licentius and Trygetius agree to the topic of order, Augustine states that he will engage in the debate (*disputazione*) and attempt to defend (*defendam*) the order of things (I.3.9). Augustine intends for the debate (*disputationem*) to address some of the issues that originally arose in his conversations with Zenobius (I.7.20). Augustine also deliberately records the disputation to invite additional debate (*disputationes*) among his audience (I.9.27), and perhaps, through successive discussion (*sermonum*), to eventually influence “the order of teaching” (*in ordinem inseret disciplinae*).

The preeminence of *disputatio* in the text makes it particularly informative to the question of what kind of school Augustine has established among his companions. *Disputatio* was certainly not foreign to the sophists (Kennedy, *Classical* 30; Marrou 51). Yet, Topping argues that Augustine’s use of *disputatio* represents a distinctly “philosophical” quality of *schola*

nostra in contrast to the sophistic rhetoric school (*Happiness* 70). Indeed, Roman rhetorical education had limited its use of philosophical concepts in addition to rhetorical theory due to a focus on practical legal and political applications, but the sophistic school still had substance (Pernot 157–59). For example, Augustine read the *Hortensius* while still in school (*conf.* III.4.7). Yet, his assessment of how the school utilized this philosophical text, predominantly for its example of style to the neglect of its content, suggests that he was thirsting for something more than he was receiving.

Augustine’s use of disputation in his dialogues may also be more consistent with the rhetorical, i.e., Ciceronian tradition than the philosophical, i.e., Platonic one (Auerbach 31; O’Meara 30; Brown 110). For example, Augustine uses particular questions (hypotheses) to complement use of general ones (theses), an approach common to Cicero’s rhetorical treatment of philosophical topics (DiLorenzo, “*Non Pie*” 126). Additionally, O’Meara notes Augustine’s use of set speeches within the dialogues, a rhetorical practice, to further his arguments (30). Other factors could certainly inform this line of inquiry, including, as Topping suggests, examination of Augustine’s understanding and use of dialectic in the text (*Happiness* 40, 138–141). However, it must suffice for the purposes of this project to suggest that it is unclear that the form of Augustine’s discourse is at the crux of this contrast with the sophistic school. Study of additional terms (rather than solely *disputatio*) may also be beneficial to understanding the purpose of Augustine’s discourse, such as *sermo* (*ord.* I.7.20) and *laudem* (I.9.27). Coordinate three addresses Augustine’s use of this latter term.

Thus, at the very least, the pedagogical practices in *De ordine* do reveal “traces” from the rhetorical school (O’Meara 11). As O’Meara suggests, “We are privileged to see [Augustine’s] mind adjusting itself to its new aspirations [in his early dialogues]. It would be surprising indeed,

if we see there no trace of his former thoughts also.” Augustine is still teaching at Cassiciacum. As Holt suggests, Augustine’s description in the text strongly points to a “new manner” of teaching, “but not so much to abandon as to reshape his former profession, and as a way not to stop but to keep doing what he has been doing differently” (49). At this coordinate, the reader can view Augustine’s teaching activity as a graduated response to the sophistic school of his past as well as consider how his new *schola* relates to the broader educational milieu of Late Antiquity (50). Further study is certainly necessary to clarify how this dynamic plays out. The next coordinate provides a specific opportunity to consider one such rhetorical trace, and therefore informs our second question from above concerning how *schola nostra* may relate to the sophistic school, *schola illa*.

Coordinate Three: Uses of the Sophistic School

Augustine’s next use of *schola* invites consideration of additional sophistic elements that are present in his teaching in *De ordine*. Augustine seems to find particular teaching practices not only useful but also central to his treatment of order, for he approaches *ordo* in a way that is somewhat consistent with “that school” (*schola illa*), the sophistic school of rhetoric. Although Augustine fits these practices to the purposes of his own school (discussed at coordinate four), his use of them demonstrates some continuity between his past as a teacher and the teaching that occurs in the dialogue.

The opportunity to treat the topic of order has come about within the daily interaction between Augustine and his young students, and on the following morning, Augustine commences their conversation with this formality,

Why do I now, in language full and fair (*copiose atque ornate*), command order to you

(*vobis ordinem laudem*), as if I were still engaged in *that school (schola illa)* from which I am glad that I have in some measure escaped (*unde me quoquo modo evasisse gaudeo*)? (*ord.* I.9.27)

Augustine initiates their discussion on order in this way after acknowledging the importance of the subject on the previous day, i.e., as particularly presented within their conversation of the cause of fluctuating water and then by their observance of fighting cocks in the front yard (I.8.25). Within the dialogue, the group has raised many questions concerning order, most especially whether it consists of both good and evil (I.6.15– I.7.19). After hearing their unlearned arguments on the matter, Augustine tells his two students that he will now give them “the answer that will seem proper” (I.7.20). They will engage in disputation (*disputatio*) on the subject, and it seems that Augustine is even willing to insert common errors of men (which Russell translates as “sophistic”) into the discussion to test the erudition, or lack thereof, of his young students. In this way, Augustine also engages the arguments of his wider audience, including Zenobius.

Augustine’s use of *schola* here refers to the sophistic school. As noted in coordinate one, Augustine has decided to leave the sophistic school for a life in philosophy. As noted in coordinate two, Augustine’s move away from *schola illa* appears to also be a step toward *schola nostra*, his school among his present company at Cassiciacum. Perhaps, however, as noted here in coordinate three, Augustine is able to utilize pedagogical practices from the sophistic school to approach and treat this important philosophical topic within his new school. To consider this possibility, it is helpful to examine Augustine’s choice of words in the above text.

Three terms from Augustine’s statement focus our study of the text. The terms are: *copiose*, *ornate*, and *laudem*. Augustine intends to use *copiose* and *ornate* language to praise (*laudem*) the topic of order “as if” he were still in the sophistic school. Russell translates *copiose*

and *ornate* as “full and fair,” but attention to the contextual significance of these terms demonstrates how they are particularly indicative of rhetoric from the sophistic school.

Copiose is an adjective frequently used by Roman orators, including Cicero and Quintilian, to describe a rhetorical characteristic of speech. Such speech exhibits “abundance” or “fullness” of rhetorical resources (Bender 505). This quality can apply either to diction, to the style or choice of words, or to invention, to the main idea that gives purpose to the discourse. *Copia*, its noun declension, is “hardly distinguishable from eloquence,” except that it is most frequently used “pedagogically, in the context of training required to attain eloquence.” In the Roman system of education, one acquired copiousness through imitation, by following proven models and themes from traditional sources, whether poets, historians, philosophers or orators. Thus, according to Quintilian, “the choice of models...[was] critical” (*Institutio Oratoria* X.1). Yet, while use of *copia* supplied speakers and writers with traditional rhetorical formulas, it also provided a means for ingenuity based on common words and ideas. A speaker’s talent for copious style could thus demonstrate his ability to add variety and nuance to the connotation of a given word or concept by saying something similar to that of a predecessor although in a slightly different way.

Ornate, an adjective related to *ornatus*, was one of the stylistic virtues of sophistic rhetoric. Advocated by Cicero and Quintilian, *ornatus* as rich “ornamentation” was among the four qualities of rhetorical excellence, including correctness, clarity and appropriateness (Pernot 58). While some sophists tended to use this rhetorical virtue excessively (and were criticized by other “sophists” for it), its highest form required complementarity from the other three qualities. This optimal balance or harmony of speech included expressing ideas in a way suited to the content and context of the speaker, an overall style meeting the requirements of *decorum* (Beale

560). As a moderating term in Cicero's thought, *decorum* brought together the aesthetics of ornamentation with the strategic and moral purpose of one's message. Consequently, the "proper" use of rhetorical style was compatible with morally right expressions. As Beale describes, Cicero associated appropriate ornamentation with harmony and grace, an expression of beauty fitted to the reason of man, "just as the beauty of nature is associated with its rational design." Furthermore, "By this logic the good is not only the appropriate but also the attractive and the pleasing." *Ornatus* was thus a sweetness of expression significant for moral speech, including the teaching (*docere*) of virtue and right action.

A third term pertaining to the sophistic school presents itself within Augustine's rubric, one that is related to a copious and ornate style, namely, *laudem*, or "praise." Augustine chooses *laudem* to describe his approach to "order," and this term seems to also have some relationship to the sophistic school. One way to explore this relationship is to consider the possibility that Augustine is addressing the topic of order through the rhetoric of praise, commonly known in antique schools as encomiastic or epideictic discourse.

Rhetoric in antiquity was traditionally categorized into three genres: judicial, deliberative and epideictic, all of which were practiced by sophists. Although all three genres were present during the Imperial Age, epideictic was the form that flourished (Marrou 195; Pernot 175). Augustine learned and taught moral content traditionally associated with the encomium through preparation exercises while in the sophistic school. Additionally, Augustine wrote epideictic speeches for the Imperial Administration while he was in his Milanese rhetoric chair (*conf.* VI.6.9). In addition to playing an important political and social function by focusing discourse on shared morals, values and conduct, this kind of speech was also strongly associated with teaching.

Epidictic was “the art of the lecturer,” and teachers, particularly sophists, used “the eloquence of the set speech” to address diverse subjects with their students and in public forums (Marrou 195). These demonstrations often had “strong philosophic undertones” (Pernot 178), and acted as moral exhortations within circles of influential Romans who shared popular codes of thought and behavior (180). Thus, epidictic rhetoric stood close to categories traditionally associated with philosophy and, as Cicero suggested, best exhibited “the philosophical concerns of the rhetorician” (Duffy 90). Professors and students alike performed these speeches as well as published them for wider distribution.

Concerning its application here, Augustine seems to be pedagogically treating the topic of order through an epidictic exercise, as he would have in the sophistic school. Current sources do not identify “order” as a typical subject for demonstration, but as Pernot suggests, sophists may have treated the topic of divine providence, i.e., “Is the world governed by divine providence?” as a general thesis (148). The encomium and the thesis were both preparatory exercises common to the sophistic school. While the pedagogical relationship between a rhetorical genre, such as epidictic, and a particular exercise, such as thesis, oscillated in antique practice, the two were compatible for sophistic instruction (Pepe 376). Augustine may therefore be treating the general thesis of order through a rhetoric of praise (encomium), as he would have in the sophistic school. To do so he is using the copious and ornate style often associated with the epidictic genre. If this is the case, then Augustine is likely addressing his subject within some shared argumentative limits as well as within the constraints of “a finely tuned sensitivity...to the *decorums* of public life” (Beale 559). Yet, rather than discount the originality of his response to these rhetorical constraints, his epidictic treatment may have carried more

weight among his audience as a result of introducing new ideas or approaches to “order” within the boundaries of this shared practice.

Augustine’s claim to be treating his topic “as if” he were still in the sophistic school invites consideration of the details above, particularly how his *ornate* and *copious* style in *praise* of order may reflect a sophistic pedagogical practice. Rhetorical style in antiquity was “tightly bound up” with the thought and the approach to thought within a given discourse (Pernot 167), so it seems unlikely that Augustine has utilized these terms independently of their use within the rhetorical tradition. Furthermore, these “stylistic qualities” thus likely have some reference to the “content” of Augustine’s dialogue (168), whether considered philosophical and/or rhetorical. Of course, Augustine was also familiar with the rhetoric of praise through Biblical psalmody (DiLorenzo, “*Non Pie*” 124), but this particular coordinate suggests that this was not his primary reference point in this text.

Another detail is worth noting concerning the pedagogical methods at play here in Augustine’s dialogue, and that is his use of dialectical questioning. According to Topping, Augustine’s use of dialectic in his early dialogues indicates his commitment to a distinctly philosophical program in contrast to the rhetorical school (*Happiness* 40). Yet DiLorenzo has suggested that Augustine’s epideictic rhetoric sometimes utilizes dialectical analysis to serve a rhetorical end, as in *Confessiones* where he uses dialectic “to raise the intelligence and affections of [his audience] to God through praise,” or in other words through a contemplative form of persuasion (“*Non Pie*” 125). Indeed, “The sometimes incompletely systematic character of Augustine’s dialectical analyses is a sure sign that he does not aim at systematic comprehension,” but rather that, “the procedures of dialectical reason are conditioned and governed by...an epideictic or demonstrative theology” (DiLorenzo, “*Non Pie*” 125). This line of

thinking – that Augustine’s use of dialectic in the dialogue serves a rhetorical purpose– deserves closer study and points to the broader question raised in this coordinate, namely, how does Augustine’s approach to order, through a rhetoric of praise, inform the overall discourse of the text? For example, with regard to Augustine’s early philosophical dialogues, specifically *Contra Academicos*, Topping has suggested the possibility that Augustine is composing a moral declamation (*Happiness* 70). Such a rhetorical reading helps to explain certain qualities of the dialogues, including Augustine’s use of set speeches, fictitious elements of certain details, and their “overtly schoolroom” character (McWilliam 135–140). Attention to the epideictic qualities of the dialogue such as those discussed above further informs such a study of Augustine’s purpose and approach therein.

For this project, Augustine’s reference to *schola* at coordinate three demonstrates his use of pedagogical practices from the sophistic school in his treatment of order. Augustine’s use of *schola* thus invites consideration of points of continuity between the sophistic school and *schola nostra* at Cassiciacum. Yet Augustine’s statement also suggests that there are limits to this interpretation, for he is “glad” to have “in some measure escaped” the rhetoric school (*ord.* I.9.27). In what ways is Augustine glad to have escaped? In what measure is he evading the sophistic school at Cassiciacum? As the next coordinate points out, while Augustine may be praising order as if he were in the sophistic school, he also reviles abusive practices common to “that school” before proceeding in his discussion.

Coordinate Four: Abuses of the Sophistic School

Augustine’s final use of *schola* continues to refine our understanding of the relationship between the sophistic school of his past and his school at Cassiciacum, this time in contrast rather than continuity. While some pedagogical practices of the sophistic school may be

acceptable to Augustine, such as the encomium, others are not. Specifically, the disordered aim of the sophistic school, so focused on the pride of self-aggrandizement, is unacceptable to Augustine's new scholastic project. To demonstrate the significance of this contrast between the sophistic school, *schola illa*, and *schola nostra*, a slightly longer introduction must precede Augustine's use of the term "*schola*."

Immediately following Augustine's statement at coordinate three, he proceeds to define order as "that which will lead us to God, if we hold to it during life" (*ord.* I.9.27), a definition framed by a distinctly "moral point of view" (Russell, "Appendix" 183, n. 7). He then challenges Licentius to provide his own definition. The young man, being divinely inspired, replies, "Order is that by which are governed all things that God has constituted" (*ord.* I.10.28). The conversation then moves to discuss whether God himself is governed by order. Licentius argues in the affirmative that, "If...God sent us Christ by way of order, and we admit that Christ is God, then God not only governs all things, but is Himself governed by order" (I.10.29). Trygetius, perplexed, tries to clarify Licentius's meaning by distinguishing God the Father from Christ. "Shall we therefore deny that the Son of God is God?" asks Licentius. Trygetius forces the response, "Yes, [Christ] is God; but, properly speaking, we call the Father God." Tersely, Augustine intervenes. "Control yourself better," he says to his young student, "for the Son is not improperly called God." Then the conversation moves away from order.

Trygetius, embarrassed by his inappropriate statement, asks for the removal of his words from the record. Licentius proudly insists that they remain, demonstrating his propensity to debate for "the sole purpose of winning glory" (*ord.*I.10.29). Perturbed, Augustine rebukes Licentius. Witnessing the scolding, Trygetius laughs. At this point, Augustine sees an opportunity to address the two young men candidly as their teacher.

Augustine asks, “Is this the way you act (*agitis*)?” (*ord.* I.10.29). Do these “perverse habits of life” and “obscurities of ignorance” not trouble (*movet*) you? “O that you could see...in what dangers we lie, and what heedlessness of ills this laughing indicates!” Augustine goes on to relay his own experience of these bad habits and repeatedly begs, “Do not redouble my miseries,” rather, “if you [unhappy boys] understand how much I love you, how highly I esteem you, how much the care for your behavior worries me...And if from your hearts you call me master – then pay the fee: be good.” Augustine finds this laughing of one student toward another fundamentally ill, demented. More than just a rudimentary schoolboy behavior deserving of chiding, the gravity of Augustine’s response suggests the seriousness of the act. The behavior of both boys at this intersection leads Augustine to make this plea, for them to “pay the fee,” to “be good.” Their dispositions toward one another and toward their teacher must change before their discussion on order can continue, and perhaps more to the point, before they can ascend toward truth and the happy life.

Augustine is here addressing faults that block the learning process. As he continues in his supplication, it becomes evident that these misbehaviors are more specifically indicative of the sophistic *schola*. He states,

You do not know that I used to be sorely vexed (*stomachari*) in that school (*schola illa*) because boys were motivated (*ducerentur*), not by the advantage and beauty of learning (*utilitate atque decore disciplinarum*), but by love of paltriest praise (*laudis amore*)...Both of you...are...trying to introduce and to implant the pest of enfeebling jealousy (*aemulationis tabificae*) and empty boasting (*inanis jactantiae*)– the lowliest of the pests, to be sure; but even more pernicious than all the others – into that philosophy which I rejoice to have made my own. (*ord.* I.10.30)

With this point, Augustine ties the misbehaviors of Licentius and Trygetius to their misguided motivation, namely a love of self-praise. Rather than seeking after the utility and *décor* of the disciplines, these actions incite the vices (*vitia*) of jealousy and boasting, and they disable the student from being properly disposed toward philosophy. Augustine willingly demonstrates that praise has its place, for he uses this complete discourse “to praise” divine order; but the love of praise sought by these boys is misguided. Instead, they must learn “to praise” God, who is the first source of all things.

Furthermore, Augustine fears that this “disease of vanity” (*vanitate morboque*), so common to the sophistic school and now present in these two young men, will have additional consequences for their *schola* at Cassiciacum (*ord.* I.10.30). Specifically, the two students may be less eager for the pursuit of learning (*doctrinae*) without the drive for self-aggrandizement. Without vainglory, they may become inactive (*congelabitis*). Augustine warns that additional vices await them unless they desire differently. Rather than requesting the high fees accorded to rhetoric teachers with the promise of financial and political success, Augustine asks his students to pay him with a change of character so that they might ascend toward “Truth itself” (*ord.* I.4.10). After this, the two students, humiliated by the words and love of their teacher, switch positions: Licentius offers to delete the record while Trygetius insists that they remain “so that the very same vainglory (*fama*) which allures us, may, by its own sting, deter us from the love of it.” The two have learned their lesson.

As Holt notes, “the distinguishing characteristic that mars *schola illa*,” the sophistic school of rhetoric, is that it inculcates “love of groundless praise” (55). The students exhibit love for this vice and attempt to infect *schola nostra*. As Tygretius notes, “the merit of exposure” is a fitting penance for this immoral act, for the publication of their discussion provides a “sting”

(*flagello*) to both young men (56). With this public dimension in mind, Augustine's discourse, and the *schola nostra* exhibited therein, renounces the misguided and ultimately immoral quality of the sophistic school, *specifically* its self-centered aim. As Holt suggests, Augustine's literature, like his school, "is based on a different moral principle than love of self-praise: instead, it depicts 'very evident deeds' evoking 'a good and edifying life.'" Even more to the point, Augustine seeks to exhibit proper praise through his treatment of divine order. This moral dimension of Augustine's new school is essential to its pedagogy and proper end, and Augustine takes care to make this redirection at the beginning of his discussion – within his definition – of order. This seems to be at the crux of Augustine's critique of the sophistic rhetorical education of his time in this early dialogue: that study of the disciplines ought to aim at the praise of God, "the object of [their] love" (*ord.* I.8.23), not vanity. This is central to the persuasive message of the text.

Furthermore, at the conclusion of Book I, Augustine notes that after confronting Licentius and Trygetius for their vanity, he needs to "spare [his] chest (*stomacho*)," "for the things which...had to be said scoldingly to those youngsters had strained it more than I should wish" (*ord.* I.11.33). Indeed, the pains of Augustine's past teaching continue to stay with him even as he begins this new scholastic endeavor. In both *De ordine* and *Confessiones*, Augustine describes the illness that coincided with his retirement from the sophistic school. In Book IX of *Confessiones*, he writes, "In that very summer, because of too much literary work, my lungs had begun to weaken and it was difficult for me to breath deeply. By pains in my chest they showed that they were injured, and it was impossible to make clear or extended use of my voice" (IX.2.4). This is the same "pains of the chest" (*stomachi dolor*) that Augustine referred to at coordinate one (*ord.* I.2.5). The reader can most certainly take Augustine at his word – that a dip

in his health due to the demands of teaching required rest. Yet Brown notes a peculiar quality of Augustine's sickness, for this pain struck him "just where he was most implicated in his career as a public speaker, and in just that part of the body which he later came to regard as the symbolic resting-place of a man's pride" (102). This particular illness in his chest, which he calls in *Confessiones* "*dolor pectoris*," never ails Augustine again once he leaves the sophistic rhetoric school. This particular disease of pride and vanity has left him.

At the conclusion of Book I, Augustine and his students morally turn toward the good – the proper disposition for learning in *schola nostra*. They also face a new educational aim: "praise of pure and genuine love (*laude puri et sinceri amoris*)" (*ord.* I.8.24). Only once they make this behavioral turn can the discussion on order move forward. The flattery that Augustine pays to the sophistic school by his imitation of its rhetoric comes with essential changes, for the purposes and motivations of the sophistic school of his time are not suited to the interests and desires of *schola nostra*. Augustine is not opposed to all elements of sophistic rhetoric, but its pedagogy needs redirected. This seems to be the quality of Augustine's response to it in *De ordine*. His reaction to *schola illa* is tempered and ingenious. He writes the dialogue to persuade his audience – his fellow students, academics and sophists – into this new school because he knows what is at stake: their souls and their true happiness.

These sophistic coordinates demonstrate Augustine's use of the term *schola* in *De ordine*. Each one informs our understanding of the relationship between Augustine's past at the Roman sophistic school of rhetoric and his new teaching efforts at Cassiciacum. *Coordinate One: From the Sophistic School* describes Augustine's move away from his work at the sophistic school and toward a life in philosophy. *Coordinate Two: Toward a New School* demonstrates that Augustine has set up a kind of school at the villa among his companions. *Coordinate Three: Uses of the*

Sophistic School invites consideration of some pedagogical activities in the dialogue stemming from the sophistic school that inform *schola nostra*. These activities include Augustine's treatment of the topic of order in this dialogue – a rhetorical, epideictic treatment. *Coordinate Four: Abuses of the Sophistic School* points to specific limitations of Augustine's sophistic background, for the education of his past is deficient and needs to be directed toward the proper ends of learning. In Book I, Augustine suggests that the liberal arts, including rhetoric, may be directed toward truth and the happy life (*ord.* I.8.24). Coordinates three and four are particularly important for refining scholarly understanding of Augustine's criticism of the sophistic school, and by implication, elements of the rhetoric therein, at this point in his life and thought.

The Significance of the Sophistic *Schola*

By applying the term “sophistic” to the study of *schola* in *De ordine*, this project invites closer attention to the rhetorical details implicit in Augustine's dialogue, for these coordinates of the sophistic school are also rhetorical coordinates. The term “sophistic” is highly textured, and so rather than using it here to label Augustine or his work, it hopefully provides yet another avenue for exploring the intricacy of his thought. As McWilliam notes, “The dialogues [are] not a bare telling of events...but the attempt [by Augustine] to weave a web in which the strands were the significant currents and influences in his life to that time” (139). Augustine's education at the sophistic school of rhetoric was one such current available to him at Cassiciacum.

This chapter has considered how Augustine's use of the term *schola* in the text exhibits elements of the relationship between the sophistic rhetoric school of his past and his new teaching efforts at Cassiciacum. Each of the coordinates in *De ordine* points to a particular significance of Augustine's rhetorical background and shapes our understanding of his use and criticism of sophistic rhetorical elements. Concerning his use of sophistic practices, Augustine

implicitly puts epideictic rhetoric into play in the dialogue as he composes a speech in praise of divine order for his students and his wider audience. This use of sophistic rhetoric refers not only to the style of Augustine's dialogue but also to its contents, and possibly, its overall treatment. Augustine additionally utilizes disputation as a way to guide the arguments of his students toward fuller consideration of the subject, an approach also compatible with sophistic rhetoric. As Cameron notes, the "showing" and "performance" typical of epideictic rhetoric had become "as important as argument" during the Imperial Age (*Christianity* 79). Praise and argument frequently worked in tandem as epideictic speech expressed "qualities of subtlety, intelligence, culture and beauty" (Pernot 180). Such rhetorical and pedagogical practices thus demonstrate Augustine's affirmative response to and use of some of the premier educational methods and the associated rhetoric of his time.

Augustine's criticism of the misguided aim of sophistic rhetoric, however, refines this use and appropriates it for a different purpose. For Augustine and his companions are seeking to be, "by virtue and temperance, lifted away from the over-growth of vices and uplifted toward [God] Himself" (*ord.* I.8.23). The vices of the sophistic school, particularly exhibited through the desire for self-praise, limit the capabilities of students, and Augustine has no hesitation in stripping this rhetorical education of its inadequacies. In this, he follows in the tradition of other teachers of rhetoric, including Isocrates, Cicero and Quintilian. Furthermore, this tradition of rhetorical critique also stems from epideictic, as "blame is the inverse of praise" (Pernot 181). As O'Meara notes, Augustine's criticism of the "worldly ambitions and success" that drive the dominant rhetorical education of his time are central to understanding his conversion experience in the *Cassiacum* dialogues (4). This criticism also informs the question of the status of rhetoric in

Augustine's immediate post-conversion thought, for he still finds the discipline useful but in need of a new purpose.

In *Confessiones*, Augustine condemns rhetorical abuses, including the use of epideictic rhetoric for deception, but this does not necessarily do away with the genre for another purpose. As Boyle notes, this autobiographical text is itself highly epideictic (25). In *De ordine*, proper praise of *ordo* is inherently linked to its fitting expression, in the words and actions of Augustine and his students. Thus, the link between appropriate rhetorical exercise and conduct is certainly present here. As Marrou notes, in antique practice, "Learning to speak properly meant learning to think properly, and even to live properly" (196). The virtues were important to this kind of rhetorical activity, giving it "an almost sacred character (197). Yet, as ancient sources attest, the sophistic schools lost sight of rhetorical breadth as they gave disproportionate attention to social successes. Philosophical retirement, a more specialized and at once religious venture, had become the outlet for a distinct kind of study and literary activity, including among rhetoricians (Brown 108, 112). This current likely moved over and against some popular practices of literary men. Thus, as those like Augustine moved away from the sophistic schools into "philosophy," they also moved away from popular elements of Roman culture and education. This move, however, was not an abandonment of rhetorical exercise but rather in many cases appears to be a refinement. As such rhetors redirected their lives, they found elements from their past useful to their new purposes. Sophists, philosophers and rhetors could use rhetorical elements as a bridge to criticize and refine cultural practices, to determine what was worthy of imitation and what ought to be avoided (Pernot 135–38). This could be the case for a pagan like Cicero or a Christian like Augustine.

Within the rhetorical tradition, this kind of (sophistic) scholastic activity exemplifies one means by which the discipline of rhetoric may be philosophically reconsidered and potentially redeployed during times of increased cultural change and conflict. As Kennedy notes, such tensions are typical of periods characterized as “sophistic” (*Classical* 30, 50). Perhaps then it was Augustine’s “sophistic” response to demonstrate how a philosophical rhetoric could conceptualize available rhetorical elements for different purposes, in his case for a Christian culture grounded on the doctrine of divine order. This is Augustine’s rhetorical ingenuity (*ingenium*) at work, his application of a skill that he learned in the sophistic rhetoric school and one that enabled his dynamic responsiveness to his rhetorical milieu. Ingenuity was the innate mental, moral and physical quality necessary for great oratory (Clark 4). For the most part, Augustine still finds this rich rhetorical skill praiseworthy as he notes the ingenious talents of Zenobius, Licentius, and his mother Monica along with some of his intellectual colleagues in the text (*ord.* I.2.4; I.3.7; I.7.20; I.9.27; I.11.31; II.1.1).⁷ Ingenuity represents an ability to bridge the old and the new, a natural talent for bringing together complex and different rhetorical concepts (Herrick 177). Furthermore, this highly acclaimed aptitude within the rhetorical tradition is compatible with philosophy.

Augustine’s discerning practice of rhetoric also exemplifies the significance for scholars, including those “on retreat” from traditional rhetorical studies, to seriously consider rhetorical dimensions of their work (for example, see Vickers, “Territorial Disputes” 259–260), or in other words, the implicit relationships between rhetoric and other disciplines, e.g., philosophy. Even at this intensely “philosophical” moment in Augustine’s life, he finds rhetoric to be a fitting means to serve the truth that brings happiness, largely because he was willing to conceptualize it in an

⁷ Although Augustine would add the essential nuance, that such ingenuity ought not lead to “a certain characteristic pride (*superbia*)” (*ord.* II.5.16).

ethically congruent way. This early philosophical dialogue, with its refined sophistic practices, demonstrates one means for raising rhetoric up, or at least thinking the issues “out afresh” (Vickers, “Territorial Disputes” 262). As Kennedy suggests, “Sophistry, like rhetoric itself, is not *necessarily* depraved, decadent, or in poor taste,” rather it “is a place within the rhetorical system where allowance is made for genius and inspiration” (*Classical* 50; emphasis added). Within rhetorical scholarship, the term “sophistic” permits us to speak broadly of discourses that have rhetorical implications (or implicit rhetorical theories) in addition to those that are explicit (Schiappa 1998). Particularly rhetorical scholars can see Augustine’s philosophical reconsideration as compatible with the sophistic tendency to engage the complex relationships between rhetoric and philosophy in any age.

Consideration of these sophistic elements furthermore invites closer study of rhetoric and its status in Augustine’s thought at this time. Sophistic rhetoric was formative to Augustine’s education and career. When he retires, what becomes of rhetoric? Study of *De ordine* adds nuance to scholarly consideration of this question in addition to study of *Confessiones* and *De doctrina Christiana*. Rhetoric is implicitly present in Augustine’s treatment of order in this dialogue even though he only explicitly mentions the discipline briefly in Book II. Additional study can even investigate whether or not *De ordine* informs the historical transition toward “Christian sophistry” (Kennedy, *Classical* 49). If it does, this would further demonstrate the significance of Augustine’s pivotal role within the rhetorical tradition.

When Augustine leaves the sophistic school, he moves toward a life in philosophy. As Douglass notes, at Cassiacum Augustine seems “frustrated” with certain “imperfections” of the pedagogies available to him (51 N.16). Yet, he wishes to continue teaching, for “the distortion is located in the modality, not in the hope.” As Augustine brings particular sophistic practices and

pedagogies with him throughout this period of educational reform, another rhetorical authority comes to the fore, providing aspects of a theoretical framework for his thought and work, namely Cicero.

Cicero tried to move the students of his day away from “the utilitarian idea of rhetoric and to enlarge their conception of the ideal orator,” as Isocrates did (Marrou 285). Even more so than his predecessor, Cicero insisted upon “the need for a solid philosophical foundation” for the orator so that his training would “be based on the widest possible culture.” Indeed, Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian all advocated a rhetoric-plus program, where philosophy was central to the highest work of the rhetor. Augustine’s understanding and use of rhetoric may be described as highly “sophistic” because of his Roman education, but he also acquires his refined taste for a more “philosophical” Ciceronian rhetoric while he is in school. Augustine’s trust of Cicero’s rhetorical precepts is still present much later when he writes Book IV of *DDC*. Following scholarly discussion of the significance of Cicero for Augustine’s philosophical program at Cassiciacum, the goal of the next chapter is to study Augustine’s *philosophia* in *De ordine* and to closely consider its implications for his use and understanding of rhetoric.

Ciceronian Coordinates in the Rhetoric of *De ordine*

Augustine's *philosophia* in *De ordine* embraces and employs the Ciceronian integration of philosophy and rhetoric. Augustine applies this integration through the content and form of his dialogue. In terms of content, Augustine finds both "rhetoric" (*rhetorica*) and rhetorical, i.e., literary elements significant for the philosophical quest for wisdom, a position substantiated by his reading of Cicero. In terms of form, Augustine expresses the insights of his leisure through a Ciceronian dialogue, an eloquent means to persuade his fellow teachers to engage and imitate his philosophical culture. *De ordine* thus represents Augustine's application of this Ciceronian principle – the integrity of philosophy and rhetoric – as he directs both disciplines toward the highest purpose that he can find, the eloquent teaching of eternal wisdom. Despite lower uses of both of these disciplines as exercised by other authorities at the time, Augustine cultivates them through *philosophia* for the happy life.

This chapter studies the text of *De ordine* through Augustine's use of the term *philosophia*, which integrates philosophical and rhetorical elements into a culture that Augustine describes in and demonstrates through the dialogue. In *Coordinate One: In Philosophia*, Augustine suggests that his *philosophia* includes both a moral and an intellectual quest for wisdom; it is a way of life sought by himself and his companions, and one that stands in contrast to the ambitions and vanities of his earlier life as a Roman rhetor. In *Coordinate Two: Framing Philosophia*, Augustine initiates his demonstration of *philosophia* through a disputation with his companions on order as he also argues for and exemplifies the significance of "framing" philosophical discourse in light of correct reasoning and eloquent expression. In *Coordinate Three: Cultivating Philosophia*, Augustine integrates literary elements, including poetry and the liberal arts, into the *philosophia* that he cultivates among his companions and proposes to his

audience. Augustine describes precisely how to use these elements within a philosophical order of teaching, namely, by directing them toward the discovery of wisdom rather than their limited use in the sophistic rhetoric schools. Lastly, in *Coordinate Four: Discovering Philosophia*, Augustine substantiates his *philosophia* with first principles discovered through the intellect by treating the topics of self and God. The discipline of philosophy specializes in bringing knowledge of the soul, of God and of all creation together, teaching the unity and order of all things. For Augustine, the goal of such philosophical knowledge, and ultimately of his philosophical culture, is both moral and intellectual, practical and contemplative: to order one's mind and one's life toward lasting happiness and then to teach this order to others.

Augustine maintains the Ciceronian integration of philosophy and rhetoric even as he deviates from Cicero's skepticism to assert the philosophical validity and truth of Christianity. Augustine's *philosophia* embraces and employs these disciplines together to teach his audience about the divine order of things. Augustine's *philosophia* in *De ordine* frames and develops this process of discovery and expression as he invites his audience to participate in a distinctly Christian culture. Unlike the erudition promoted in the sophistic schools, which Augustine describes as preoccupied with vanity and personal ambition, Augustine applies Cicero's integration of philosophy and rhetoric to cultivate these disciplines in learning and in practice for a new purpose: to discover and express the happy life in the enjoyment of God. *De ordine* sheds light on how Augustine uses and understands rhetorical categories, and rhetorical authorities like Cicero, through the content and form of his work. His example invites scholars of all disciplines to consider how rhetorical and literary categories are integral to their own teaching and writing.

The Significance of Cicero for Augustine's Philosophical Rhetoric

Scholars have long acknowledged Augustine's intellectual relationship to Marcus Tullius Cicero, the Roman lawyer, politician and writer of the 1st century BC. From Augustine's earliest writings to his last, this Roman predecessor was a valuable "interlocutor in [Augustine's] consideration of key questions" (Troup 21). The relationship was dynamic, with Augustine "occasionally embracing, sometimes rejecting, and often revising or expanding on Cicero's discourse," but the "scholarly dialogue" between the two remained constant (21, 22). According to Troup, central to this relationship was Augustine's adoption of two key philosophical principles: the integration of philosophy and rhetoric and an eclectic approach to philosophy (16, 24). While Augustine's reading of Cicero's *Hortensius* stands out as a particular moment when he drew attention to the significance of these principles (*conf.* III.4.7), they continued to have significance for his use and understanding of rhetoric long after. As this study suggests, both of these principles are present in Augustine's writing immediately after his retirement from the sophistic rhetoric school as he composed his philosophical dialogues at Cassiciacum in AD 386.

As a student in the Roman sophistic schools, Augustine studied Cicero's rhetorical works, including *De inventione*, *De oratore*, and *Orator* (Hagendahl 554; Curley 190). Augustine also read some philosophical texts within his course of study, including Cicero's *Hortensius*, the orator's exhortation to the philosophical life. While schools like Augustine's utilized such philosophical works the particular way in which fourth century teachers and students understood their significance was, however, limited. For some time now the majority of Roman intellectuals and orators had failed to appreciate the full breadth of Cicero's contributions to Latin thought, especially his understanding of philosophy (Marrou 285; Troup 16–19). Augustine's description of his reading of the *Hortensius* from *Confessiones* captures some of the

complexity surrounding use of Cicero's work at this time. By Augustine's account, his rhetoric teachers sought imitation of Ciceronian style, but they cared less for consideration of the philosophical content of his thought (*conf.* III.4.7). For cultural and political reasons (Leff 236), this truncated reading of Cicero had become typical for most Roman teachers and students (Foley, "Cicero" 61-62). Consequently, Augustine's fellow students came to admire Cicero's "tongue...but not his heart" (*conf.* III.4.7). While Cicero's original thought unified content and form in learning, as it integrated philosophy and rhetoric, Late Roman oratorical practice and education tended to separate them and focus on rhetorical style without philosophical substance.

Augustine's interest in Cicero, however, went beyond imitation of his predecessor's style. Unlike his classmates, Augustine found that Cicero's work did not primarily "impress (*persuaserat*) [him] by its way of speaking but rather by what it spoke" (*conf.* III.4.7). Cicero's exhortation moved Augustine's heart through its persuasive content, and it inspired him to reconsider his intellectual priorities. For years, Augustine had put his mind in pursuit of the goal for which his education prepared him, to be a skilled orator in the service of the Imperial government, but upon hearing Cicero's invitation to *philosophia*, Augustine suddenly felt that all of his earlier "vain practices" from the sophistic school were insufficient (I.18.28). The rhetoric that he learned there was "directed towards empty human joys," "for a damnable and inflated purpose" (III.4.7). The rhetoric of the *Hortensius*, however, "set [Augustine] on fire" for philosophy (III.4.8). By its delightful discourse, he "was stirred up and enkindled...to love, and pursue, and attain and catch hold of, and strongly embrace not this or that sect, but wisdom itself." Unlike the sophistic school and its rhetorical goal of "paltriest praise" (*ord.* II.10.29–II.10.30), Cicero's philosophy directed Augustine's intellectual efforts and rhetorical talent

toward a new end, the discovery and teaching of wisdom, as well as set out a method by which such a pursuit could precede.

Augustine's exposure to Ciceronian philosophy led him, even if not his classmates, to reappraise his earlier understanding of rhetoric and its applications (Troup 16–17). Cicero's work particularly enabled this transition by demonstrating how to supplant rhetoric "from the lore of personal triumph [in the sophistic schools] to the ancient idea of moving men to truth" (Baldwin 187–88). Moreover, at least since his reading of the *Hortensius*, Cicero's philosophical framework, with its strong rhetorical implications, i.e., the inseparability of wisdom and eloquence, provided a means by which Augustine evaluated forthcoming intellectual and moral authorities (DiLorenzo, "Ciceronianism" 174–176), including Scripture (*conf.* III.5.9), Faustus the Manichaean (V.5.10–11), Victorinus the philosopher (VIII.2.3), and Ambrose the Bishop (V.14.24). Following Cicero's philosophical eclecticism, Augustine sought wisdom from this variety of eloquent sources as he wrestled with complex questions concerning truth, evil and the soul. The *Hortensius* had set Augustine's heart on fire for wisdom, and he pursued this philosophical quest as he continued to teach rhetoric for the next twelve years.

During this period, Augustine's professional life followed along the lines of the prevailing rhetorical practices of his time as he publically spoke and taught within the Roman educational system. Yet, in his personal affairs, he simultaneously pursued resources that were both beyond and intertwined within this extensive network of people and practices. As DiLorenzo notes, Cicero's philosophical method continued to play a significant role during these working years of Augustine's early adult life, providing a certain "Ciceronian organization" to Augustine's continued search for wisdom ("Ciceronianism" 172), perhaps in his teaching of rhetoric as well as in his personal pursuits. This organization, particularly the relationship

between the philosophical substance and eloquent expression of wisdom, significantly framed Augustine's experiences with both the Manichaeans and Neo-Platonists during this time, culminating in Augustine's exposure to the Milanese Bishop, Ambrose (*conf.* V.13.23). Tensions, however, grew between the two modes of life: between Augustine's profession as a public orator, and his growing desire to live "in philosophy" (*ord.* I.2.4). The stress became so great that Augustine became ill.

When an appropriate time came, Augustine took the opportunity to move his life and mind more fully to the ways of wisdom. While "cultural retirement" was a socially acceptable withdrawal from public teaching for an intellectual such as Augustine (Brown 108–09), his deepening conversion to Christianity had made the necessity of *otium liberale* even more urgent (*conf.* IX.2.2). He could no longer tolerate the "vanity and...lying" – the prevailing rhetorical abuses of the time – associated with his public profession (*conf.* IX.4.9). Augustine sought to commit himself and his rhetorical talents elsewhere, somewhere better suited to his pursuit of wisdom. Retirement was a fitting choice. In late summer, Augustine moved to a country villa with some of his family, friends and closely associated pupils as he awaited baptism by Bishop Ambrose the following spring. Augustine composed four texts during this period (*Contra Academicos*, *De ordine*, *De beata vita*, and *Soliloquia*), and they are his earliest extant writings. Within these texts, Augustine addressed topics important to his own intellectual development, but he published them for a more persuasive purpose – to invite those closest to his heart, his present company and his friends and colleagues abroad, into his vision of a distinctly philosophical culture (*ord.* I.9.27; McWilliam 138–139). Within these texts, Augustine continued to utilize Cicero as a key interlocutor, although with great discernment.

Study of these works reveals the nuances of Augustine’s ongoing relationship to his respected Roman predecessor. Although most studies of Augustine’s rhetoric and its Ciceronian antecedents focus on Book IV of *De doctrina Christiana*, this chapter attends to such elements in the philosophical dialogue *De ordine*, a work that adds texture to scholarly understanding of this relationship from an earlier and pivotal time in Augustine’s life. This study considers how Augustine’s philosophical rhetoric exercised in and through the dialogue exhibits the Ciceronian integration of philosophy and rhetoric – or what he later describes as the unity of wisdom and eloquence (*doc. christ. IV.5.7*). The interest here, however, is not merely in Augustine’s formal imitation of Cicero, which Foley has established (“Cicero” 62), but following the work of DiLorenzo and Troup to consider how the substance of Augustine’s philosophical rhetoric demonstrates a unity of wisdom and eloquence in theory and practice (DiLorenzo “Ciceronianism” 174; Troup 16). The text of *De ordine* provides new insights to rhetorical studies of Augustine’s thought, and particularly the significance of Cicero for Augustine’s rhetoric at this time.

Cicero had determined the nature of rhetoric by its relationship to philosophy, one essentially of content and expression, of things and words (Riley 116). While Cicero and Augustine both understood rhetoric *qua* rhetoric as a specific kind of practical knowledge (DiLorenzo, “Critique” 248; *ord. II.13.38*), they both broadly applied principles of eloquence to other disciplines, particularly philosophy (Pernot 119). Other Hellenic philosophers and orators also followed this practice, including some Neo-Platonists (Pernot 196–97, 119). In these cases, rhetoric was “put to the service of philosophy, and vice versa” (201). Therefore, although Cicero and Augustine both theoretically distinguished between the disciplines of rhetoric and

philosophy, the two were linked in practice. As Augustine moved into his philosophical life, he pursued a kind of eloquent wisdom that Cicero had inspired him to seek and to teach.

While additional terms from the text could inform this study, e.g., *eloquentia*, *modus*, *oratio*, Augustine's use of *philosophia* invites broad consideration of the substance of his philosophical rhetoric in the dialogue. This study suggests that *philosophia* is both a mode of life and a mode of learning that Augustine is promoting and persuading others into as a broad but distinctly Christian culture. Augustine's *philosophia* embraces and employs Cicero's integration of philosophy and rhetoric to discuss and demonstrate this culture in and through the dialogue of *De ordine*. Elements of this culture are in continuity with the typical rhetorical culture of the Late Roman Empire and others are in greater opposition. Augustine's discernment appears to hinge on the ordering of such elements toward lasting happiness, a subject addressed in the following chapter. Augustine uses the dialogue form to invite others to participate in this cultural conversation for the specific benefit of framing "the order of teaching" (*ord.* I.9.27). In *De ordine*, Augustine eloquently expresses the order of a philosophical culture to his audience with hopes that they will follow a similar path.

Augustine's intellectual relationship to Cicero certainly includes major divergences, including his refutation of Cicero's skepticism (Foley, "Cicero" 63–67; Fortin 223). Additionally, Augustine's work presents a significant "reorientation" of Ciceronian terms, including "wisdom" and "teaching" (Troup 26; Fortin 227, 221). Yet, elements of Augustine's engagement with Cicero's philosophical thought and method remained constant, including insistence on the "synthesis of wisdom and eloquence" (Troup 26). Furthermore, while the "Ciceronian tenor" of the Cassiciacum dialogues has been "widely acknowledged," the depth of this relationship "has yet to be adequately explored" (Foley, "Cicero" 51–52). Study of

Augustine's *philosophia* in *De ordine* provides a means to consider not merely Augustine's stylistic imitation of Cicero but the philosophical principles of Cicero, such as the unity of philosophy and rhetoric, guiding his thought and practices at this pivotal time.

Philosophia in De ordine

Augustine's *philosophia* in *De ordine* discusses and demonstrates a culture that embraces and employs the Ciceronian unity of philosophy and rhetoric. This section chronologically identifies and discusses four coordinates in the text that reflect this unity in learning and in practice. These coordinates are: *In Philosophia*, *Framing Philosophia*, *Cultivating Philosophia*, and *Discovering Philosophia*. In the introduction, Augustine describes his life in *philosophia* as a moral and intellectual conversion toward the happy life (*beata vita*), a move that stands in contrast to the ambitions and vanities of his life as a Roman rhetor. Then, in dialogue with his companions, Augustine demonstrates that this moral and intellectual conversion includes both correct understanding and eloquent expression of philosophical topics. To cultivate such conversion, Augustine proposes contemplative and practical study of the liberal arts to discover and express truth. In addition to these traditional arts, however, Augustine argues that the discipline of *philosophia* specializes in treating the topics of self and God. For Augustine, the goal of philosophical discovery, and ultimately of his philosophical culture, is both intellectual and moral, contemplative and active: to order one's thoughts and one's life toward eternal happiness. Once this personal discovery is in place, one bears a certain responsibility to teach it to others and thus to bring about a broader culture of *philosophia*. Following Cicero's example, Augustine argues for the integration of the arts – and particularly philosophy and rhetoric – in his *philosophia*. *Philosophia* in and through the dialogue is a way of life and a way of learning directed toward the discovery *and* expression of truth.

Coordinate One: In Philosophia

The first coordinate, *In Philosophia*, discusses how Augustine's initial uses of the term *philosophia* reflect a transition in his intellectual and moral life from teaching rhetoric at the sophistic school to a life "in philosophy." This transition comes through the practice of *otium liberale* and prompts the composition of Augustine's philosophical dialogues (Trout 618). Once at the villa in Cassiciacum, Augustine leads his companions in leisurely activities that are contemplative and practical, philosophical and rhetorical, personal and social. Augustine, however, gives all of these activities a common purpose: he orders them toward the philosophical life as habits in the "love of wisdom" (*ord.* I.11.32). Augustine demonstrates and discusses the significance of these habits, and ultimately promotes them, through use of the Ciceronian dialogue. In doing so, he seeks to cultivate the philosophical life not only among his present companions but also among a broader audience. Like Cicero, this is one way that Augustine practices the art of rhetoric for a persuasive purpose during his *otium*, through the eloquent expression and teaching of wisdom.

Within the introduction, Augustine recollects to his friend Zenobius that he left the sophistic rhetoric school to take refuge in philosophy (*in philosophiam confugere*) (*ord.* I.2.5). Augustine had been struggling with an illness in his chest that complicated his teaching of rhetoric, and this difficulty coincided with the beginning of summer vacation. Yet, even apart from this physical "emergency" and break from teaching, Augustine suggests that he was "already planning" to make this transition into philosophy, a move particularly reflected in his use of the word *schola*. Augustine left Milan and went to the villa of his friend and fellow professor, Verecundus, as he shifted from the sophistic rhetoric school, *schola illa* ("that

school”), to his philosophical school at Cassiciacum, *schola nostra* (“our school”). Moreover, this physical transition reflected a deeper intellectual and moral one.

Augustine describes the “manner of life” that he and his companions are “leading” at the villa as one of “generous leisure” (*liberali otio*) (*ord.* I.2.4). They are following a long tradition of “cultured retirement,” a move to a tranquil space detached from public occupations and ambitions to consider philosophical matters in “creative” ways (Brown 108). Augustine follows Cicero in taking such opportunity not only for philosophical study but also for literary writing (Trout 618). Augustine gathers at the villa with an “ill-assorted company,” consisting of family members and students from his teaching career (Brown 113). They are an unusual group for traditional *otium*, which was a privilege of intellectual culture, but this distinction appears central to the philosophical life that Augustine seeks to cultivate at *schola nostra* (*ord.* I.11.31). Augustine’s *otium* includes the activities of treating classical texts, quiet study and prayer, and exercises on philosophical questions (I.3.6). The villa provided a suitable ambiance and situation, a fitting “place” (*loco*) (I.8.23), for this kind of leisure.

While these activities occur in the dialogue only among a small, private group, Augustine records them as a means to share the “fruit” of their leisure with Zenobius and others in their intellectual circle (*ord.* I.2.4). To express the insights of this philosophical leisure, Augustine uses the Ciceronian dialogue (Foley, “Other” 167–68). This particular form of discourse included certain stylistic features but moreover demonstrated an approach to persuading a specific kind of audience of philosophical content. As De Giorgio notes, while the form historically included disputation (*disputatio*) between individual personas to engage philosophical arguments, the dialogue (*sermo*) was predominantly a subtle and nonaggressive way for the composer to engage in persuasive conversation with a small group of fellow intellectuals (106–07, 114). The

discourse of *sermo* was an eloquent and palatable expression of leisurely conversation (109–10); it was a gentle and composed form that invited consideration of philosophical topics.

Augustine composes *De ordine* as a *sermo* (*ord.* I.7.20). Like Cicero, he finds the dialogue an appropriate means to engage his fellow Romans in a certain quality of conversation and into a certain quality of life. Since most of Augustine’s audience, including Zenobius, was predominantly cultivated in the rhetorical education of the time, they struggled with the obscurity (*obscurus*) of philosophical topics (*ord.* I.1.2; I.7.20). Augustine’s dialogue seeks to overcome the limitations of this “feeble mentality” (*ord.* I.1.2), and to demonstrate precisely how his colleagues can come to a fuller understanding of the order of things through philosophical learning.

According to De Giorgio, the persuasive power of *sermo* came through “the validation of ideas by a circle of friends,” cultivating an “ethics of conciliation” among them rather than strict technical demonstration (114). In *De ordine*, Augustine seems aware of how his *sermo* may influence not only the personal lives of his readers (*ord.* I.2.3), but also the broader educational culture in which they all participate (I.9.27). Like Cicero, Augustine’s leisure contains this social dimension (Trout 618), for his philosophical writing is at least partially a response to certain cultural concerns of Late Roman society (Foley “Other” 167–68). Through the practice of *otium* and specifically use of sermonic discourse, *De ordine* presents Augustine’s contribution to a broader discussion over scholastic, i.e., educational culture, in light of, not despite, his physical distance from the city of Milan. Augustine’s contemplative study at the villa informs his insights on issues of practical significance, and he shares them through the text as a way to shape public discussion and teaching of such matters.

One issue that seems particularly relevant to Augustine's audience in *De ordine* is the relationship between philosophical life – its habits, culture and intellectual underpinnings – and the predominant rhetorical, or literary, life of the Later Roman Empire. As these coordinates collectively suggest, Augustine addresses this issue throughout the dialogue, but this first coordinate highlights his initial approach to the matter, one that includes the educational significance of poetry and skepticism, two elements central to the prevailing rhetorical culture, for compatibility with Augustine's understanding of philosophical life.

Early in the dialogue, as Augustine attempts to engage his young student Licentius in an exercise on the topic of order, the boy claims to prefer his own mode of study, that of poetic composition (*ord.* I.3.8). Augustine is both encouraged by and concerned about this, for Licentius's "extreme" affection for poetry appears to "take him away from philosophy." "I am vexed somewhat" says Augustine, "because...you pursue that verse-making of yours which may be erecting between yourself and reality a wall more impenetrable than they are trying to rear between your lovers." He said this in reference to Licentius's current preoccupation with the love story about Pyramus and Thisbe from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In response to his teacher's concern, Licentius states, "Why may I...not be admonished by the sound of your voice to study philosophy rather than to compose poems?" (I.3.9). "For philosophy," he asserts, "as I have begun to believe you as you prove it day by day, is our true and tranquil abode (*habitatio*)."
Through this interaction and prompted by the sound of Augustine's voice, Licentius's mind, including his passion for poetic composition, turns (*conversus*) toward *philosophia*.

While this interaction seems to subordinate poetry, it also does not dismiss it. Rather, Augustine suggests that the "extreme" practice of poetic composition acts as a wall, a blockade, to his student's movement toward truth (*veritatem*) (I.3.8). Yet, this is why they have come to the

villa – with hope of finding truth (*inveniendi veri*), or rather “Truth itself” (I.4.10). For this purpose, they have left the walls of Milan, to pursue leisure “more lofty” than Apollo. Augustine’s comment on poetry demonstrates how their philosophical life at this time stood in some opposition to Roman literary culture (Brown 112). Augustine’s concern for Licentius presents his attempt to “swim against” the limitless consumption of Roman ways and their inherent values while they are on retreat. Yet rather than rejecting all such poetry, Augustine’s *philosophia* brings measure to it. Indeed, their philosophical mode appears to be one of measure in many ways (*ord.* I.8.26; Hochschild 78). As Augustine states at the onset on their discussion, he is glad to have escaped the sophistic rhetoric school but only “in some measure” (*modo*) (*ord.* I.9.27). The sophistic school was the dominant institution for teaching Roman culture and values, particularly through poetry and literature, and Augustine demonstrates his ingenuity as he finds ways to bridge his new philosophical leisure with the common education and expectations of his audience, particularly those who still valued this system and its proverbial compositions.

Their leisure at Cassiciacum is, however, more directly opposed to another facet of Roman culture, namely academic skepticism. While Augustine’s elaboration of this criticism comes predominantly through another dialogue from this period, *Contra Academicos*, *De ordine* also references the inadequacy that Augustine finds in skepticism. For soon after Licentius agrees to debate the topic of order, Augustine invites his other present student, Trygetius, to participate. “What is your opinion on this subject [of order]?” asks Augustine (*ord.* I.4.10). Trygetius replies, “I incline very much towards order, but I am not yet fully convinced.” In fact, this element of “indecision” (*incertus*) – a symptom of academic skepticism – still affects them all at Cassiciacum. Licentius in particular was only recently a defender of suspended judgment, but now he is tired of its distractions. Licentius responds to his fellow student, perhaps to counter

Augustine's criticism above, "Poetry surely cannot turn me away from philosophy as much as distrust of finding truth" (*inveniendi veri diffidentia*). Leaving such distrust behind, this young student now seeks "a divine thing," one he is intent on finding.

While poetry in Augustine's assessment may offer a point of entry from literary life to philosophy for those such as Licentius, a point of agreement with Cicero (Foley, "Cicero" 53), skepticism as an intellectual assumption seems predominantly discordant. In addition to Augustine's refutation of the epistemological inadequacies of skepticism, Topping argues that his primary concern in the Cassiciacum dialogues is "the disastrous educational and moral implications" that result from a skeptic's lack of assent (*Happiness* 96–97). For as students despair of actually finding the truth that they seek, skepticism ultimately "undermines the conditions for learning" (97). Practically speaking, such students find their natural motivation for pursuing truth derailed because they assume they cannot find it with certainty (112). Consequently, skepticism does not fit the mode of life that Augustine seeks to establish at Cassiciacum – intellectually, morally, or pedagogically.⁸ Skepticism undermines their ability to confidently abide in their philosophy.

Augustine uses the dialogue, and the personas reflected within it, as an opportunity to engage issues relevant to his transition from rhetorical life to a life *in philosophia*. The way that Augustine discusses poetry and skepticism demonstrates how the status of these intellectual habits was relevant to Augustine's audience, specifically whether or not they were suited to the pursuit of wisdom, to life in philosophy. Augustine's *otium* provides the context for him to address such matters of social import, and his dialogue, his *sermo*, is a suitable means for him to

⁸ Although Augustine rejects the philosophical foundations of skepticism and their implications here, he seems willing to use a skeptical method of questioning as a means to teach his present students and to move them closer to the truth of divine order (*ord.* I.7.20).

converse with his colleagues about how these issues relate to the public “order of teaching” (*ord.* I.9.27). Their conversation includes the evaluation of certain intellectual practices common to the predominant rhetorical culture of Late Antiquity, such as study of poetry and presumption of skepticism, for usefulness and compatibility with the philosophical life. Augustine discerns these elements of the philosophical life explicitly *in* the dialogue with his companions as he also implicitly converses with his broader audience *through* the dialogue concerning the relationship between literary and philosophical life. As the following coordinate shows, another facet of this relationship is teaching students how to frame their philosophical expressions.

Coordinate Two: Framing Philosophia

This coordinate, *Framing Philosophia*, demonstrates how the developing habits of Augustine and his companions at the villa include learning philosophical content as well as rhetorical expression. Augustine and his students are seeking to get at “the heart of philosophy” particularly through their conversations (*ord.* I.6.16). While Augustine too is still learning (I.5.13), he at times proves his “fine pedagogical sense” (Russell, “Introduction” iv) as he seeks to “carry along” his students and his broader audience in his love of wisdom by framing their philosophical discourse in and through the dialogue (*ord.* I.5.13–14). As a teacher, Augustine offers an eloquent example for imitation in such discourse through his own speeches in the dialogue, which not only address philosophical content but also rhetorically frame the content in a way fitted to express and teach the truths therein. The collective sum of Augustine’s speeches through the dialogue not only shape the expressions of his companions but also provide persuasive arguments for shaping the opinions of Augustine’s broader audience, particularly other teachers.

In the dialogue, Licentius, Trygetius and Augustine agree to a debate (*disputatio*) on order. After Licentius makes the initial argument that order governs all things, he seeks to express his position more clearly (*ord.* I.4.11). He proceeds to suggest that the trees, the leaves, the animals, and their very discussions all confirm “the order of things,” crediting the statement that nothing is without order. Augustine then asks a following question. Is this order of things “something good or something bad?” (I.6.15). There is “a kind of middle course,” replies Licentius, for “order seems to be neither a good thing nor a bad,” but rather “nothing is apart from” or “opposed” to order.

Augustine responds to the arguments of his young student with great joy, for Licentius now proves that he is “coming full force into the very heart of philosophy” (*medium venire philosophiam*) (*ord.* I.6.16). Augustine is perhaps particularly gratified that Licentius’s statement stands against the Manichaean dualism that he himself once ascribed to concerning the order of good and evil. Moreover, Augustine is gratified that this “youthful son of [his] dear friend,” Romanianus, is grasping the nature of causes (*causae*), which demonstrates “the integral fittingness of things” (I.1.2). Licentius reveals his possession (*possessione*) of a first principle fundamental to their philosophical discipline – belief in a unified order of all things (I.6.16). Yet, his ability to reason through and express his understanding of this principle is still incomplete. For Trygetius immediately questions his fellow student, “What more impious statement could be made than that evil things themselves are comprised in order” (I.7.17). Licentius then attempts to extrapolate his argument, suggesting that God harmonizes the universe by a “divine arrangement” (*divinae dispositionis*) of contrasts, an antithesis (*antithetis*) of good and evil.

Licentius has more to learn, for he lacks the ability to aptly express the philosophical principles that he is discovering. “Oh, if I could say what I want to say,” he cries, “Words, where

are you now? I ask. Come to my aid! Both good things and bad are in order. Please take my word for it, because I know not how to explain it” (*ord.* I.6.16). Licentius’s “difficulty of finding words” (*difficultate verborum*) signifies his need for greater cultivation, for even when his answer is apparent to his mind he lacks a strong ability to convey it (I.7.18). Augustine notes that this young student is “not searching at all for what to answer, but just how to frame the answer” (*nec omnino quaerens quid responderet, sed quemadmodum quod respondendum*). Following this, Licentius throws himself on his bed and says, “Will you give me no answer – You who have driven me to say these things?” (I.7.19). Licentius expects Augustine, as his teacher, to aid him in this matter. At this point in the dialogue, however, Augustine is acting as “a captious questioner” (*odiosum percontatorem*), perhaps posing as a typical academic, skeptical and adversarial (I.5.12). This posture eventually shifts, when Augustine appears to move from questioner to magister (*magistrum*) (I.10.29), but here Augustine simply promises to eventually become the teacher (*doctorem*) on the topic of order (I.5.12). Therefore, while Licentius now demonstrates much progress in the ways of philosophy, he still needs additional instruction, particularly in the expression of the wisdom he is discovering.

Augustine utilizes his experience and expertise as a teacher to provide this instruction, specifically by the example of his own apt and eloquent expressions on the topic. Augustine does not give Licentius an explicit lesson on how to frame answers to general philosophical questions. Rather, he frames his own answer in the dialogue through a rhetorical exercise of praise (*ord.* I.7.20; I.9.27). Licentius already has some natural ability (*ingenii*) in speaking, but it needs to be cultivated for philosophy (I.7.20). Following Cicero and others within the rhetorical tradition (Pernot 219), Augustine demonstrates that the best way for Licentius to learn clarity and eloquence of expression is through “imitation” of a cultivated orator (Kennedy, *Classical* 182),

in this case, through imitation of Augustine's epideictic speech on order in the dialogue. While Augustine elaborates on this principle of eloquence – that a student learns it more effectively through imitation than through study of rhetorical rules – in *De doctrina Christiana* (IV.3.4–5), he applies it here throughout *De ordine* in what he says and how it says it. Augustine responds to an audience through the questions and arguments raised by his present company as well as those arguments that he assumes among his colleagues abroad, e.g., Zenobius. He frames the dialogue to address these issues as well as one of broader cultural concern – the question of how to order a distinctly Christian education in the Late Roman Empire. As he eloquently teaches his students in the dialogue, he also seeks to persuasively move his broader audience through it.

Perhaps for this reason, Augustine recognizes a certain significance of the typical Roman way of teaching at this point in the dialogue, even as he subordinates it to Christian doctrine (*ord.* I.5.13). For although he criticizes failures of the sophistic rhetoric school, predominantly its deprived purpose in *De ordine*, he also seems to acknowledge how the predominant literary education can play some role in preparing young minds for *philosophia*. He states that while most teachers are “quite remote from such [philosophical] pursuits,” they do “teach something when, by certain ties of questioning, they are drawn to the fellowship of those engaged in discussions.” Augustine does not specify who this group of teachers is (perhaps other rhetoric professors), but he argues that they do “teach something...and that something is not nothing.” Augustine suggests that a certain quality of intellectual discourse occurs among this group of teachers and their students, and this discourse informs the order of teaching (I.9.27). Augustine publishes his own “chain of written words” through the dialogue to influence this intellectual conversation (Foley, “Cicero” 74). He is hopeful that his approach to the cultural question of

Christian education, which he expresses both eloquently and sincerely, will contribute a certain *gravitas* to this public discussion on teaching.

Thus in his care for developing moral and intellectual habits for philosophy, Augustine attends to subtle details of Late Roman educational culture, at times in criticism of the predominant literary system and at times in continuity. As he establishes his own school at Cassiciacum, *schola nostra*, Augustine argues, like Cicero, that it is imperative for his companions to learn philosophical answers, i.e., the “what” of *philosophia* as well as how to express them in an effective and eloquent manner, i.e., the “how” of *philosophia*. Augustine demonstrates the significance of both abilities in the dialogue so that his students can imitate his philosophical rhetoric. Moreover, by capturing this discussion through the dialogue, Augustine ingeniously influences how his broader audience may discern and discuss such pedagogical elements for the benefit of teaching *philosophia* to others.

Coordinate Three: Cultivating Philosophia

The third coordinate, *Cultivating Philosophia*, demonstrates how the habits of *schola nostra* include additional elements from Roman literary education, specifically the liberal arts, ordered to philosophical ends. Following Cicero, Augustine directs study and use of the arts toward wisdom. This includes the art of rhetoric, which is essential to the expression and teaching of wisdom to others (*ord.* II.13.38). Augustine makes a critical distinction, however, between the common use of the arts and his goal for their study at Cassiciacum. Unlike the sophistic rhetoric school, *schola illa*, which directs its pedagogy toward the rhetorical abuses of vanity and false praise, Augustine’s intends for his school to use the arts toward the advantage and beauty of learning (*ord.* I.10.30). According to Augustine, the arts are both practical and contemplative (II.16.44), and their richness is accessible to the gifted as well as to the morally

upright (II.16.45). Augustine explicitly makes such arguments in the dialogue concerning the arts in addition to exemplifying their significance through the following interaction with Licentius. Furthermore, Augustine describes some political applications of his philosophical culture as he promotes the exercise of virtue and wisdom in social and public affairs.

Augustine rejoices over Licentius's new zeal for philosophy and wants him to continue along this path of learning. Although previously concerned about this student's "extreme" attention to poetry, Augustine's next move attends to the boy's interest. He says to Licentius, "If you have a care for order...you must return to those verses" (*ord.* I.8.24). Augustine sees an interpretive value in the poem that had previously preoccupied this young man, for something about the story directly pertains to the question of order.

This is a rich example of continuity between Augustine's earlier rhetorical culture and his philosophical life at Cassiciacum. Augustine brings much more with him than poetry. Rather than rejecting "the liberal arts" (*disciplinarum liberalium*), Augustine appropriates "moderate and concise" (*modesta sane ac succincta*) instruction (*eruditio*) in all the arts to his philosophical culture in the dialogue (*ord.* I.8.24). His reasoning is explicit: instruction in the liberal arts "produces devotees more alert and steadfast and better equipped for embracing truth" (*amplectendae veritati*). Moreover, this disposition toward truth is essential, "so that...[students] more ardently seek and more consistently pursue and in the end more lovingly cling to that which is called the happy life" (*beata vita*). In these concise yet significant statements, Augustine brings the arts into his philosophical culture, ordering them toward the wisdom that confers happiness.

Augustine's discussion of the arts in part reflects his understanding of the relationship between Roman rhetorical culture and *philosophia*. Following Cicero's example, Augustine puts

the arts in service toward the end of humanity's striving, the happy life (Kimball 42). His explanation of this relationship in the dialogue is insightful, for he presents the arts as medicinal, as a means to move from the limitations of sense experience to wisdom (*ord.* I.8.24). Augustine, however, also seems to anticipate his audience's skeptical response – that while one may assume that the arts guide the mind toward truth and the happy life, the reality of sensual addictions prevents anyone from actually finding it. In such cases, men, “content with the name of the most high God, and with their sense faculty,” “live wretched...but they live.” Augustine here perhaps speaks most directly of those colleagues who were content with thinking (intellectually) like Christians but who failed to virtuously live (to be morally converted to) the philosophical life as Augustine essentially understood it. Yet, at present, Augustine's discussion is with Licentius, a young man who demonstrates the desire *to live* the happy life.

For students such as Licentius, the relationship between the arts and happiness seems more like an exercise regimen than a medicine. Learning the arts is not synonymous with living the happy life, no more than the act of exercise is synonymous with physical health, but rather the arts appear as a significant means to attaining the final goal. They prepare one for living a certain fullness of life: of mind, body, and soul. The arts are a means to wisdom (*sapientia*), and ultimately to the Wisdom of God, “that Spouse supremely good and beautiful,” Who seeks men “worthy of His abode, souls for whom it is not enough merely to live but to live a happy life” (*ord.* I.8.24). Thus while Augustine anticipates the skepticism of his audience— their assumption that the happy life, like truth, may be sought but cannot actually be discovered – he counters their conclusion while adopting their pedagogical method (Topping, *Happiness* 83). Augustine's colleagues were well versed in the rhetoric of their time, a rhetoric that sought practical use of the arts, even as a means toward philosophical life (Kimball 41). Augustine, however, takes a

pivotal step as he puts the arts, the literary education of the day, into a deeply Christian philosophical context, one that puts the arts to work toward humanity's ultimate end – an end, unlike Cicero's, that one seeks *and* finds.

Of great interest is not only the fact that Augustine relates poetry and the arts to wisdom and the happy life but also that he explains to his young student precisely how this movement from the arts toward truth may be accomplished, in this case how Licentius can interpret the poem to learn something of wisdom. Augustine's instructions are two-fold. First, he says, "For the present...return to the Muses" (*ord.* I.8.24). Then, he says, "And yet, do you know what I would have you do?" Here Augustine extrapolates the relationship between the arts and the truth that leads to the happy life:

At that point, where Pyramus destroyed himself...and [Thisbe] slew herself over his half-dead body...– there, in that very anguish where it is proper that your poem should reach its highest flight, you have a golden opportunity: satirize (*arripe*) the curse of that unclean lust and those burning passions by which those deplorable things come to pass. Then soar aloft (*attollere*) with all your power in praise (*in laude*) of pure and genuine love (*amoris*)– love wherein souls endowed with knowledge (*disciplinis*) and adorned with virtue (*virtute*) are, through philosophy (*per philosophiam*), united to understanding, and whereby they not only escape death, but moreover enjoy a life most happy.

Augustine's first statement relays, as at coordinate one, that poetry may be a starting point for philosophy, at least "for the present." Augustine's second and longer statement demonstrates how the student may move from poetry to philosophy through an alternative interpretation of Ovid's poem, by reading it satirically. Following Russell's translation of *arripere* in the Latin literary sense of "to ridicule," Augustine seems to suggest that Licentius use his love of poetry

for literary criticism, or specifically, to move from a lower reading of the poem to a higher one (Hagendahl 440–441). The young student can thus evaluate the vices of the young lovers and the tragic end toward which these vices lead, and subsequently praise (*laude*) the inverse, the virtues and the consequent happy life toward which they lead instead.

Augustine and Licentius previously agreed that their life at Cassiciacum was about conversion (*converti*) (*ord.* I.8.23). As Augustine describes it, this conversion is a turn toward God from “a certain uncleanness of the body and its stains,” and “from the darkness in which error has involved us.” Their philosophical life is about being “lifted away from the over-growth of vices,” and to be “uplifted toward Himself” through “virtue and temperance.” Their minds, bodies and souls are all engaged in this change of life, this turn from vice to virtue, from error to knowledge. Here Augustine continues on the theme of conversion with reference to the content of Roman poetry. His young student Licentius must recognize that the vices of sensual desire displayed by the two lovers ultimately led to their peril. From this, Licentius can turn toward a higher love, one “wherein souls endowed with knowledge and adorned with virtue...enjoy a life most happy” (I.8.24). The love displayed by this tragic couple is destructive, but it also represents the human longing for a “pure and genuine love,” one that is both attainable and truly satisfying.

Augustine’s instructions on how Licentius may accomplish this turn include treating the poem rather than simply dismissing it. Augustine could have dismissed it with the entirety of Roman literature, as some of his Christian contemporaries did (Murphy, “Debate” 207–210; Kimball 40–41). Of course, by the time Augustine writes *Confessiones*, he has stronger words of criticism for the “filth” of typical Roman education (Farrell 268–69). Yet, here Augustine finds this Roman literature useful to bringing this promising student into the heights of *philosophia*.

Augustine has now ordered poetry toward a higher end. Rather than wholly opposing the content and form of rhetorical and philosophical life, they appear at this point on a vertical plane, the latter higher than the former. Licentius can begin with a tragic poem, but then he must “soar aloft” in praise of the higher love.⁹ Interestingly, in Augustine’s final conversion scene in *Confessiones*, he takes and reads (*tolle e lege*) Sacred Scripture (VIII.12.28), which literally moves him to alter the direction of his will. In a similar way, in *De ordine* Licentius takes (*attollere*) and reads this text in a way that leads his own will, and most likely his tongue, toward proper praise –of virtue and of rightly ordered love.

As the dialogue continues, however, Licentius proves that a final and deep-seated wall still blocks his path to philosophy. Augustine as teacher (*magister*) has commenced his lecture on the subject of order when the two present students, Licentius and Trygetius, show their immaturity by jostling one another “for the sole purpose of winning glory” in their debate (*ord.* I.10.29). Their demonstration of such “perverse habits,” laughing and shaming one another for pride of place in the discussion, signifies “their minds immersed in darkness.” Augustine exhorts them to “rise high” above such behaviors and “be good,” but the boys remain ignorant of their fault. Augustine firmly replies to them, “I used to be sorely vexed in that [rhetoric] school because boys were motivated, not by the advantage and beauty of learning (*non utilitate atque decore disciplinarum*), but by love of paltriest praise (*sed inanissimae laudis amore*)” (I.10.30). At present, these two are “trying to introduce and to implant the pest of enfeebling jealousy and empty boasting...into that philosophy which I rejoice to have made my own.” This “disease of vanity” is infectious to the *philosophia* that Augustine seeks to cultivate, and he even acknowledges how crippling this particular vice had been to his earlier years (I.10.29). Unless

⁹ “*In laude*” may also imply a literary device, specifically use of the encomium to “praise” a moral topic, including virtue.

purged, it will prevent Licentius and Trygetius from moving higher into philosophical life. Thankfully, however, “Wisdom extends a helping hand to the sunken,” and as signified by their subsequent acts of humility, they leave the vanities of the rhetoric school behind in order to move closer toward *philosophia*.

Truth is there for the finding; happiness may be lived. Yet, Augustine seems particularly attentive to the reality that nothing perhaps blocks the path to philosophical life more than vanity and pride, prevalent vices of the rhetorical culture of his time and of his younger life. Augustine, perhaps anticipating that some of his audience will not be so eager to leave behind such habits, directs a further challenge to reluctant readers. His statement turns to the example of “proud and ignorant men” who prefer to remain satisfied by empty and vain elements of life (*ord.* I.11.31). These men do not care what kind (*quales*) of life they live but attend only to “worldly wealth.” In the reading of books, including one such as the dialogue that Augustine now composes, these men care mostly for eloquence at the cost of “the purpose of the authors or even to what is fully explained and proved by them.” Consequently, only a small number choose to enter “through decked and gilded portals to the sacred inner courts of philosophy.” Through the dialogue, Augustine calls into question weaknesses of the prevailing rhetorical culture and its practices, including the disproportionate attention given to eloquence at the cost of substantial content, a concern that Cicero shared in his own time.

The teaching that Augustine provides, which includes training in the arts, directs Licentius to better his philosophical habits. This use of erudition highlights both pedagogical and cultural qualities of Augustine’s philosophy as he responds to complexities of his historical moment through the dialogue. Augustine’s *philosophia* uses rhetorical elements from the prevailing Roman culture even as he criticizes their abuses, and he puts them to work toward a

life that seeks, finds and expresses wisdom in attainment of the happy life. Augustine's *philosophia* is one that is necessarily communicable, even if not in its entirety due to the limits of human speech (*ord.* II.7.22). For the relationship between finding and expressing truth, and living the happy life, is central to Augustine's *philosophia*, which strives toward "accurate expression of truth" in word and example (Holt 53). The insights cultivated in conversation between Augustine and his students "generate change" as they deepen their conversion to philosophy (Douglass 41). Furthermore, these conversion experiences are not only personal but are designed to leave an impression on social institutions, including public offices and other human affairs (*humanitatis*) (*ord.* II.8.25).¹⁰ In other words, those who take *philosophia* seriously apply virtue "in all circumstances of life, in every place and at all times." Through the dialogue, Augustine gives cultural significance to such philosophical insights as he gains them during his *otium* and encourages others to seek, find and apply them to the broader culture, exhibiting wisdom and virtue in their lives.

In this coordinate, Augustine proposes a program of education using the common literary tradition of the arts. Yet, he embeds this program within a philosophical culture at Cassiciacum, directing the arts beyond their typical use (and abuse) and ordering them toward the discovery and expression of wisdom that leads to the happy life. As Augustine does so, he responds to cultural tensions and rationales over the value of Roman rhetorical education for Christian philosophy (Cameron, *Later Roman* 152; Kimball 40). While his understanding of the significance of this education may be predominantly propaedeutic to his philosophical culture (Topping, *Happiness* 93–94), he also broadens the spectrum of those invited into this general,

¹⁰ To some extent, such a community is "aloof" from the wider culture (*ord.* I.2.3), but this chapter seeks to demonstrate how Augustine's *philosophia* includes dimensions designed to affect imbedded social institutions.

perhaps “pansophic” (Kimball 40), program. By sharing their discussion through the dialogue, Augustine seeks to persuade his audience into this way of life, learning and teaching. Augustine and his students are living a life in philosophy, one that embraces a discerned and rightly ordered use of the arts. As the next coordinate explains, the culmination of these disciplines is “philosophy,” a specialized means to discover the very source of order.

Coordinate Four: Discovering Philosophia

In the previous coordinate, Augustine describes an interpretive method associated with their philosophical life at Cassiciacum. This method stands in some continuity and some contrast to the predominant educational culture of the Late Roman Empire, for it utilizes the arts but directs them with greater confidence to the finding of truth. Augustine also broadens the audience for such a culture beyond the boundaries of the Roman elite, including those like his mother who faithfully seek God (*ord.* II.11.31). As the dialogue continues, Augustine moves forward in his pedagogical discussion by addressing the role of each art in its order toward wisdom. Rhetoric, as the art of moving (*commoveri*) the emotions of an audience toward the pursuit of wisdom, has an essential role to play in Augustine’s program (II.13.38). Yet, he also argues for the high distinction of the discipline (*disciplina*) of philosophy (*philosophia*), which specializes in finding (*invenit*) the unity of all things and that affects (*efficit*) our knowledge of ourselves and of God (II.18.47). According to Augustine, philosophy ultimately persuades (*persuasit*) us to see how the individual parts of the created order fit into the whole (II.18.48). Thus, while Augustine’s *philosophia* in this coordinate has specific content, it also continues to actuate his larger philosophical culture, being a fundamental means by which willing participants move closer to possessing the happy life.

Early in Book II, Alypius, Augustine's friend who had temporarily left the villa, returns, and the four companions return to "the all-important matter itself" that began in Book I, the definition of order (*ord.* II.1.2). Their conversation continues with the definition previously provided by Licentius, "that order is that by which God governs all things." They address many fine distinctions of the definition, particularly the relationship between God's order in temporality and eternity (II.1.3–II.2.7). This distinction is significant for their topic because they are seeking eternal wisdom through temporal realities, i.e., through their minds.

Augustine uses the arts as an illustration (*simile*) of how temporal reality reflects something of eternal order (*ord.* II.4.12), for education in the arts (*disciplinis omnibus erudiendos*) "so thoroughly" teaches order that it becomes "clear as day" (II.5.15). Augustine discusses each specific arts and its relationship to reason, which initially comes through "the ocular," "works of man which are seen," and "the auricular," "the words which are heard" (II.11.32). In such cases, pleasure often accompanies these "traces of reason in the senses," i.e., beauty (*pulchrum*) for the eyes or sweetness (*suavitas*) of sound to the ears (II.11.33). Augustine discusses the measure of reason, guided by design and proportion, a quality of pleasure that "pervades all the arts and creations of man" (II.11.34). He then extrapolates on each individual art and its order toward wisdom. His list of the arts includes grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and harmony (Kimball 42). Following Kimball, the discipline of philosophy is included within Augustine's cultural project in addition to these seven arts.¹¹

¹¹ While many scholars agree to list the first three arts as described here, there is much debate over the last four. For various lists of the arts in *De ordine*, see Pacioni "Liberal Arts" 492–494; Hagendahl 593; Riley 132; Topping, *Happiness* 132; Shanzer 98–103. Within this debate is the question of whether or not the discipline of philosophy, which Augustine also discusses in *De ordine*, is to be included within the arts or in addition to the arts. This study follows Kimball in suggesting that Augustine *combines* the pansophic approach to the liberal arts (use of the seven listed above) with the propaedeutic approach (use of the seven arts plus philosophy) (40–41,

Although Augustine likely took his list of the arts from Varro (Pacioni, “Liberal Arts” 492), he contextualizes them for the purpose of his own project (Topping, *Happiness* 227). Each art serves a unique purpose in the order of eternal wisdom. The first three arts are discursive: grammar consists of the “fixed rules” of speech; dialectic “teaches how to teach and how to learn;” rhetoric “[arouses students] as to their emotions” (*ord.* II.12.36–II.13.38). The following four arts are “numerical proportions” (II.14.41). As Augustine describes each art, he attends to how the discipline directs the student from sensory experience through intellect toward truth and wisdom. Augustine emphasizes the importance of following the order of the arts “or not at all” (II.16.46), for only together do these arts demonstrate unity, how the parts of the created order inform the whole. Augustine also stresses the shared practical and contemplative roles of the arts, each of which signifies divine reality in application and in study (*ord.* II.16.44). While he hopes that students will pursue this complete program of study, he offers less “extensive” opportunities for learning as well. Therefore, while Augustine promotes the usefulness of the traditional liberal education, he also pushes beyond its conventional applications as he accommodates it to non-traditional groups and challenges those who typically see it as an end in itself, ordering it not only toward the pursuit of wisdom but toward the philosophical discovery of Truth itself.

The final discipline, philosophy, is especially useful to this discovery, for it teaches first principles, which it finds (*invenit*)¹² through treatment of the two-fold topic of self and God (*ord.*

emphasis added). Consequently, Augustine’s use of the term *philosophia* in *De ordine* includes the discipline of philosophy but moreover describes the breadth of this complete culture (the eight disciplines together as an order of study in addition to the exercise of moral virtue).

¹² Interestingly, Augustine’s discipline of *philosophia* includes invention (*inventio*), which Cicero listed as the first canon of rhetoric. While this has led some scholars to argue that, unlike Cicero, Augustine separates the substantive work of philosophy from more superficial elements of rhetoric (Walker 320–322; Kennedy, *Classical* 182), attention to Augustine’s diverse use of

II.18.47). Through use of both authority and reason, philosophy argues for the unity of order, a sense of the whole, from creation to the Creator. Study in the arts lends itself to thinking of this kind, but philosophy specializes in bringing this knowledge of the soul, of God and of all order together – philosophy teaches what unity is. Such discovery persuades (*persuasit*) reason to move from the particulars of the self to the unity of all creation, revealing a universal principle of order. Together “the order of wisdom’s branches of study” leads the student “to grasp the order of things and to discern two worlds and the very Author of the universe.” Through the discipline of philosophy, Augustine seeks to understand what he does, to discuss and ponder reality “from the lesser good to the greater, from the mortal to the immortal” (II.19.50). Thus, while philosophy pursues knowledge of the soul that “makes us fit for a happy life,” it finally leads us to knowledge of God, which “renders us happy.” This is the ultimate goal of Augustine’s philosophical life: to possess the eternal joy that is God.

According to Augustine, an individual who seeks and finds the truths of philosophy has a responsibility to teach (*docere*) such wisdom to others (*ord.* II.5.16; II.2.7) – to teach how to find happiness. Augustine stresses the importance of teaching, for the wise man ought not “forsake his fellow men” (II.2.7). One cannot “shirk the duty of bestowing benefits on whom [one] can...especially...the duty of teaching them wisdom.” As did Cicero, Augustine acknowledges the importance of rhetorical preparation for this task, including the arrangement and memorization of ideas. Yet, more than this is Augustine insistence on teaching correctly through one’s discourse (II.12.35), on teaching true wisdom as opposed to that which is false (II.3.9). Augustine’s descriptions of dialectic and rhetoric together highlight how to accomplish this teaching, for while dialectic teaches (*docere*) how to teach, i.e., distinguishing knowledge from

the term *philosophia* suggests greater depth and nuance in the relationship between these disciplines. See also Sutherland 140–41.

error rhetoric teaches how to move (*commoveri*) minds. To be sure, Augustine’s discussion of “rhetoric” (*rhetorica*) in this section of the text highlights assumptions of his historical moment. For, as Russell translates, Augustine writes that this discipline is “more replete with lack than with enlightenment, its lap heaped high with charms which it would scatter to the crowd so that the crowd might deign to be influenced for its own good” (II.13.38).¹³ Yet, this limitation of a particular, i.e., sophistic “rhetoric” does not prevent Augustine from situating his own rhetorical practices differently, most predominantly by unifying his use of rhetorical charm to philosophical content, in imitation of Cicero.

While the relationship between dialectic and rhetoric is relevant to discussion of Augustine’s assumptions about discovery and expression (Topping, *Happiness* 138–141; Cooper 73–74; Blyth 75; Seigel 17), the argument here is that it is Augustine’s broader use of *philosophia* that truly unites the highest purpose of these arts and of all the disciplines. No discipline is sufficient in and of itself for the fullest discovery and expression of Augustine’s philosophical culture. Rather, through their unity, they permit one to perceive and to explain the relationships that unite all of creation to the Creator; together they are a means to know and to share the eternal wisdom of order. Augustine’s *philosophia*, including the arts and the discipline of philosophy, arranges and gives breadth to Augustine’s educational project, cultivating a way of learning and a way of life that views all things through a unifying lens.

Augustine demonstrates a transition of life and mind while on retreat through which he evaluates his understanding of educational and cultural priorities. Yet, to do so, he does not simply reject the contemporary Roman way of life but rather with nuance and refinement orders

¹³ Van Deusen’s translation of this section reflects a more complimentary relationship between dialectic and rhetoric than Russell’s translation (726). Closer consideration of Augustine’s terms would be insightful to further understand the relationship(s) between the two arts.

all things to the final end that he finds most essential to the quest for purpose and meaning. “What else do friends strive for, but to be one?...Does [love] not wish to become one with what it is loving?” (*ord.* III.18.48). All of creation, and in a particular way, humanity, seeks after unity. In and through the dialogue of *De ordine*, Augustine shares his understanding of this path to discovery with his companions and colleagues abroad, with hopes that they too will find and follow this *philosophia*. As the discussion between Augustine and his companions ends, they leave further contemplation and discussion of these things for another time, lest they “exceed moderation, the parent of order” (*ord.* II.19.50). Augustine closes his discussion by summarizing his reflections: “Prize nothing more highly than the finding of truth...wish for...think of...[and] love nothing else” (II.20.52). Augustine has set out a means by which his audience may find this truth; ever the teacher, he willingly assists all those who seek into this essential endeavor.

These four coordinates in *De ordine – In Philosophia*, *Framing Philosophia*, *Cultivating Philosophia*, and *Discovering Philosophia* – highlight rhetorical dimensions of Augustine’s philosophical project at Cassiciacum. While on retreat, Augustine composes a dialogue to share his life in *philosophia* with his companions and broader audience. The philosophical life that Augustine encourages includes traditional literary elements but brings new light to old habits, directing all things toward the discovery and expression of truth as informed by philosophical first principles. In the dialogue, Augustine engages in some disputation of philosophical topics but, more generally, he uses philosophical rhetoric to develop a philosophical culture, a *philosophia*, to teach and move his audience. By recording and composing this eloquent discussion in and through the dialogue, Augustine invites his broader audience to participate in the conversation of such matters with hopes of influencing the cultural practices of others, particularly teachers.

Together these uses of *philosophia* integrate philosophical and rhetorical elements into a culture that is both a way of learning and a way of life for all of those willing to discover it. Much of the sophistic rhetoric and education of the Late Roman Empire separated these two elements in favor of the latter, which also often reflected disproportionate attention to style over substance in thought and expression. Augustine uses the culturally authoritative example of Cicero, particularly his predecessor's unity of philosophy and rhetoric, to move beyond the limited understanding of *both* disciplines held by his audience and colleagues. Cicero's example provides Augustine with a means to reassess and reassert the significance of these disciplines united through *philosophia* – a culture that directs the intellectual and moral life toward the discovery and eloquent expression of wisdom. Augustine also moves beyond elements of Cicero, as is particularly apparent by his confidence in finding, not merely seeking, truth. Augustine is dissatisfied with only directing *philosophia* toward wisdom. Rather, he suggests that such a distinctly Christian culture, grounded on the truth of divine order, provides a means to grasp and to explain with certainty a fundamental reality that undergirds all of human existence, that is, the communication of God through creation.

Rhetorical Implications of Augustine's *Philosophia*

At least by the time Augustine converts to Christianity, he finds sophistic rhetoric and education insufficient, i.e., empty (*ananis*), specifically its misguided aim of vanity. Augustine's *philosophia* in *De ordine* brings new light to rhetorical theory and practice, situating this discipline within a broader educational culture and directing it toward the discovery and expression of eternal wisdom. Cicero's integration of philosophy and rhetoric, which Augustine was exposed to as a young student but implemented on his own, provided a culturally authoritative means for Augustine to reassess his understanding of rhetoric and ultimately to

substantiate it in unity with philosophy. Augustine consequently practices and promotes a philosophical rhetoric in *De ordine*, one moderated within the arts and ordered toward the highest purpose that Augustine can find, happiness.

Augustine was not the only practitioner of such philosophical rhetoric at this time. In fact, in *De ordine*, Augustine highlights another exemplar that embraced this same unifying principle of wisdom and eloquence, namely Theodore Manlius (*ord.* I.11.31). Ambrose certainly embodied it as well (*conf.* V.13.23–V.14.24). In Augustine’s quest for wisdom, his listening ears (his “auricular” reasoning) were tuned to those who practiced this Ciceronian principle, for they manifested a certain *gravitas* for which he longed (*ord.* II.11.32). The sweetness of their sounds, proportionately accompanied by their philosophical knowledge, delighted him in a way that moved him to consider the truths expressed therein (II.11.33–34). As evident in his criticism of the sophistic rhetoric school, Augustine’s specific concern for rhetoric is its disproportionate application, not its nature as an artistic discipline.

Augustine discerns cultural elements within the context of his developing understanding of Christianity, the true Philosophy, and this is the framework to which he applies them. His *otium* provides him with an opportunity to engage topics of philosophical interest, such as the order of reality, but moreover he considers such topics in light of their cultural implications, such as the order of teaching. Augustine’s *philosophia*, which integrates philosophical and rhetorical elements into a culture, offers a means for individual hearers/readers to convert themselves to this way of thinking and living as well as suggests how broader social structures, specifically schools, can adopt this way of teaching and learning. Augustine embraces and employs Cicero’s unity of philosophy and rhetoric, both in and through the dialogue, to discuss and demonstrate how such a cultural transition can be accomplished. Augustine illustrates his own rhetorical

ingenuity by imitating Cicero's authoritative example whilst applying it to his own persuasive purpose: a distinctly Christian culture.

Augustine's uses of *philosophia* theoretically embrace and practically employ the Ciceronian integration of philosophy and rhetoric. He does not explicitly discuss this principle in the dialogue, for he is not writing a rhetorical handbook. Rather, he is composing a philosophical dialogue for a particular audience and with a particular persuasive purpose: to cultivate *philosophia* among other teachers. Augustine criticizes certain predominant rhetorical practices of Late Antiquity as well as their common abuses while at Cassiciacum, but this does not mean that Augustine abandons "rhetoric" *in toto* when he retires (Sutherland 142). Instead of completely rejecting rhetorical culture, Augustine redirects –reorders – rhetoric (as well as, to some extent, his understanding of "philosophy") in service to his *philosophia*. This is the kind of rhetoric that moves him to publish his dialogues.

Rather than assume a competitive narrative between the disciplines of philosophy and rhetoric in Augustine's early dialogues as some scholars do (Marrou 318–319; Topping, *Happiness* 28–29), Augustine's *philosophia* in *De ordine* invites readers of the text to consider their interweaving relationship, particularly in discursive practice (Vickers, "Territorial Disputes" 259–260), at this historical moment. Certainly, a third discipline is also at play within Augustine's *philosophia*, and that is "the very law of God...ever abiding fixed and unshaken...[and] transcribed...on the souls of the wise" (*ord.* II.8.25). Augustine situates Christianity as a "genuine philosophy" because its "venerated mysteries" teach a first principle, namely that all things have their beginning (*principium*) in one God omnipotent, and that He is tripotent, Father and Son and Holy Spirit" (II.5.16). Augustine makes subtle allusions to his personal conversion to Christianity *in* the dialogue, but his overall approach to inviting his

audience into closer consideration of their own conversions comes *through* the dialogue as a rhetoric of order, one that is responsive to their shared philosophical questions and concerns but that is foremost rooted in Christian doctrine. Consequently, Augustine seeks to cultivate moral and intellectual ground for his audience to engage the topic of *ordo* through the text but divine wisdom, planted in the soul, comes from another source.

Christian Coordinates in the Rhetoric of *De ordine*

In *De ordine*, Augustine's approach to the topic of *ordo* is foremost responsive to the authority of Christian doctrine and pursued through philosophical reasoning. In the narrative, Augustine and his companions treat some categories related to this approach as they seek to discover and explain the order of things, but rather than systematically working them out Augustine eventually applies them to an order of life and study, a philosophical culture, that he seeks to propose to his broader audience. Augustine frames this culture for his audience to imitate, not only for their personal benefit, i.e., to lead to happiness but moreover to inform the current order of teaching of the arts. Consequently, he reappraises the arts in light of *ordo*, that is, he relates their practical and contemplative use to the discovery and expression of the whole of divine goodness, truth and beauty. In this way, Augustine's text is also responsive to the cultural dilemma of his historical moment concerning the inadequacies of the Late Roman sophistic schools to meet the developing needs of Christian education. Augustine uses his ingenuity to offer an alternative that teaches *philosophia*. In doing so, he frames his solution to this particular dilemma in light of the whole reality of divine order.

This chapter considers the rhetoric of the text through Augustine's use of the term *ordo*, which, although multi-faceted, congruently points to the intelligible arrangement of creation. In *Coordinate One: Discovering Divine Order*, Augustine clarifies that the persuasive purpose of the dialogue is not primarily to treat the philosophical question of order, but rather to demonstrate and discuss a proper approach to the question. This approach is through *philosophia*, a philosophical culture that seeks to discover and express the significance of particular things in light of the sum of divine reality, i.e., their divine order. In *Coordinate Two: Expressing Divine Order*, Augustine seeks to cultivate this approach among his companions in

the narrative, encouraging their discovery and expression of “the order of things” through philosophical and rhetorical exercises that frame their way of thinking and speaking in light of divine order. In *Coordinate Three: The Order of Life and Study*, Augustine moves to present the breadth of his philosophical approach in a speech on the order of life and study, which is a two-fold mode of procedure to reflect and reflect on divine order. In *Coordinate Four: The Order of the Arts*, Augustine accommodates study of the seven liberal arts to his philosophical approach by reappraising them in light of divine order, that is, by recognizing their truth and beauty as intelligible reflections of divine truth and beauty. Of particular interest to this study is his discussion of the art of rhetoric (*rhetorica*), which was fragmented from the other arts in the typical sophistic schools of the time. Although Augustine’s understanding of rhetoric continues to reflect some assumptions of his historical moment, such as its particular attention to moving the emotions, his reappraisal of the disciplines has a radical consequence for them all: the arts are infused with divine purpose. They lead us to discover and express what makes us truly happy.

Augustine’s rhetoric of order in *De ordine* is responsive to the authority of Christian doctrine and pursued through philosophical reasoning. Christian doctrine teaches him that there is an intelligible relationship between all of creation and the Creator of all things. His rational mind provides him with a philosophical means to understand this relationship through study of the arts and the discipline of philosophy. Since Christian doctrine teaches him that “something” of goodness, truth and beauty is discoverable in all things (*ord.* II.1.3), he integrates diverse authorities, disciplines and practices into his approach of studying them. The most practical issue in *De ordine* then becomes how to reasonably teach, delight and persuade others to follow this *philosophia* as a way to discover and express the relationship – the order – between parts of reality, including evil, and the whole that is sustained by God. Augustine uses the dialogue to

demonstrate and discuss how his audience might imitate this “order of teaching” for the benefit of their own souls and for the benefit of society (I.9.27). Augustine’s exhortation to eloquently teach *philosophia* amidst a skeptical audience still speaks to educators today.

Augustine’s Rhetoric of Divine Order

Ordo is the stated topic of the dialogue (*ord.* I.1.1.). While Augustine’s audience was most likely familiar with some treatments of this topic (Pernot 148; Pacioni, “Order” 598), Augustine’s approach in the dialogue has a particular purpose: to inform the “order of teaching” within the developing Christian culture of the Late Roman Empire (*ord.* I.9.27). Augustine predominantly grounds his multi-faceted treatment and teaching of *ordo* on Christian doctrine, which he describes as authoritative teaching on the divine, consequently framing the question of order within divine providence, i.e., the relationship between God as Creator and all of creation, most especially humanity. While multiple authorities, disciplines and practices inform Augustine’s approach in *De ordine*, he appraises and applies such resources in light of divine order.

Many principles of Christian doctrine are implicit to Augustine’s arguments in the dialogue rather than systematically worked out, such as God’s infinite goodness and consequently the goodness of creation (*ord.* II.7.23). Based on the particular goals of the dialogue (I.2.4), Augustine’s audience is most likely already receptive to such principles; therefore they are enthymematic to his project. The most explicitly addressed divine principle, however, is that of unity – that God is the *one* source of all goodness, truth and beauty. Following this premise, Augustine considers the goodness, truth and beauty of particular things in light of this single source, consequently discovering and expressing an intelligible relationship between creation and Creator (I.2.3). The focus of much of the dialogue then is understanding

and explaining the distinctions that fall within the unity of divine order. Augustine seeks to teach his audience about the relationship between particular things, including evil, and the whole of divine reality that is held together and governed by God, who is infinitely powerful.

To discover and express the “order” – the unified yet distinct relationships – of divine reality, Augustine invites the audience to participate in *philosophia*, a philosophical culture that he seeks to enact through and propose in the dialogue. Augustine’s *philosophia* includes a two-fold mode of procedure: it first morally and then intellectually orders the soul towards the divine (*ord.* II.8.25). Therefore, Augustine and his student-companions seek both moral conversion and intellectual conversation in the narrative as they reflect on divine order. However, a lack of erudition among Augustine’s companions eventually prevents them from more fully discovering and expressing the order of things. Like Augustine’s friend Zenobius for whom he composes the dialogue (I.2.4; I.7.20), they need greater cultivation. Yet, as Augustine acknowledges (I.10.30), the existing sophistic schools cannot adequately provide what is necessary for such a distinctly Christian education.

As a response, Augustine recommends an order of life and study, grounded on the reasonable authority of Christian doctrine and pursued through philosophical reasoning, that “better” prepares students for “embracing truth” and consequently for possessing “the happy life” (*ord.* I.8.24). Augustine’s *philosophia* is the means by which his audience might come “full force” into the possession of wisdom that “confers happiness” (I.6.16; Gilson 7). This is the persuasive goal of the dialogue (*sermo*): to inform discussions of *ordo* among his audience in light of divine order and consequently to shape “the order of teaching” on the topic through a higher quality of instruction in “all branches of learning” (*disciplinis omnibus erudiendos*) (*ord.*

I.9.27; II.5.15). Thus as Augustine writes during his *otium* at Cassiciacum, he contributes to this discussion of cultural and social significance.

Yet, while Augustine particularly attends to this cultural predicament in and through the dialogue, his treatment of the term *ordo* is multi-faceted (Pacioni, “Order” 598), including disputation of some categories inherent to his assumption of divine order. Augustine, however, integrates these different uses within the dialogue form, a dynamic literary means for him to engage multiple issues related to order. These different uses of *ordo* all inform the persuasive purpose of *De ordine*, which is to propose a philosophical culture for imitation to the audience. Consequently, there is an inherent relationship between his treatment of the term and its cultural application. The dialogue teaches a philosophical approach to *ordo* that moves his audience into a divine way of reading the world; it teaches a practical, Christian hermeneutic.

In *De ordine*, Augustine demonstrates and discusses how to integrate diverse authorities, disciplines and practices into the order of teaching in light of divine order, including those that his audience may perceive as incongruent. He does this through his treatment of *ordo* in the text, perhaps most obviously in the example of the relationship between goodness and evil. He, however, addresses the integrity of many relationships through the text, such as that between the body and the soul. He speaks to the necessity of authority and reason in philosophical study. He insists on the significance of the arts in practice and contemplation. He uses pagan poetry, even its vices, to point out divine truth. He argues for true philosophy while he exposes the limitation of worldly philosophy, i.e., pride. He does the same for rhetoric, using it profoundly while denouncing its abuse, i.e., vanity. He takes in the pleasure of the senses as a means to move beyond the senses. He uses language, which he knows is inadequate in its capacity to speak to the whole of divine order, to teach others about the whole of divine order. This is all situated

within his understanding of divine order, for since all of creation, including all human creativity, has God as its source, all things reflect “something” of the divine (*ord.* II.1.3), even if this reflection is one of deprivation as in the case of evil (I.7.18; II.7.23). Augustine applies his ingenuity to find and express this something in everything that he says and does. The dialogue demonstrates and discusses these many “somethings” and their relationship to the sum and the source of all things.

Augustine uses philosophical as well as rhetorical categories in the narrative as he engages his students in discussion of divine order. This is particularly significant for his historical moment since some of his contemporaries were rejecting one (particularly rhetoric or philosophy) or all of the disciplines associated with classical culture for the primacy of Christian texts (Murphy, “Debate” 207–213; Kimball 40). Among others, there was debate over which parts of classical culture were significant and which were not for Christian education (Topping, *Happiness* 41–65). While a number of Augustine’s works reflect the nuance of his response to this historical dilemma, the text of *De ordine* presents a particularly original contribution (1, 128). In this text, Augustine maintains the significance and integrity of philosophy and rhetoric, along with six other liberal arts, in light of their necessary purpose to bolster the discovery and expression of divine reality within Christian culture. In and through the dialogue, Augustine’s *philosophia* seeks to understand and teach the relationship between particular things (e.g., the falling of leaves, the fighting of chickens, the absence of friends, even singing in the bathroom) and the sum of reality. Through *philosophia*, he seeks to teach about divine order. He uses seven liberal arts and the discipline of philosophy to do so.¹⁴

¹⁴ Following Kimball’s assessment, the seven liberal arts discussed by Augustine in *De ordine* are grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and harmony (42). While many scholars agree on the first three, there is much debate over the last four. For various lists of the

In this way, *De ordine* is a philosophical dialogue that reappraises the arts in light of divine order (Cipriani 725). No art, no beauty exists apart from the hand of God, the true artisan, and human artistry is always, in some proportion, a response to the divine (*ord.* II.11.34). Furthermore, the truth of the arts is discernable in proportion to the fullness of divine truth. Each discipline provides a distinct doorway into truth, but moreover through their unity they signify the integrity of all truth. This is the contemplative element of the arts (II.16.44), that such study of them leads one through the soul to “Truth itself” (I.4.10). As Augustine makes clear, this is not the typical way of studying the arts in the current sophistic schools (I.10.30), but rather than rejecting them *in toto* as did some of his contemporaries, Augustine reappraises – reorders – them.

To do so, he uses philosophy (*germana philosophia*), which is to say that he discerns the purpose of the arts in light of a philosophical first principle, a first cause. As Christian doctrine teaches, “This First Principle is one God omnipotent, and...He is tripotent, Father and Son and Holy Spirit” (*ord.* II.5.16). From this premise, Augustine finds the arts significant, for they both practically and contemplatively reflect and reflect on a certain *ratio* from which they derive their power (II.11.34). In other words, the reasonability of the arts reflects “another Reason” that “from on high rules over all things (I.8.25). Philosophical consideration of this *ratio* in each art leads the soul to consider the “intellect, in which all things are” and to “what, beyond all things,

arts, see Pacioni, “Liberal Arts” 492–494; Hagedahl 593; Riley 132; Topping, *Happiness* 132; Shanzer 98–103. Within this debate is the question of whether or not the discipline of philosophy, which Augustine also discusses in *De ordine*, is to be included within the arts or in addition to the arts. This study follows Kimball in suggesting that Augustine *combines* the pansophic approach to the liberal arts (use of the seven listed above) with the propaedeutic approach (use of the seven arts plus philosophy) (40–41, emphasis added). Consequently, Augustine’s use of the term *philosophia* in *De ordine* includes the discipline of philosophy but moreover describes the breadth of this complete culture (the eight disciplines together as an order of study in addition to the exercise of moral virtue).

is the source of all things” (II.9.26). The discipline of philosophy has its own “mode of learning” (*eruditio*) to find this source (II.18.48), but unified study of the arts also lends itself to such discovery. Through either method, *ratio* is the entrance into the soul through which one discerns how each particular good, truth and beauty is unified to a single source and consequently how it reflects, through its divine order, some portion of the sum. Such knowledge is wisdom, the possession of which is the happy life.

Augustine thus utilizes the seven liberal arts and the discipline of philosophy within his *philosophia* to lead students to happiness. In and through the dialogue, Augustine invites his audience to participate in this *philosophia*, an invitation of personal significance for those who seek wisdom and one of social significance for those who are in a position to teach such wisdom to others (*ord.* II.2.7). In addition to his care for Zenobius then, Augustine anticipates that his readers will include others within his intellectual circle, those who able to shape “the order of teaching” (I.9.27). Augustine particularly hopes that his reappraisal of the arts will inform the way his fellow teachers teach.

In considering the cultural consequences of Augustine’s *philosophia* for his historical moment, the teaching of rhetoric (*rhetorica*) seems implicated in particular. This art had rose to the top of Late Roman life for both practical and political reasons (Pernot 145–146). Yet, the typical sophistic schools had also fragmented rhetoric from the other arts and furthermore reduced it to imitation of rhetorical formulas. Augustine’s most obvious criticism of the sophistic school (*schola illa*) in *De ordine* specifically attends to the moral consequence of isolating this art: students are deprived of learning rhetoric in light of its full utility and beauty – its greatest practical and philosophical significance – because it is reduced to an empty love of praise (*ord.* I.10.30). With hopes of appearing eloquent and receiving applause, students imitate the style of

classical speakers without attending to what they say (I.11.31; *conf.* III.4.7). They separate the eloquence from wisdom.

Without unified study of all the arts, philosophically ordered toward wisdom, students are left learning an inane rhetoric that, when practiced, mistakenly praises its own power in place of praising its true source (*ord.* I.10.30). Instead of pointing up toward the divine, it puffs up the self. Augustine acknowledges that this fundamental “defect” of rhetorical education easily lends itself to others, for even if a teacher such as Augustine criticizes this kind of rhetoric, students might simply abandon their learning and choose to remain uneducated since their initial motivation for such study – the “desire for vainglory” (*famae*) – has been squelched. Without vanity, students may become inert. Augustine’s argument is clear. Critique is not enough. Such rhetorical education needs reordering; it needs a new purpose. In response, Augustine reorders rhetoric within a philosophical culture, and he persuasively presents this approach by teaching, delighting and moving his audience through an eloquent rhetoric of order. If, as Leff argues, the time was ripe for a philosophical reconsideration of rhetoric (236), then *De ordine* presents scholars with an opportunity to examine Augustine’s contribution to this dilemma through his rhetoric of order as well as the example of his ordered rhetoric.

Ordo in De ordine

This chapter considers the rhetoric of the text through Augustine’s use of the term *ordo*, which, although multi-faceted, congruently points to the intelligible arrangement of creation. In *Coordinate One: Discovering Divine Order*, Augustine clarifies that the persuasive purpose of the dialogue is not primarily to treat the philosophical question of order, but rather to demonstrate and discuss a proper approach to the question. This approach is through *philosophia*, a philosophical culture that seeks to discover and express the significance of

particular things in light of the sum of divine reality, i.e., their divine order. In *Coordinate Two: Expressing Divine Order*, Augustine seeks to cultivate this approach among his companions in the narrative, encouraging their discovery and expression of “the order of things” through philosophical and rhetorical exercises that frame their way of thinking and speaking in light of divine order. In *Coordinate Three: The Order of Life and Study*, Augustine moves to present the breadth of his philosophical approach in a speech on the order of life and study, which is a two-fold mode of procedure to reflect and reflect on divine order. In *Coordinate Four: The Order of the Arts*, Augustine accommodates study of the seven liberal arts to his philosophical approach by reappraising them in light of divine order, that is, by recognizing their truth and beauty as intelligible reflections of divine truth and beauty. Of particular interest to this study is his discussion of the art of rhetoric (*rhetorica*), which was fragmented from the other arts in the typical sophistic schools of the time. Although Augustine’s understanding of rhetoric continues to reflect some assumptions of his historical moment, his reappraisal of the disciplines has a radical consequence for them all: the arts are infused with divine purpose and lead us to discover and express what makes us truly happy.

Coordinate One: Discovering Divine Order

De ordine begins with an introduction wherein Augustine prepares the audience, particularly his friend Zenobius, for the narrative that follows and clarifies the particular purpose of the discourse. Within this introduction, Augustine frames the traditional topic of order in light of divine providence, which includes grounding his understanding of *ordo* within the authority of Christian doctrine, i.e., principles of the divine. Augustine enthymematically takes these principles for granted through most of the dialogue, as his audience is already receptive to them. Consequently, the main question posed in the dialogue is not whether or not God orders all of

creation (*ord.* I.1.2; I.4.11), but rather, how to perceive and explain or to understand and then teach the relationship between particular (*proprium*) things, including evil, and the whole of the universe designed by God (I.1.1.). Thus, Christian doctrine informs their discovery of order as it also finds means to deepen their understanding of it. As the introduction ends, Augustine identifies the purpose of the dialogue, which is to cultivate *philosophia* as the means to discover and express this relationship – this order – between the particular parts of creation and the sum of divine reality.

Augustine approaches the topic of order (*ordinem rerum*) in light of a question shared by his audience (*dignum auditorem*): How is it “that God has a care for human affairs (*humana*), and nevertheless perversity (*perversitas*) is so serious and widespread that it must seem unattributable not only to God’s governance but even to a hireling’s management?” (*ord.* I.1.1). Augustine begins his response by addressing common arguments: “Either...divine Providence (*divinam providentiam*) does not reach to these outer limits of things or...surely all evils (*mala*) are committed by the will of God.” Augustine immediately assumes the inaccuracy and impiety of the latter, but he acknowledges that some individuals may need to consider more closely the former. Along this line of thought, one may reasonably ask if the things of this world are beyond God’s power or if they are neglected and unnoticed by it. Augustine dismisses the possibility of either, arguing, “But who is there so dull (*caecus*) of mind that he will hesitate to attribute to divine power and government whatever there is of order (*rationis*) in corporeal operations, apart from human arrangement and will (*humanam dispositionem ac voluntatem*)?” (I.1.2). Only vanity would deny that every single thing that “we find marvelous...throughout the universe” is “arranged in a manner surpassing the utmost efficiency of human power (*arte*),” and belongs “to

the hidden control of divine majesty.” Humanity has a capacity for arrangement (*dispositio*),¹⁵ but only divine power establishes “the integral fittingness of things.” A dilemma, however, continues to present itself – how can the parts of a flea be marvelously arranged while at every turn human life is “made restless” (*fluctuet*) by innumerable disturbances?

The question of divine providence thus turns to the complexities of human affairs, specifically the appearance of evil. Augustine frames his response to this dilemma in light of the persuasive purpose of the text. He writes,

On this line of reasoning, if one were examining the details in an inlaid pavement, and if his searching eye could grasp no more than the outline of one little cube, he might censure the artificer for lacking skill of arrangement and order. On this account, he might think the uniformity of the little stones disarranged, just because the drawn lines harmonizing (*congruentia*) into one integral form of beauty could not be seen and examined all at once. *Ord.* I.1.2

Without denying human perversity, Augustine points to the significance of perceiving the unity of things, of seeing the particulars – including evil – in light of the whole of reality. He then relates this problem of perception to the issue of culture, for “something very similar to this,” he says, “is found in the case of uninstructed (*minus eruditis*) men.” Without erudition, humanity is left to a “feeble mentality” (*imbecilla mente*) that fails “to grasp and to study the integral fittingness of things.” If an individual is preoccupied with any one part of reality or distracted by

¹⁵ As exemplified here, Augustine situates the rhetorical term *dispositio* in a distinctly Christian way in *De ordine*; it is informed by his understanding of divine *ordo* and thus substantially altered from its Ciceronian antecedent. However, this does not seem to stop Augustine from applying traditional precepts of *dispositio* to his own dialogue. A cursory reading of the text suggests that he begins with *exordium* (*ord.* I.1.1.), moves to *narratio* (I.3.6), includes a *propositio* just before the *partitio* (II.7.24), declares his *confirmatio* (II.9.26), considers *refutatio* (II.18.47), and closes with *peroratio* (II.20.52).

the multitude of reality, s/he loses perspective of the center that holds all things together, where “all sectors converge” and “by which the other parts are mutually measured” (I.2.3). This distorted perception (*cogitationi*) tends to magnify particular things in disproportion to the sum of reality, and it prevents one from finding (*invenire*) unity.

Consequently, Augustine responds to the question of divine providence – of the relationship between particular things, including evil, and the whole of divine reality – with a proposal for examining (*cognitus*) the soul (*ord.* I.1.3). Since the audience already assumes God’s creative power is present in the order of creation, Augustine argues that the greatest means by which humanity discovers and expresses this reality – this relationship – is in and through the soul. For Augustine, the soul that studies itself moves from the senses, i.e., material reality to an inner knowledge of the unity of things, i.e., immaterial reality, for the nature of the soul “forces it to seek that which is one” (I.2.3). As Augustine’s student Licentius embarks on this distinct way of soul-searching in the dialogue, he can say, “Today perhaps I shall find (*inveniar*) myself” (I.3.9), not only as a means to self-knowledge but as a means to discover something of the divine through his soul (I.5.14). While Augustine acknowledges that one partially achieves this form of learning in solitude, e.g., soliloquizing, the dialogue primarily focuses on the correction (*medicant*) of lower erudition through study of the liberal arts, which, as Augustine suggests, reflect and reflect on the relationship between parts and whole.

Near the close of the introduction, Augustine again addresses Zenobius, the particular person for whom he records the dialogue. Augustine explains that he and Zenobius already agree on many things but that their previous discussions on divine providence had left Zenobius unsatisfied (*ord.* I.2.4; I.7.20). Augustine, however, is confident that his friend will succeed in his search, for he is a virtuous and ingenious man who simply lacks the cultivation necessary for

the proper perception of things. Zenobius's soul must be "cleared and cultivated" for "a divine planting" (I.2.4). Augustine proposes a means by which this cultivation can take place, one that will dispose his soul to more fully discover and express divine order.

According to Augustine, the four-fold purpose of the dialogue is to show Zenobius: "What is the nature of all this clearing and planting," "What mode of procedure it demands," "What it is that reason promises to those who study and are good," and "What manner of life [Augustine and his companions] are now leading" (*ord.* I.2.4). Through the example of Augustine and his companions in the narrative, Zenobius can discover the "fruits" of such a divine planting. Moreover, Augustine assures him that his discovery of these things will be even greater if he participates in the process, making himself a part of the very order of which Augustine writes.

This multi-faceted purpose of the dialogue thus responds to the dilemma that Augustine presents at the beginning of the text, for he proposes a means by which his audience can discover the order of things, from the particulars of daily life to the whole of the universe, through *philosophia*. Augustine's *philosophia* is foremost informed by Christian doctrine, which teaches the "nature" of unity and distinction in divine order, i.e., that creation participates in divine reality but is also distinct from God (*ord.* I.2.4). Augustine's *philosophia* includes a two-fold "mode of procedure" – an order of moral life and intellectual study – through which he and his companions seek to discover and express, in word and action, the order of things. Augustine and his companions live in community, supporting and encouraging one another and sharing a common vision for the "right order" of things, through their mutual understanding and practices of *philosophia* (II.19.51). In doing so, they seek to demonstrate the goods, the "fruits," that come

to each and all of them through this “manner of life” (I.2.4). They participate in this process through the narrative, and Augustine invites his broader audience to follow their lead.

Augustine proposes a philosophical culture in *De ordine* that, through authority and reason, leads to the happy life for “those who study and are good” (*ord.* I.2.4). The dialogue demonstrates *how* to relate the particulars of daily life to the fullness of divine reality and to understand the proofs for their significance. Augustine leaves his teaching position in the sophistic rhetoric school to find refuge in this *philosophia* at Cassiciacum (I.2.5). Some of his students and family members come along. By recording the details of their philosophical life via *otium* in the dialogue, Augustine hopes that his broader audience will imitate their example, not only in their singular lives but also in the order of their teaching (I.9.27). These two groups – Augustine’s present companions and his audience abroad – are distinct, but the purpose of the dialogue unites them. They represent Augustine’s hope to have found (*inveniat*) an audience fitted for this kind of *philosophia* (I.1.1.). In and through the dialogue, Augustine presents his philosophical culture, grounded on principles of the divine, as a means for each and all of them to discover and express order in the universe. The goal of this *philosophia* is to lead them, through the ordering of their souls, to God, with Whom one finds lasting happiness.

The dialogue seeks to teach, delight and persuade the audience into *philosophia* by inviting them to participate in this process of discovery, this “love of finding the truth (*amore inveniendi veri*)” (*ord.* I.3.6). Augustine’s *philosophia* includes philosophical and rhetorical exercises that encourage his audience to consider the divine significance of diverse authorities, arguments and practices. The highest of these authorities is divine and revealed through sacred “mysteries” and traditional teaching but many other “human” authorities inform Augustine’s

approach (II.9.27).¹⁶ Moreover, Augustine does not abstract his *philosophia* from experience.

Once the narrative begins, he initiates the process of discovery when an unusual sound during the night prompts him to inquire into its cause. Through the dialogue, Augustine and his companions seek to discover and explain the order of such things, from the particulars surrounding them at villa to the whole of divine reality.

The group records the conversations for the benefit of the audience, and the writing process shapes their responses to one another (*ord.* I.2.5). They try to avoid “intemperate wrangling” and seek to practice a “carefulness of expression.” Yet, the narrative frequently demonstrates that some of Augustine’s companions are better at expressing their understanding than are others. Augustine leads the way in this “school” (*schola*) among his companions with his own refined rhetoric (I.3.7). Still acting primarily as a teacher, Augustine demonstrates in *De ordine* how to enact *philosophia* – with its integrated philosophical and rhetorical elements – to discover *and* express divine order.

Coordinate Two: Expressing Divine Order

In the dialogue, Augustine dynamically expresses the philosophical means by which he and his companions order their souls toward the center (*centrum*) of reality, which is the measure of all things (*ord.* I.2.3). Particularly through conversation, which Augustine volunteers to lead (I.3.6), they seek to understand and explain the relationships between particular things and the sum. Augustine initiates their discourse, not with abstract arguments, but with the ordinary events surrounding them at the villa, through which they interpret intelligible signs of order. Moving from study of the material world into the immaterial, they apply philosophical and

¹⁶ In addition to sophistic, Ciceronian and Christian authorities, the Neo-Platonists are also a particularly significant contributor for Augustine’s thought at this time. Additional study of their rhetoric would further inform study of Augustine’s.

rhetorical categories to deepen their understanding and refine their expressions of divine reality. Furthermore, Augustine's philosophical approach considers the moral disposition of his students in light of its consequences for their actions and speech. His students must arrange their wills, minds and mouths according to divine order, for the fullest expression of *philosophia* comes through the whole person and fosters a complete culture.

Augustine and his companions share numerous expressions on *ordo* in the narrative, but the conversation extemporaneously begins when Augustine hears an unusual sound near the villa (*ord.* I.3.6). He asks himself what may be cause of it, but having no explanation, he asks his students if they hear it. Augustine's companion Licentius offers a probable answer to the particular cause (*causae*) of the irregularity (*inconstanter*) (I.3.7), but he is overall unimpressed by his teacher's consideration of the unusual sound in the first place. Augustine responds that it is the unusual nature of a particular thing that frequently prompts one to wonder about the order of causes (I.3.8). Licentius replies with the main expression of order addressed throughout the text: "It seems to me that nothing is done apart from order." Augustine, acknowledging that this statement is of philosophical significance, sees an opportunity to pursue a more in-depth disputation on the topic.

The disputation then begins when Augustine offers to debate his student's statement on order with hopes that Licentius will defend it (*ord.* I.3.8). Although at first reluctant, Licentius eventually agrees. He states, "Even though some one were to worst me in this debate, I should attribute even that fact to the order of things, and not to reasonless change" (I.3.10). Licentius makes this statement of faith in the divine order of things even before the arguments begin. Another present companion, Trygetius, also willing joins the conversation, for he is somewhat skeptical about the order of things (I.4.10). In fact, this element of "indecision" (*incertus*) affects

them all, but Licentius again reveals his confidence stating, “Do not mention [skepticism] now...lest this cunning, captious (*captatorium*) something distract me...from a matter, I know not what – a divine thing, which begins to reveal (*ostentare*) itself to me.” Augustine quickly responds to Licentius with a recognizable expression from the Aeneid, one that they would have learned in the sophistic schools, but then he redirects its meaning. He says, “Indeed Apollo is not lofty...There is, however, another, or rather *the* other, lofty and truth speaking (*veridicus*), and – Ah! Why quibble with words? – Truth itself” (italics in original translation). Augustine’s use of Vergil’s text here as a signpost of Christian truth demonstrates early in the dialogue how the *philosophia* proposed through the text will embrace elements of classical thought in some relationship to Christian doctrine.

As Licentius accepts this learning opportunity, he says, “Please question me then...to see whether I can explain (*explicare*) this something or other by your words and mine” (*ord.* I.4.11). Licentius acknowledges that while he will seek to express his understanding in his own words, he will also need Augustine’s – his teacher’s – assistance. He hopes that Augustine will offer the example for imitation. Returning to the matter of the irregular sound that initiated their discussion (which they concluded was the accumulation of leaves in the nearby stream that first stalled the flow of water and then eventually dislodged, releasing the flow), Augustine begins with a formative question. While one can reasonably assert that the flow of water is “in accordance with order,” for “men using reason” built the wooden channels to carry it into the villa, is it likewise within the order of things that the leaves fell and blocked the flow? Augustine’s question metaphorically hints at the dilemma of the dialogue – the relationship between divine order and the fall of things.

In response, Licentius argues the principle that “nothing can be done without a cause,” and therefore the falling of these particular leaves is a participation in the final causality of all things (*ord.* I.4.11). In other words, they fall within divine order. He offers many reasonable ways to consider the causality of the matter: the location of the trees and branches, the weight and shape of the leaves as nature has determined it, the movement and conditions of the air, but then he protests, “Why should I investigate? Those things are hidden, completely hidden, from our senses. Yet this one point at least...that nothing is done without a cause – this point is somehow or other not hidden to the mind; and that is enough for the problem proposed.” Augustine and his companions ground their *philosophia* on principles and then pursue the meaning of these principles through reason. In this way, Licentius willingly acknowledges the material investigations that could inform their inquiry on the irregular sound, but he furthermore suggests that the other types of causality are more fundamental to the question. He states, “Either let me be shown (*docear*) that something is done without a cause, or admit (*credite*) that nothing is done but by a fixed order of causes” (I.4.11). He trusts the credibility of the principle that “nothing is done without a cause” as it reveals itself to his soul over and above the inquiry he could make through his limited senses, but he is also willing for Augustine to disprove him through reasonable teaching.

Augustine continues to prod his student through the exercise like a skeptical teacher, for even these “certain ties of questioning” have value (*ord.* I.5.13). Augustine prefers the interplay of disputation to guide the discussion, an approach that may be more likely to draw his broader audience into the discourse. Soon after, however, Licentius makes the following plea in frustration of the difficulty of their discussion,

Who, O Great God, can deny that Thou rulest all things in order? How conjoined are all things! How in fixed successions are they moved to their proper correlations! How great and how numerous are the facts that warrant our saying this! How great the things that are made, that we may find Thee! For, the fact that we were awakened, that you noticed this sound, that you asked yourself about its cause, that you did not find the cause of such a trifling thing – whence all this, unless it flows from the order of things and is derived from it? *Ord.* I.5.14

So convinced is Licentius of the principle of order in the arrangement of causality, he joyfully exclaims, “Let no one question me as to *why* anything is done. It is enough that nothing is done, nothing originated, which some cause has not originated and moved” (italics in original translation). Why and how could such things happen apart from the order of things? The group agrees that even Augustine’s expressions (*sermo*) indicate the order of things, for as Licentius acknowledges, the written record speaks to a broader audience for an ordered purpose.

Augustine then shifts the conversation to the moral dimension of *ordo* first alluded to in the introduction, that is, “whether order...[is] something good (*bonum*) or something bad (*malum*)” (*ord.* I.6.15). In response, Licentius argues that there is “a kind of middle course (*medietatem*),” for nothing can “be opposed to that which has seized and held the whole.” Not even error (*error*), which still has a cause, is opposed to order. Their companion Trygetius is not, however, convinced that evil (*mala*) things are comprised of order, for this seems to be inconsistent with the love of God, He Who loves order, and therefore, according to Trygetius’s interpretation of Licentius’s statement, must also love evil (I.7.17). Licentius attempts to respond to the doubts of his friend but finds it difficult to “frame” his answer (I.7.18). He eventually proposes that there is a “divine arrangement” (*divinae dispositionis*) wherein God maintains the

beauty and harmony of the universe by the distinction between good and evil. He grounds his position on the traditional teaching (*traditur*) of divine justice (I.7.19), by which God “discriminates between good and evil, and gives to each its due” (II.7.22). The principle of God’s justice therefore becomes a measure of their understanding of the order of things, particularly error and evil. In doing so, their argument maintains the unity of divine order and its inherent goodness (II.7.23), whilst acknowledging distinction between higher and lower goods.¹⁷

Already exhausted by the unfolding discursive exercise, Licentius reveals his lack of “erudition and training” as he sits to rest and begs for Augustine’s help (*ord.* I.7.19–I.7.20). Indeed, Augustine’s intentional engagement with Licentius directly demonstrates the purpose of the dialogue, which is to treat the issue of education by which philosophical questions, e.g., order may be addressed in light of Christian doctrine. This is the persuasive goal of the dialogue. For this reason, Augustine says to his students:

If you have a care for order...you must return to those [poetic] verses; for instruction in the liberal arts, if only it is moderate and concise, produces devotees more alert and steadfast and better equipped for embracing truth, so that...they more ardently seek and more consistently pursue and in the end more lovingly cling to that which is called the happy life. *Ord.* I.8.24.

Augustine’s hints at the speech that he will give in Book II on the significance of the arts for his *philosophia* as he briefly acknowledges and discusses here the role that literature, such as Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* which preoccupied Licentius earlier in the dialogue, can play in cultivating an

¹⁷ Augustine and his companions eventually elaborate on their understanding of this distinction, wherein they describe evil (*malus*) as a “non-entity” (*nihil*) or, in other words, a negative (deprived) good rather than a positive thing (*ord.* II.7.23). Consequently, they acknowledge the congruence and unity of divine justice and goodness, of divine order, while maintaining that deprived goods, i.e., sins (*peccata*) “are still to be abhorred” (I.2.4).

understanding of divine order. As Augustine exemplified with his previous reference to Virgil, such works can be useful signposts for divine reality. Augustine describes this interpretive relationship between part (a piece of literature) and whole (the sum of divine reality) as a hermeneutic entrance through one sense of things and into another. Licentius can use Ovid's poem to deepen his understanding of divine reality by moving from a lower reading of the text to a higher one, for the love between the two characters expresses something of a more "pure and genuine love," one that if moved "through philosophy" truly leads to the happy life. The higher reading of the text reflects a greater proportion of the goodness, truth and beauty of divine reality while the lower reading reflects a lesser, more deprived condition of things. The interpretive key for Licentius is to properly use the poem in light of divine order, which views the good of a particular thing – in this case the desire for love – in light of Goodness itself. As Augustine later elaborates, study of the arts ought to follow this pattern as well.

In addition to this particular discussion of how *philosophia* leads one to read literature for signs of divine order, Augustine also demonstrates other such interpretive examples with his students in the narrative. Soon after Augustine makes this reference to Ovid, he and his students come across a cockfight near the villa. They choose to watch, for as Augustine describes, "What do the eyes of lovers [of truth and beauty] not encompass; where do they not search through to see beauteous reason signaling something thence?" (*ord.* I.8.25). Augustine and his companions can discover divine order in everything, because everything expresses something of divine reality – all of creation gives signs of the Creator. "Whence indeed and where can [reason] not give a signal...precisely because another Reason from on high rules over all things." They can inquire into the natural details of this event – "Why do cocks behave this way? Why do they fight for the sake of supremacy of the hens subject to them?" – in a way that will lead them into

their own souls – “Why did the very beauty of the fight draw us aside from this higher study...What is there in us that searches out many things beyond the reach of the senses?” (I.8.26). This interpretive element of Augustine’s *philosophia* demonstrates how use of the arts (as well as the consequent art itself) leads students to discover and express something of divine order in all that they say and do. They can inquire about parts of creation through each distinct art to discover something of the truth, but moreover, the general order of the arts leads them into a certain breadth of this truth, which, when considered through the intellect of the soul, i.e., beyond the senses, is found to reflect the unity of Truth itself.

This way of reading things applies not only to diverse events and disciplines but also to diverse authorities and practices. Augustine willingly uses sophistic elements from his early education and teaching career, such as the exercise of defining, within his *philosophia*; but such elements are reoriented. As Augustine introduces his own definition of *ordo* to his students, he says, “Why do I now, in language full and fair (*copiose atque ornate*), command order to you, as if I were still engaged in that school from which I am glad that I have in some measure (*modo*) escaped?” (*ord.* I.9.27). Augustine seems to anticipate that his students (and audience) may be surprised to hear such a typical exercise of the sophistic school (an epideictic speech) from him, a school from which he is clearly trying to remove himself. Yet, this move is only in some measure, or in other words, in moderate proportion. Like the cockfight and the poem above, Augustine uses this sophistic exercise to signify something more.

Even the typical sophistic abuses of rhetoric do not prevent such a practice from usefulness for a more ordered, a more proportionate, purpose. In light of this, Augustine provides his own definition of order to his students through an epideictic speech. Augustine states, “Nothing...can be said more concisely in praise of it or more truly concerning it than this: Order

is that which will lead us to God, if we hold to it during life; and unless we do hold to it during life, we shall not come to God (*ord.* I.9.27). Augustine's eloquent expression in praise of order reflects the purpose of his text. At the villa, he and his companions are seeking to discover divine order, an order represented through study of creation that reflects something of the Creator. By studying the order of things in a philosophical way, they are led through their souls to consider the origin and cause of these things, a process by which one moves from the reasonability of particular things to "the sum total of all things" (II.9.26). This kind of inquiry ultimately leads them "beyond all things" to God, "the source of all things." Beginning with the principle of divine order, Augustine and his companions pursue understanding of that order through the order of things (e.g., the order of the arts) and into the intelligible order of their souls. Yet, they cannot fully discover and express the truth and beauty of this intelligible reality unless they first imitate the accompanying goodness of it in their moral lives. Augustine's *philosophia* necessarily expresses the wisdom that it finds in word and in action. The moral disposition of their souls is integral to their discovery and expression of order, as the following interaction proves.

After offering his own definition of order, Augustine appeals to Licentius to "frame" his own understanding of the topic, in his own words (*ord.* I.10.28.) Although Licentius is at first flustered by the task, he states, "Order is that by which are governed (*aguntur*) all things that God has constituted." Augustine follows with a specific question, "Does God...seem...to be governed by order?" (I.10.29). Through Licentius's response, the conversation moves from order into discussion of the relationships within the Trinity, which Licentius inadequately expresses. This deficient expression then leads to a lengthy but significant digression wherein Augustine scolds both Licentius and Trygetius for seeking their own glory in the record rather than truth.

Augustine's students still practice certain vices prevalent to the dominant rhetorical culture of the time, specifically vanity and pride. They have forgotten to "be good" (*ord.* I.10.29). While even these lower habits fall within divine order (I.11.33; II.4.11), Augustine is quick to reprimand his students and redirect them toward higher habits of virtue. Augustine knows from his own personal experience with these vices that in order to discover "the advantage and beauty of learning" they must move above their love of "paltriest praise" (I.10.29–I.10.30). This is a pivotal moment for them to reorient their dispositions, the arrangement of their souls, to reflect the height – or better, a greater proportion – of their pursuit and overcome these defects (*vitia*) in expression and action. Indeed, "the lowliest of the pests, to be sure" is a kind of ostentatious ambition exemplified in speech, empty (*inanis*) expressions arranged solely for vainglory (*fama*). This is deprived rhetoric. Augustine's students must instead seek what is above these "perverse habits of life," which are tied to "obscurities of ignorance" (I.10.29). Augustine seeks to cultivate the souls of his students so that their habits of word and deed express the fullest proportion and height of divine order.

As the dialogue continues to unfold, Augustine's friend Alypius returns from the city to enter the disputation. The companions engage in several philosophical arguments concerning order, such as the significance of time (*ord.* II.2.4), the definition of wisdom (II.3.10), and the relationship of God's justice to evil (II.7.23). Each of these arguments informs the broader discussion, as they are categories that inform their understanding of the unity and distinction of divine order, but they do not systematically work them out. Augustine invites consideration of a particular question, listens to the perspectives of his company, and then adds his own refined statements to the conversation. As facilitator of the discussion, Augustine raises philosophical categories that are imperative to the topic, but the overall narrative of the dialogue is not

reducible to a dialectic exercise. The dialogue is dynamic in its expressions of order through both the discussions and demonstrations of the participants (Douglass 41; Foley, “Cicero” 74).

Augustine’s persuasive purpose in the text – to cultivate a particular *philosophia* among his audience – holds these dynamics of the dialogue together as a whole.

Augustine uses the dialogue to propose his *philosophia*, a philosophical culture grounded on Christian doctrine that discovers and expresses order through a two-fold procedure of life and study. Augustine guides and encourages his companions as they initiate this process of discovery while at the villa, but over the course of their discussions, their abilities frequently fall short, particularly in moral exercise and clear expression. Even still, throughout the dialogue, the audience has a sense that order is present among these companions despite their depravities (*ord.* I.8.21; I.8.23). Divine order participates in their efforts even as they pursue order itself.

Interacting with his present company as a teacher, Augustine demonstrates his own cultivation through the dialogue by his well-formulated questions and expressions. Like many in the rhetorical tradition before him, he seeks to teach eloquence suited to philosophical discussion through his example. He is not, however, preoccupied with the eloquence of his students. His attention is predominantly on their ability to reasonably understand and correctly articulate the relationships between the philosophical categories that he is introducing. This is philosophical rhetoric suited for teaching. The goal of the disputation in *De ordine*, like the goal of the overall dialogue (*sermo*), is to raise “the eyes of the mind” and broaden one’s “field of vision” to “survey all things as a whole” (II.4.11). Only through this way of reading things will one find “nothing unarranged, unclassified, or unassigned to its own place.” Like the signs of divine order in creation, each one of Augustine’s expressions on order is distinct but congruent. Their conversation, definitions, literature and disputation – moreover, every physical, moral and

intellectual move that they make – express something of divine order; but some are more deprived than others. The goal of Augustine’s teaching is to bring his students and his audience into a fuller understanding and expression of the whole of divine goodness, truth and beauty. His *philosophia* enacts this goal through a two-fold mode of procedure: an order of life and study. Thus, the cultural inadequacies of Augustine’s audience eventually move him to present his proposal for a means by which they can develop their bodies, minds and souls toward true happiness, not only to inform their personal lives but to shape the order of teaching of the arts.

Coordinate Three: The Order of Life and Study

In the narrative, Augustine guides the conversation through a combination of philosophical and rhetorical exercises on the topic of divine order. At present, however, a lack of erudition among his present companions prevents them from working through the intricacies of the questions, even with assistance from their teacher (*ord.* II.7.24). Augustine can see that they “greatly love order,” but their reasoning is impaired (*imperitos*). They have failed to keep “to that very order of which [they] were treating, and by which one comes to a knowledge of His ineffable majesty.” Augustine responds to their depravities by suggesting that there is an “order of teaching,” an arranged way of philosophizing, that ought to be followed so as to provide students with a more complete understanding of the relationships within divine order. While the extemporaneous conversations in the dialogue have played out some of the intricacies of the question of order between Augustine and his companions, Augustine now moves to address the particular purpose of the text to his audience. He gives a speech wherein he proposes a culture – a *philosophia*, grounded on the authority of divine teaching and implemented through an order of life and study – that discovers and expresses the fullness of divine reality through the moral and intellectual ordering of the soul.

To propose his *philosophia* as a fitting means to cultivate a fuller discovery and expression of divine order, Augustine begins from the ground up. He founds his philosophical culture on what he describes as *disciplina ipsa* (*ord.* II.8.25). Augustine’s description of this discipline echoes the prophet Jeremiah as he states (*New American* 31:33), “This science is the very law of God...ever abiding fixed and unshaken with Him, [and] transcribed...on the souls of the wise.” In other words, this law of God is not extrinsic to the soul but rather intrinsic to it and congruent with its natural desire for wisdom. Augustine’s *philosophia* both assumes and seeks to understand this law – this relationship between Creator and creation – through the soul. This intellectual endeavor is not arbitrary but significant to the purpose of the text, for “[the wise] know they live a better and more sublime life in proportion as they contemplate [this law] more perfectly with their understanding and observe it more diligently in their manner of living.” Augustine’s *philosophia* embraces and enacts a complete culture that leads to lasting happiness. To do so, followers discover and express divine order through a particular kind of moral action and intellectual study, particularly accomplished in the soul.

Augustine’s introduction of this discipline at the beginning of his speech reflects the “trans-philosophical” nature of his project (Gilson 9), which moves from the authority of first principles through reason. As he previously stated, “The philosophy that is true...has no other function than to teach what is the First Principle of all things” (*ord.* II.5.16). He further specified that the Christian mysteries teach that this first principle is “one God, omnipotent, and that He is tripotent, Father and Son and Holy Spirit.” Therefore Augustine, and perhaps most of his audience, assumes a mutual relationship between philosophical categories and theological presuppositions (Brown 103–104). Philosophy starts with first principles, which relates use of authorities to the work of reason. For Augustine, this relationship between authority and reason

is such that the trustworthiness of an authority (whether divine or human) is judged by its ability to give proof (*indicia*) for its doctrines (*doctrinarum*), which are pursued through the intellect (*ord.* II.9.27). Without this factor, authority can be deceiving. In light of this understanding, Augustine utilizes both authority and reason within his “order of teaching” (*docendi ordinem*) (II.7.24), for as he argues, the “authority of the mysteries” ultimately purifies the life of good men over and above “the circumlocution of disputation” (II.9.27). Through reasonable and correct teachings, divine and human authorities are an essential part of philosophy.

Although Augustine acknowledges that authority precedes reason (*ratio*) within the operations of learning, it is the latter that is the “more highly prized...object of desire” (*ord.* II.9.26). *Ratio* is fundamental to Augustine’s *philosophia* as the distinguishing characteristic of man in his relationship to God (II.11.31). Reason is the height of human expression because it is a reflection of the divine intellect that is communicated through all of creation and most especially through the rational souls of humanity. Augustine is interested not only in the application of reason to the study of things, but in the philosophical inquiry of what reason itself *is*, its “qualities” (II.11.30; italics in original translation). This is the kind of discovery that he seeks to cultivate through study of the arts, to move students from reasoning about the order of things in creation to considering “what, beyond all things, is the source of all things,” through examination of the soul (II.9.26). Particularly through the intellect, one discovers the divine Intellect “in which all things are” and “which is itself the sum total of all things.”¹⁸ Fundamental to this intellectual discovery, however, is the exercise of virtue. This is a natural consequence of the unity of body and soul – that through their integrity one discovers and expresses something

¹⁸ Russell notes the Platonic quality to this theme of “intellect” in Augustine’s work (“Appendix” 185, note 13). Like the other rhetorical authorities, Augustine freely applies Platonic ideas to his project when they are congruent with his principles.

of order.¹⁹ Augustine repeatedly stresses the congruence of moral goods and intellectual truths, two distinct but unified parts within the whole of divine reality, both to be discovered and expressed in the happy life.

Grounded on authority and reason, Augustine implements his *philosophia* through “a twofold order of procedure,” one part of which “pertains to the regulating of life” and the other of which “pertains to the directing of studies” (*ord.* II.8.25). In his discussion of the former, a well-regulated life, Augustine provides many precepts (*praecepta*) for exercising virtue (II.10.28). Such “right living” is significant because it reflects the height of their pursuit in the order of moral goods, knowledge and practice of which is necessary for the happy life (II.10.29; Topping, *Happiness* 229). Therefore, devotees of *philosophia* ought to “refrain from all wantonness, from the enticements of gluttony, from excessive care and adornment of the body, from silly practices of games...[and] from the unrestrained desire for praise” (*ord.* II.8.25). In treating these issues, Augustine highlights temptations typical of the sophistic school and its surrounding culture, particularly those that enticed him in his earlier years.

Augustine also, however, goes beyond these deprived desires to invite his audience into a deeper appreciation of virtue as it applies to the happy life. He argues, “Let them do nothing half-heartedly, nothing rashly...Let them hate no one” (*ord.* II.8.25). He acknowledges the importance of good friendships. Furthermore, in politics he suggests prudence and justice. He encourages forgiveness, fairness and the golden rule. Augustine hopes for a kind of politician who is morally active and philosophically minded, one who stands in contrast to “vain” orators

¹⁹ Augustine assumes that the moral and intellectual orders of things discovered and expressed in creation congruently reflect divine order. These orders are distinct as students discern their particular applications – moral order signifying higher and lower goods and intellectual order signifying greater and smaller proportions of truth – but they are also united within the fullness of divine reality. The truths discovered through the intellect harmonize with the goods sought through the will.

and “proud” philosophers (I.10.30; II.5.16; Foley, “Other” 171–172). In this philosophical mode, individuals are to live “in a fitting and decent manner” (*ord.* II.8.25). Lastly, he says, “Supported by faith, hope, and love, let them have God as the object of their worship, their thinking, and their striving.” God is the measure of this way of life.

While Augustine expresses these “rules of life...in [his] own words...and...in keeping with the [current] circumstances,” he acknowledges that they “are not of [his] invention (*inventata*)” (*ord.* II.10.28). Rather many books address them. Augustine encourages his students to consider these precepts not only according to his own description of them but in light of all the available and reasonable sources. Augustine is confident about the capacity of humanity to follow this way of life and thus to find happiness in God through *philosophia*, but he is not selling a formula for immediate gratification. Following these precepts of life is difficult and their implementation requires “divine assistance.” The group laments that more men do not already live in this manner so that it might be easier to imitate “by universal example.” Yet more often than not humanity struggles, entangled in lower desires as if they alone can satisfy the soul. Augustine does not reject pleasure (II.12.35), but he expects the senses to “serve [the] soul” (I.2.6).²⁰ As Augustine’s companions demonstrated earlier in Book I through their “perverse habits” (I.10.29), one’s moral disposition either supports or distracts from the philosophical life (I.8.24). Virtuous desires ought to be in “tune” with the work of one’s mind (II.19.50). Therefore, they all have to remember to “be good,” that is, to avoid vice and to practice virtue (I.10.29). The moral life, however, is not only a list of precepts to be blindly followed. This life

²⁰ Augustine’s understanding of the order of pleasure is captured in his statement, “Delight *of* the sense is one thing; delight *through* the sense is something else,” which distinguishes between lower (the former) and higher (the latter) uses of pleasure (*ord.* II.11.34; italics in original translation).

is reasonable in the sense that the practitioner understands and has clarity about its end, its final purpose (II.12.35). One chooses to follow the moral life in order to be happy.

Augustine describes their life at the villa in terms of conversion, for as he states early in the dialogue, “What else is all this than to be...lifted away from the over-growth of vices, and uplifted towards Himself...the truth for which we yearn, and for which as the object of our love we make ourselves clean and beautiful?” (*ord.* I.8.23). Yet uncleanness of the body and darkness of the mind block the path to wisdom, to God. In contrast, Augustine’s *philosophia* cultivates both “a good and edifying life” (II.10.29). Augustine’s two-fold order of life and study includes the conversion of one’s will toward God, Goodness itself, as well as the intellectual pursuit of God, Truth itself. As Augustine told Zenobius in the introduction, his *philosophia* includes an element of “clearing” and one of “planting” – in that order (I.2.4). Therefore, in this main speech on the order of teaching Augustine first encourages his audience to morally cleanse themselves of vice, and then he moves to describe a new way to cultivate intellectual study.

Moral goodness is a condition of Augustine’s *philosophia* because it clears the mind in its pursuit of truth – it “properly [adjusts and disposes]” the soul (*ord.* II.19.51). Once the soul is ordered toward goodness, and consequently “harmonious and beautiful,” then can it “venture to see God, the very source of all truth and the very Father of Truth.” Even in this expression, Augustine is always aware of human limitations. He knows that while they pursue a fuller discovery and expression of goodness, truth and beauty, they are still only seeing a glimpse of divine reality. This, however, does not impede their pursuit, for they are seeking to reflect and reflect on the relationships between Creator and creation. God invites this participation through communication of divine order in material and immaterial reality. If one follows a “right order” –

one that truly and appropriately accounts for the breadth of divine reality –one can find happiness amid the complexities and struggles of human life.

Thus as the will clings to moral goodness, so the intellect pursues truth through reason. Through the “creative principle” of *ordo*, one discerns the intelligible through the sensible (Hochschild 78). Augustine’s *philosophia* intellectually engages the physical universe, as Licentius is willing to consider certain causes of the fallen leaves at the beginning of the dialogue (*ord.* I.4.11); but it does not stop there. Rather, as Licentius’s speech makes clear, Augustine’s *philosophia* assumes that there is more to be discovered concerning the significance of such things. Philosophical study may begin through the senses, but its discernment of things through the intellect is “far more profound and sublime” (II.18.47). Only through the immortal soul can one consider that which is immortal – that which is beyond the contingent, material and finite reality of things. Augustine’s *philosophia* invites the souls of its students to “take flight from the lesser good to the greater, from the mortal to the immortal” (II.19.50). Through the order of the intellect, students gain wisdom to “grasp the order of things” and eventually “to discern two worlds and the very Author of the universe” (II.18.47). Philosophical study of the created soul itself – an intelligible expression of the Creator – is the premier source for discerning divine order. As the next coordinate shows, Augustine applies this kind of study to the order of the arts and furthermore demonstrates how the discipline of philosophy specializes in this way of learning.

In the dialogue, Augustine acknowledges that this complete culture – of moral life and intellectual study – is necessary for the happy life (*ord.* II.9.26). Although Augustine eventually softens this stance in *Retractiones* (I.3.2), the practical significance of his *philosophia* still stands. Augustine’s *philosophia* in *De ordine* responds to the deprived education of his time,

which practiced the lowest vice, “vanity” (I.10.30), and promoted “false judgments” and “fallacious arguments” (II.5.13). His philosophical culture aims high in the sense that it follows principles of divine order to meet the needs of a distinctly Christian education in the Late Roman Empire, but to a great extent he uses available authorities and practices of his historical moment to do so. Yet, he also stretches the significance of these resources beyond their common use as he infuses them with new meaning and gives them new purpose toward lasting happiness.

Augustine also accommodates this culture to a broader spectrum of students than was typical for his time (*ord.* I.11.31; II.18.47). Augustine is willing to make several adjustments to his intellectual program, “lest anyone think that [his *philosophia*...embraces] something very extensive” (II.18.47). If one is currently unlearned in study of the arts, then “authority alone opens the door” (II.9.27). Docility becomes the bridge between knowledge through authority and knowledge through reason, inviting those who are willing to enter into “the sacred inner courts of philosophy” (I.11.31). No greater example can be given of those who lack a certain cultivation and yet capture the very essence of order than Augustine’s mother Monica, who grasps “the almost heavenly power and nature of grammar” despite her deficient education (II.17.45).²¹ Informed by the authority of sacred mysteries and knowledge of divine Scripture, Monica practices a less formal philosophy but a *philosophia* nonetheless.

Of greater cultural concern to Augustine are those who would begin to inquire into philosophical matters but fall short of a fuller understanding of things, particularly those who fail to consider the significance of the soul in light of divine reality (*ord.* II.5.15, II.5.17). These

²¹ Augustine describes Monica as having a certain ingenuity (*ingenium*) that informs her knowledge of the soul, but she particularly lacks an acquired “mode of expression” (*ord.* II.17.45). This, however, is less significant, for she grasps the deeper meaning of things despite an inability to eloquently express them. Unlike students typical of the sophistic school, she has not *preoccupied* herself with eloquence in a way that has prevented her from learning wisdom. See also I.11.31–32.

students limit themselves to a lesser form of learning, one representative of the sophistic school. They are curious, not studious. Rather than discern the order of things, they rush to “discredit everything” (II.5.17). Even their reading of literature is deprived, as demonstrated by Licentius’s initial use of poetry. This kind of study fails to see the integrity of particulars in light of the whole; it results in a curious skepticism. Augustine’s concern for this kind of semi-cultured person indicates his criticism of the relationship between the prevalent sophistic education, and its limited use of the arts, and skepticism. For this very reason, Augustine recommends an “order of the branches of learning” so that the philosophical complexities of life may be more “thoroughly understood” by those who are willing (II.15.17; II.5.15). Augustine proposes an order of the arts for his *philosophia*, but through a mode that infuses them with divine purpose. The arts become a premier means to bolster the intellectual discovery and expression of the fullness of divine truth.

Coordinate Four: The Order of the Arts

As Augustine continues in his speech on the order of life and study, he turns to discussion of the specific means by which reason is expressed in the rational soul. Humanity applies reason to study by “distinguishing and connecting the things that are learned” (*ord.* II.11.30), for through a “kind of inner and hidden activity,” the soul is “able to analyze and synthesize the things that ought to be learned” (II.18.48). This two-fold activity, of distinguishing and uniting things, is the “mode of learning” through reason. Augustine gives many examples of how to initiate this reasoning in study. One perceives that a stone has many parts but also that its consolidation makes it a stone. One considers that a tree has many parts but that its unity makes it a tree. This kind of reasoning applies to society as well. In life, do friends not strive to be one? Does a city not seek to be unified? Must an army not remain united? Does a lover, “not wish to

become one with what it is loving?” In all of these things, there is distinction and unity. Through the application of reason, humanity grasps (*cognoscendo*) the significance of this relationship, the significance of its order (II.18.49). As Augustine eventually argues, philosophical study of the liberal arts provides an imperative means to reflect and reflect on the meaning of these relationships.

The reasonable goal of Augustine’s *philosophia* then is to understand the relationship of particular things to the whole of things, to discern distinction and unity. For this reason, he engages his present companions in the disputation on order, wherein they seek to work out the details of this relationship. Augustine’s approach, however, is not limited to order of the material world, although it is significant as his discussion of the arts demonstrates. Augustine also seeks to understand “reason itself” (*ord.* II.9.26). His students begin with the senses, with matter, but then they move into the soul, lest they become preoccupied with “objects of sense” (II.11.30). The world passes away, but immortal reason that resides in the soul does not (II.19.50). Humanity discovers new depths of divine reality, beyond the senses, through its capacity for reasoning about the relationships between things, including parts of the soul.

The particular significance of discerning the relationship between part and whole is purpose. Augustine exhibits this philosophical principle through his use of final causality throughout the dialogue. Thus as humanity applies reason to its own endeavors, particularly its actions and words, it first takes in the pleasure of them through the senses, in their beauty and sweetness, but then it moves to consider them through the rational soul for their meaning (*ord.* II.11.32–34). One can discern meaning (*sententiam*) in human activity in three particular ways: by considering the purpose of an action, that is its end (*finem*); by considering the discourse of speakers, that is whether or not they teach correctly (*recte docere*); and by considering the

delight of a thing, that is to contemplate the beauty that comes through it (II.12.35). Since Augustine is still extrapolating on his order of life and study, he clarifies: “the first deals with right living; the other two, with those branches of learning which we are now considering.” Thus while the discernment of reasonable actions corresponds to the recognizable exercise of moral virtue that leads to happiness in Augustine’s *philosophia* – that is to one willing the highest goods for oneself and others – the reasonability of discourse and delight has something to do with the way one studies the arts. Augustine has already suggested that there is a more limited study of the arts common among his contemporaries and present in the current sophistic schools (I.10.30; II.5.17). Now Augustine responds to this deprived education with his own *philosophia*, his philosophical culture, which situates the significance of each art, including its expression of beauty and sweetness – that is, its reasonable delight – in light of divine order.

As stated in the introduction, the purpose of *De ordine* is to demonstrate and discuss a philosophical culture that discovers and expresses divine order, that is, the distinct yet unified relationship between Creator and creation. Augustine began the narrative with a disputation, a means to discursively engage his audience in some of the philosophical categories that are imperative to this relationship. Yet, after his present companions struggle with this approach Augustine moves to propose the fullness of his *philosophia* to the audience in a speech on the order of life and study, which is grounded on the law of God and pursued through the intellect. Augustine argues that the exercise of reason is fundamental to this *philosophia*, for reason is the quality of the soul that most reflects the divine. Consequently, humanity ought to exercise reason in all three possible ways: through a life ordered toward goodness, through discourse ordered toward truth, and through pleasure ordered toward beauty. In this way, the significance of life, discourse and pleasure is reasonably discovered and expressed in proportion to – in light of – its

relationship to God, the source of all goodness, truth and beauty. As Augustine exemplifies in an earlier speech, the highest expression of order that humanity can make is the praise of things in a way that explicitly or implicitly points to their relationship to God – speech that signifies divine order, speech that adores God. Therefore, as Augustine continues to present his order of study, he comprises the arts but in a way that points to their divine purpose.

Augustine moves to present the order of the arts as a necessary means to bolster the discovery and expression of divine order through the mind. As expressions of human reason and creativity, each art has a special significance, a way of discovering and expressing “something” of divine reality (*ord.* II.1.3). As each art reflects the reasonability of the created world, through some expression of language and numbers, so philosophical study of the arts reflects on this reasonability and inquires into its purpose. Thus, Augustine introduces each art not *only* as a discipline to be practiced but also as a discipline to be contemplated (II.16.44). By approaching the arts in this way, Augustine’s *philosophia* utilizes the disciplines in contrast to the approach of the sophistic school. Whereas students of “that school” cared little for the utility and beauty (*decore*) of the arts in light of personal vanity (I.10.30), Augustine’s “school” cares for both and discovers and expresses both in light of divine order. Each art has its own usefulness and beauty to be exercised, but it also has “something” divine to be understood (II.1.3). Without grasping this divine significance, this purpose, of the art, then one is not only lacking in terms of learning but one will inherently fail to express the fullness of its artistic beauty in practice. Without recognizing divine purpose, art is deprived; it is in vain.

Each individual art – grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and harmony (Kimball 42) – is significant for the discovery and expression of divine order, a particular part of the whole of truth and beauty in language and numbers. Moreover, through

their unity the arts make a certain breadth of order manifest as they are brought together in the sum of things. As each art reflects something of the divine, so study of their unity indicates the integrity of truth and beauty. As Augustine has argued throughout the dialogue, goodness, truth and beauty are one, for God, the source of all things, “is one” (*ord.* I.5.16). The order of the arts, as an order of study, signifies the truth and beauty of distinct things, as the order of life signifies their goodness. Yet, study in *all* of the arts prepares students to move deeper into the soul through consideration of their unity; it invites contemplation of all facets of truth, beauty and goodness in relationship to the One through whom all things are made.

After elaborating on the distinction of each discipline, Augustine discusses additional topics that ought to be treated once one is “learned” in all of the arts so that one may speak correctly and avoid error in terms of understanding and expressing divine reality (*ord.* I.16.44). Augustine argues for the necessity of studying and understanding many essential topics that pertain to divine things, such as “what pure nothing is, what formless matter is, what a lifeless informed being is, what a body is, what species in a body is, what place and time are, what in a place and at a time signify...” (II.16.44). These are topics that Augustine tried to treat with his present companions, but since they lacked the necessary erudition in the arts, they were unable to express themselves adequately and completely. Augustine acknowledges that this kind of study is demanding and may be difficult for some, but his invitation into *philosophia* seems to extend to all who are willing. His zeal is for “right order,” whether one follows his particular expression of it or another “more concise and appropriate” (II.19.51). However, following the “order of the arts” is a non-negotiable, for otherwise one will undoubtedly succumb to error (II.17.46). While Augustine may assume that the specific list of arts to be included within this “order” is adaptable to particular circumstances and capabilities of students (II.18.47; II.19.51), the philosophical

approach to studying them – to discern the relationship between particular truths and the whole of truth in light of divine reality – is essential.²² Perhaps Augustine reiterates this fact because he is acutely aware of the temptation to slight education in some way, either by directing it toward a lesser purpose or by depriving it of a fuller consideration of reality.

While the seven liberal arts provide an encyclopedic means for engaging fundamental elements of reality, study of Augustine’s text is incomplete without consideration of his arguments for the discipline of philosophy. While Augustine previously defined philosophy in general terms as the “love of wisdom” (*ord.* I.11.32), he now goes into discussion of its profound and sublime treatment of essential topics (II.18.47). In doing so, Augustine here combines what Kimball calls the “pansophic” approach and the “propaedeutic” approach to the liberal arts (40–41). The former reflects an encyclopedic quality of the arts as Augustine describes them, a complete culture that leads one to discover and express divine order and ultimately the happy life, assuming the congruent practice of moral virtue. The latter reflects the necessity of the arts as preparation for further study, here, as traditionally, the study of philosophy. As Kimball suggests, it is the combination of the two approaches that distinguishes the Christian contribution to the history of the liberal arts (41), for they are no longer studied as “an end in itself” (38), but, alongside philosophy and the developing field of theology informed by tradition and Sacred Scripture, they are viewed as parts in the whole of divine truth discoverable through creation and revelation. As Augustine assumes in *De ordine*, the arts have divine significance when studied for *both* practical content and philosophical reflection. The former mode is necessary and useful for life in the world, but the latter mode moves through the soul to that which is beyond the

²² This is not to diminish the significance of Augustine’s particular list of the arts and their “order” in *De ordine* (II.17.46).

world. The two modes unite in their purpose, to reflect and reflect on the fullness of divine reality.

Therefore, in his discussion of the order of study Augustine also provides a rationale for the discipline of philosophy, in addition to the arts. He already stated that true philosophy teaches first principles (*ord.* II.5.16). He also further clarified that this teaching comes through both authority and reason (II.9.26–27). Now Augustine establishes the kind of learning that is distinctly philosophical – the kind that seeks to understand “ourselves” and “our origin” (II.18.47). This, states Augustine, is “the order of wisdom’s branches of study (*ordo studiorum sapientiae*) by which one becomes competent to grasp the order of things and to discern two worlds and the very Author of the universe.” Philosophy specializes in relating knowledge of the soul to knowledge of God, and it does so through consideration of distinction and unity (II.18.48). Distinguishable from the arts, the discipline of philosophy is essentially interior; it examines (*inspicit*) the soul, and speaking to itself (*loquetur*), persuades itself (*persuasit*) to “take flight from the lesser good to the greater, from the mortal to the immortal” (II.18.48; II.19.50). Like the philosophical use of the arts, philosophy considers the relationship between creation and Creator, but it specifically ponders the soul within the soul through an interior mode of learning. Within the soul, philosophy ventures “to see God, the very source of all truth” and to glimpse a “vision” of eternal beauty (II.19.51). In this way, the soul comes to understand that what is particularly true and beautiful exists in proportion – in relationship – to the measure of truth and beauty itself, God.

Although Augustine distinguishes the discipline of philosophy (*philosophia*) here in the text, *philosophia* has indeed penetrated his entire project. Consequently, Augustine’s *philosophia* includes but is not limited to the discipline of philosophy itself. Consideration of the nuance

surrounding this term in the dialogue sheds light on the dynamic interplay of Augustine's uses. Augustine's *philosophia* is a complete culture, and it is a distinctly philosophical one. His *philosophia* includes moral action, both personal and political; it includes authority, both human and divine; it includes the arts, both practical and contemplative; and it includes philosophy, as a way of life and a way of learning.

Augustine cultivates this *philosophia* in and through the dialogue for the specific purpose of shaping an "order of teaching" (*ord.* I.9.27; II.7.24). He hopes for his audience to imitate what the dialogue demonstrates and what his speeches propose. In *De ordine*, Augustine teaches his audience how to approach the topic of divine order, which treats the relationship between creation and Creator, in such a way that leads – persuades – them toward the happy life, and it does so through *philosophia*, the means by which one discovers and expresses a certain fullness of divine reality. *Philosophia* orders one's life through the exercise of moral virtue and the formation of one's internal and external discourse, within the soul and with others. Initiated as a response to divine reality as transcribed on the soul and reasonably expressed through the authority of Christian doctrine, Augustine invites his audience to participate in a process whereby they gradually discover and express the significance of things by imitating order in their souls. Yet, it does not stop there, for Augustine expects his *philosophia* not only to be exercised, but also taught. He wants to teach this love of wisdom to others (II.2.7), and he wants it to have an effect on how well the developing culture lives, prays and studies (II.19.51). The quality of Christian culture is at stake along with the very happiness of every soul.

As Augustine describes the significance of the arts for this distinct purpose, he has in mind their present abuse in the typical sophistic schools. Indeed, his reappraisal is responsive to the deprived education currently offered in "that school" (*ord.* I.10.30). The most conspicuously

inane art within this prevailing system is rhetoric. Augustine had grown increasingly aware of the school's inadequate approach to this art during his own early education (*conf.* III.4.7), although he continued to be susceptible to its empty promise of achieving professional success through eloquent expression (IX.2.4). Augustine's personal goals were at least partially motivated by ambition despite his move in the direction of philosophy upon reading Cicero's *Hortensius* at age 19. This text, however, persuaded him to follow a different method and a different end for learning, one in which rhetoric was united to philosophy toward wisdom.

By the time Augustine writes at Cassiciacum, he is ready to resign from his teaching position, his rhetoric chair, in the Milanese sophistic school. As Augustine recounts this time in *Confessiones*, he makes a two-fold criticism of himself in light of his teaching career. He says, "I loved vanity, and I sought after lying" (*conf.* IX.4.9). His study and (ab)use of rhetoric was tied to both. First, he learned and practiced rhetoric in vain, that is, misdirected from its highest purpose, i.e., the discovery and expression of the divine. In this way, it was morally deficient, directed toward a lesser good rather than a greater one. Secondly, study of this rhetoric was separated from the other arts; it was deprived of truths that proportion its highest use.

Augustine acknowledges the temptation of fallacious arguments dressed in eloquence (*ord.* II.5.13). They appear so well arranged that "deception through them becomes pleasant," but they are not fully eloquent because, lacking the fullness of truth, their rhetoric is disproportionate. Lying "perverts the true purpose of speech" (Curley 192). Such speakers arrange their words for the purpose of falsehood, but the unity of truth inherently limits their persuasive effect. Particularly without dialectic, which distinctly informs rhetoric of erroneous thinking (*ord.* II.13.38), rhetoric may be susceptible to a certain sweetness applied to incorrect teaching. Yet even such attempts at speaking beautifully, of sounding "sweet," are undermined

by a speaker's deprived understanding (II.11.33), as exemplified by the Manichean teacher Faustus (*conf.* V.6.10–11). This kind of rhetoric fails to express the unity of goodness, truth and beauty, which it is designed to do; it is deprived of the fullness of its divine purpose.

At Cassiciacum, Augustine is on retreat. He is partaking in the traditional leisure (*otium*) of a professor. He is writing dialogues of philosophical significance and cultural import. In doing so, Augustine composes *De ordine*, which particularly reconsiders the typical education of the time in light of his developing understanding of Christianity. He applies his knowledge of Christian doctrine to a pressing need of his time: an education that teaches students to think and speak about the fullness of divine reality, from the particulars of “everyday expressions” to the general question of God’s providence (*ord.* II.19.51). In responding to this need, Augustine does not begin anew but rather reappraises the existing system in light of new knowledge. He applies his ingenuity to discover and express the unity of traditional Roman education with the emerging priorities of a distinctly Christian culture. His *philosophia* thus comprises the arts, but they are changed in the process. Their new purpose – to lead us to God – orders them differently.

Augustine’s reordering of the arts has significance for each one of them. Rhetoric in particular, united to the other six, discovers a certain wholesome sweetness through this connection (*ord.* II.11.33; *conf.* V.6.10). Balanced by the others, its application is measured in proportion to its purpose. This rhetoric signifies “something” beyond itself (*ord.* II.11.34). In light of divine order, it can correctly teach others by stirring (*commoveri*) their souls toward the fullness of divine truth (II.13.38); it can delight them by sweetly signifying the fullness of divine beauty; and it can reasonably persuade them to see something of the divine in their own souls.²³

²³ As Russell translates Augustine’s description of the art of rhetoric at *ord.* II.13.38, he seems to have Augustine’s strong criticisms of the sophistic school in mind. Van Deusen’s translation highlights different qualities. She writes: “Since [the unlearned] are separated from a proper turn

The art of rhetoric rises and falls in proportion to this purpose, to sweetly speak something of the whole, implicitly or explicitly recognizing “the very Author of the universe” (II.18.47).

Augustine’s *philosophia* cultivates and exercises this ordered rhetoric in the dialogue.

As with the other arts, Augustine’s understanding of rhetoric in *De ordine* still reflects some assumptions of the sophistic school, such as the importance of imitation, the role of rhetorical exercises, and the emphasis on eloquence to arouse emotions (Kennedy, *Classical* 182). Yes, Augustine is happy to be resigning from the sophistic school for reasons discussed above, but in his words, his departure is only “in some measure” (*ord.* I.9.27). Augustine particularly continues to find epideictic speech useful and fitting for his new purposes. Ordered speech is “praise” of the good, the true and the beautiful. The intellectual knowledge and moral exercise of order, i.e., relationship to the divine arranges one’s epistemological and ethical use of rhetoric toward the fullness of truth and beauty and the highest possible expression, praise of God through his creation. Indeed, Augustine uses material from diverse sources, authorities and disciplines to inform his approach to *philosophia* because they all fall within divine order. Augustine seeks to clear away their lower uses to lift them to a higher form of discovery and expression. His *philosophia* reflects and reflects on their divine significance.

The previous chapters of this study have attended to sophistic and Ciceronian elements that inform Augustine’s use and understanding of rhetoric in *De ordine*. Sophistic elements were considered through Augustine’s use of the term *schola*, which highlighted both unity and

of mind, as well as good mental habits, it is necessary not only to teach them the material to be learned itself, but often – and in as many ways as possible – to move their emotions. This is done according to the part of learning that consists in actually doing a given task, that is more produced by necessity than by its own [abstract] purity. Further, what is to be learned is noticed most when it is delicious, as it is, so to speak, scattered to pupils” (726). “Rhetoric then ‘adds the dignity of usefulness’ and the deliciousness of attraction, thus moving the desire to the discipline of communication. Thus the discipline of rhetoric ‘promotes the study of the liberal arts’.”

distinctions between “that school” and Augustine’s “school” at Cassiciacum. Ciceronian elements were considered through Augustine’s use of the term *philosophia*, which pointed to the integrity of philosophy and rhetoric in the text. This chapter has considered distinctly Christian elements, particularly those assumed and articulated in Augustine’s use of *ordo*, to discuss the significance of divine order for Augustine’s approach and purpose in *De ordine*. The final section of this chapter reflects on the overall significance of these three authorities for Augustine’s rhetoric in the text – how he uses and understands these sources in light of the whole dialogue.

Augustine’s rhetoric in *De ordine* exhibits a responsive quality in light of his creative and constrained use of these three rhetorical authorities, as they interact with one another in unity and distinction through Augustine’s work. Yet it is particularly through his understanding of “order” that Augustine elucidates and explains the *means* by which he can apply all three authorities within his rhetoric. Order thus becomes an interpretive key for appreciating the breadth of Augustine’s rhetoric in this dialogue. Order situates his understanding and use of rhetorical authorities as well as diverse disciplines and practices. As discussed in the first chapter of this study, *ordo* is a kind of “metarhetoric” in *De ordine* that grounds and situates Augustine’s understanding and use of the rhetorical art, *rhetorica*. Through order, Augustine moves beyond the historically situated understanding of rhetoric that he learned and taught. His (meta)rhetoric of order rearranges the order of his rhetoric.

In some measure, Augustine continues to use elements of the sophistic school in his teaching at Cassiciacum. He applies these elements in and through the dialogue. Yet, as evident from his particular criticisms of this resource, sophistic education and its associated rhetoric were insufficient for meeting the needs of a distinctly Christian culture. Specifically, it lacked divine

purpose. One could debate whether or not Augustine ultimately finds sophistic education disordered (*inordinatos*) (*ord.* II.7.24), but it seems more in line with the overall text to argue that it was morally deprived. The Sophistic school failed to find and express its proper end – to teach students how to find true and lasting happiness.

Augustine’s reading and use of Cicero was certainly significant for his move toward philosophy. Pedagogically, Augustine finds a method in Cicero wherein eloquence is necessarily united to wisdom. Here too, however, Augustine treads carefully, adopting Cicero’s method while declining his skepticism, particularly in light of its cultural consequences. While Cicero’s understanding of the integrity of philosophy and rhetoric informs Augustine’s rhetorical practices in the dialogue, his philosophical skepticism is refuted for a fuller, truer *philosophia*. Cicero’s work put Augustine on a path toward wisdom, but only his Christian teachers taught him that the love of wisdom was in unity with the love of God.

The nuance of Augustine’s attention to diverse authorities, disciplines and practices, however, is incomplete without order. Specifically, Christian teaching on divine order provided a rationale for how Augustine could use available elements of Late Roman education toward a new kind of culture. All things rise and fall within divine order. Thus knowledge of and cooperation with divine purpose, as inscribed on the souls of the wise, is essential to the proper use of things. Augustine can distinguish higher and lower, smaller and greater elements of things while maintaining their integrity within the fullness of divine reality. Through one’s moral exercise and epistemological understanding, order ultimately informs the practical and contemplative use of such things for culture, for education, for human flourishing, society and happiness. Augustine’s rhetoric of order is best described as metarhetorical because the “rhetoric” of his time was too small, too low for his new rhetorical purposes. Augustine needed a rhetoric that could lead others

to God. He articulates the “what” and the “how” of this rhetoric through his rhetoric of order in *De ordine*.

Implications of Augustine’s Rhetoric of Order

Augustine’s rhetoric is responsive as he composes the text of *De ordine* in light of a context. He responds to a particular dilemma of his historical moment, the development of a distinctly Christian culture. He responds to the concerns of a particular audience, his fellow intellectuals who are contemplating the significance of divine order for their personal and professional lives. Finally and most fundamentally, he responds to particular teachings of Christian doctrine that he comes to believe and understand through intellectual and spiritual mentors, e.g., Theodore Manlius, Ambrose and Simplicianus (*ord.* I.11.31; *conf.* V.14.24, VI.3.4; Madec 151). In other words, he is writing for a particular purpose, to a particular group of people, about something of vital importance. In addition to its other dimensions, Augustine’s writing corresponds to a rhetorical situation (Bitzer 5–6). The discourse of *De ordine* is a “fitting” response to a particular, philosophical, i.e., epideictic question (9): how does divine order relate to our cultural understanding and expression of things? A related question in specific reference to rhetoric is: What are we praising?

To develop his response to this situation, Augustine utilizes emerging and latent rhetorical authorities that he shares with his audience. In other words, he uses the rhetorical tradition available him to inform his present discourse (Bitzer 13). He incorporates sophistic elements from the current sophistic schools, Ciceronian elements from Roman rhetorical literature, and Christian topics and doctrines from the Milanese Christian community. With each authority, Augustine considers the usefulness of its elements for his persuasive purpose in this particular text – to propose an order of teaching to the audience that leads to lasting happiness,

which he believes is found in the enjoyment of God. Augustine applies his ingenuity to this particular purpose, discerning the reasonableness of each authority and its appropriateness for his project. In doing so, Augustine offers specific insights concerning the significance of each one to meet the moral and intellectual needs of the developing Christian culture.

Augustine finds the sophistic school (*schola*) intellectually and morally deprived because its misconception of rhetoric, as the only necessary art, contributes to the misuse of rhetoric, for personal glory. The sophistic school fosters this kind of rhetoric for material and political gain at the cost of ignoring what will make students truly happy. This education leaves the souls of students empty. The Ciceronian elements that Augustine learned through his rhetorical reading were also lacking, for although the *Hortensius* inspired Augustine to have “different purposes and desires” directed toward wisdom (*conf.* III.4.7), they were ultimately left unsatisfied. Intellectually, Cicero united rhetoric to philosophy (*philosophia*), which was an essential step for Augustine’s developing understanding of the rhetorical discipline, but morally, the teaching of Cicero’s skepticism left students wanting and apathetic. Only upon hearing the teaching of Ambrose in the Milanese Cathedral is Augustine moved like never before (V.14.24; VI.3.4). For the first time, Augustine hears Ciceronian eloquence united to truth, and the joys of “temporary happiness,” which had enticed him for so long, united to that which is lasting (VI.6.9). Particularly in light of this encounter, Augustine evaluates his own rhetoric. He realizes that he has sought “only to please men, not to instruct them.” The time was ripe for a rhetorical change.

As Augustine reconsiders his rhetoric, he does so philosophically. Having “in some measure” moved beyond the intellectual limitations of his early rhetorical education (*ord.* I.9.27), Augustine now reappraises Roman *eruditio* – and its associated rhetorics – in light of a first principle discovered through questions of *causa* (I.4.11). This principle is the order, the unity and

distinction, of divine reality. While the question of “cause” was also present in the Roman sophistic schools (Pernot 224), Augustine does not ground his treatment of it on probability as was taught there. In *De ordine*, Augustine engages in this exercise to discover the objective truth about reality (Pacioni, “Order” 598). In doing so, however, he relates the particular to the general through “the fixed order of causes” (*certo causarum ordine*) (*ord.* I.4.11). Augustine uses the dialogue to demonstrate and discuss how one can discover and express the principle of order but moreover to propose what are its implications for the commonplace of Christian education and the study of rhetoric in particular.

In the dialogue, Augustine considers the *ratio* of culture, which he discerns through its purpose (*finem*), its discourse, and its pleasure (*ord.* II.12.35). The sophistic school had failed in its purpose because it ultimately led students to empty promises of “vanity” and “lying” (*conf.* IX.4.9). As stated above, Augustine learned to please men through his discourse but in a way that was separated from teaching them what is true. Like his fellow classmates, Augustine was led to seek pleasure in his youth but not the kind that lasts. Ciceronian philosophy gave more purpose and substance to Augustine’s discourse as it was directed toward wisdom, but its skepticism eventually disappointed him. Only through the teachings of Christian doctrine did Augustine find true purpose, true discourse, and true pleasure – that which leads to lasting happiness. Furthermore, it showed him how all things are in relationship to one another (*conf.* IV.11.16). All of creation, especially the reasonable actions of humanity, signifies the Creator. By understanding the relationships, the order, of things – to one another and to their first principle, God – one can discover and express a certain fullness of goodness, truth and beauty, and finally, be happy. Augustine then applies his understanding of order to Christian education.

Augustine utilizes these rhetorical authorities within his *philosophia* because he recognizes their “right order” (*ord.* II.19.51), that is, he sees how their *ratio* relates to the *Ratio* that “from on high rules over all things” (I.8.25). Divine order unites the goodness, truth and beauty found through these authorities, like through the disciplines, to the source of all goodness, truth and beauty: God. In light of this relationship between all created things, especially humanity, and the Creator, Augustine recognizes this element of unity and builds his *philosophia* upon it. Order, however, also has distinctions, for the goodness of human activity varies in proportion to Goodness itself. Some acts are better than others, being higher or more closely related to the Goodness that is God. Augustine proposes the practice of certain moral goods for those who pursue *philosophia* (II.8.25). Indeed, exercise of these goods is a condition of fully discovering and expressing intellectual truth (I.10.29; II.20.51). Yet, the fundamental unity is never lost. Augustine laments the lower use of things, such as the teaching of eloquence through use of immoral poetry, as in his early education, (*conf.* I.16.26); but he also uses poetry in *De ordine* because he discovers something useful in it for teaching about goodness (*ord.* I.8.24).²⁴ Lower things still fall within order. They still reflect “something” of the divine (II.1.3), even if this reflection is one of deprivation, as in the case of evil. For good use, however, they need to be lifted up. Augustine’s understanding of divine goodness and the height of the moral order thus have significant ethical implications for his educational approach. Learning to “be good” is essential to knowing what is true and to living the happy life.

²⁴ As an intellectual distinction of Augustine’s approach to poetry, he argues that, “praise of meter is one thing, but praise of meaning is another” (*ord.* II.11.34). Ideally, the eloquence of poetry (e.g., its form) ought to complement its wisdom (e.g., its content). Moreover, Augustine uses even the lower goods (vices) of poems to encourage his students toward higher things (virtues).

This is also the case with divine truth and proportionality within the intellectual order. Augustine finds some reasonable truth in the discourse of the sophistic school; he finds some reasonable truth in the work of Cicero. To a degree, they both represent acceptable human authorities (*ord.* II.9.27). Yet only through Christian teachers does Augustine discover a certain fullness of divine authority and reason. This is to say, not primarily in the individuals themselves, e.g., Ambrose, but rather in the God who speaks through them as the true Teacher (I.5.13). Indeed, only through Christian doctrine does he find “Truth itself” (I.4.10). In proportion to this measure, Augustine discovers truth through various authorities, as well as through the disciplines and through everyday discourse. As in the moral order, there is more truth found in some sources than in others (II.9.27), but they all signify truth to some degree, even if in their depravity, such as false arguments (II.5.13). Thus, Augustine can apply the principle of divine order to his evaluation of and proposal for a moral and intellectual erudition to meet the developing needs of the Late Roman Empire. In doing so, he discourages the lower use of things and seeks to cultivate the higher. Augustine tells his companions to “soar aloft” (*attollere*) – to be lifted up, over and above the fallen aspects of their selves (I.8.24). By adorning their souls with virtue and endowing them with knowledge, students unite themselves, through *philosophia*, to understanding whereby they can enjoy true happiness. This culture ethically and epistemologically grounds and forms one’s expressions.

Using Kennedy’s distinction between “primary” and “secondary” rhetoric (*Classical 2–3*), one could thus suggest that Augustine’s (primary) rhetoric of order, which situates his philosophical mode of life and study in *De ordine*, is fundamental to the transition that he makes in his use and understanding of (secondary) *rhetorica* in the text. The art of rhetoric – that which is to be taught – is given new significance as it is ordered. In *De ordine*, Augustine distinctly

arranges *rhetorica* according to its philosophical purpose, which is to “stir” (*commoveri*) the souls of the audience toward the fullness of divine truth and beauty (*ord.* II.13.38). Moreover, by positioning *rhetorica* among the other liberal arts and philosophy as a complete culture, Augustine argues for the integrity of knowledge, both practical and contemplative, that leads to wisdom and happiness. Indeed, one of the goals of *De ordine* was to teach the order proper to each particular thing (e.g., each individual art) as well as the order of things together (e.g., the unity of the arts) (I.1.1). The result is a philosophical rhetoric that teaches, delights and persuades the audience to discover and express the relationships of things – their goodness, truth and beauty – by moving their souls toward order. Augustine uses diverse sources and interpretive signs within his teaching to accomplish this goal. While such rhetoric includes and encourages the explicit praise of higher things in light of the fullness of divine reality, it also includes an implicit interpretive exercise by which all created things are seen in light of divine principles. As exhibited through the dynamics of the narrative, a speaker or teacher can use this kind of rhetoric by beginning with the shared assumptions that one has with the audience and then build upon it toward a fuller perception and explanation of divine reality. One can begin with anything, because everything expresses something of the divine. Thankfully, wisdom extends a hand to the sunken soul.

As discussed in Chapter I, rhetorical scholars generally agree that Augustine’s use and understanding of rhetoric is responsive to sophistic, Ciceronian and Christian elements of his historical moment. *De ordine* demonstrates this quality of responsiveness from an earlier time of Augustine’s life than is often studied, that is, through *Confessiones* and *De doctrina Christiana*. *De ordine* also particularly shows how Augustine applies use of these rhetorical authorities to a general Christian culture. As Hochschild suggests, the “cosmological framework” of *De ordine*

expresses a certain breadth of Augustine's thought and therefore this text is extremely insightful to the interpretation of his other works (87). Through his rhetoric of order, which includes his discussion of the arts but also contains the interdisciplinary unity of his rhetorical, philosophical and theological expressions, Augustine gives new meaning to everything. He discovers the divine significance of it all and seeks to share it with others. The dialogue is not merely an intellectual exercise; it is a sermon that teaches how to interpret the world in a way that has temporal and eternal consequences for human existence. God invites this interpretation through the divine communication of creation.

Because of the breadth and height of this rhetoric, or more specifically, because of its assumed relationship, i.e., order between the particular and the general (*ord.* II.19.51), this study describes Augustine's rhetoric of order as metarhetorical. Augustine demands that the greatest ethical and epistemological use of rhetoric is inherently united to an understanding of order. A rhetorician "needs to know" *ordo* "in order to be a rhetorician" (Murphy, "Metarhetoric" 202). For Augustine, order is a first principle "upon which a rhetorician bases his whole activity." In this way, Augustine's rhetoric reaches beyond his historically situated *rhetorica* to develop a use and understanding of discourse united to a distinctly Christian understanding of goodness, truth and beauty. As Shaeffer argues, in Augustine's appraisal "eloquence [secondary rhetoric] must be judged according to wisdom [primary rhetoric]" (297). Augustine presumes the ordered communication (the *invention*, *dispositio*, and *elocutio*) of the Creator – through all of creation and particularly through the soul – as a precursor to the discovery, arrangement and expression

of language by humanity.²⁵ Human speech is always, although in varying degrees of truth and beauty, a response to the God who truthfully and eloquently speaks first.

Augustine's rhetoric of order thus includes a tension between the human desire and ability to discover and express something about God, which he is certain of in his soul, without being able to do so completely or perfectly (*ord.* II.7.21; II.19.51). Throughout *De ordine*, Augustine demonstrates and discusses the teaching role of discourse, which occurs through internal speech acts within one's soul as well as through external speech acts that one has with others, to reflect and reflect on the fullness of divine reality. Both forms are necessary for the happy life, which has personal and social dimensions. We need to learn how to communicate well with ourselves as well as with others. In many ways, these two forms of discourse reflect the relationship between the disciplines of philosophy and rhetoric in *De ordine*. Augustine prepares orators to speak to others by showing them how to order their own souls, through a kind of contemplative persuasion.

In his consideration of Augustine's work, Auerbach asks, "What changes did the traditional forms of discourse incur under the stress of such [Christian] ideas, and can the new Christian discourse still be classified according to the system of ancient rhetoric...?" (32-33). Augustine's rhetoric of order demonstrates that "the old rhetoric was not enough" (Murphy, "Forward" xi). In Murphy's words, as Augustine "sets out to do his own thinking about the matter of 'expressing' what is known," he reaches beyond the current "rules" to develop something new (xi, xii). In doing so, however, he is "like an efficient gardener," who carefully prunes and replants elements of Late Roman thought while adapting them to the developing

²⁵ As Tracy notes, "The Augustinian understanding of *inventio* can only be understood in his theological terms and not in purely philosophical terms" (268). This study adds that it is also not understandable in purely rhetorical terms of Augustine's historical moment.

needs of a distinctly Christian culture (Topping, *Happiness* 6). He is a “jazz improvisationalist” who understands the nature of the notes so well that he can accommodate and augment them in the music without losing sight of the song (O’Donnell, “Authority”). Augustine applies his ingenuity to the particular dilemma before him. He attends to the details of his time and place. Yet, he grounds his rhetorical response within a bigger, more general, picture. He knows that whatever he teaches, delights and moves his present audience toward must be understood in light of “the whole of which it is a portion” (*ord.* II.19.51). This is also the case for how he speaks to his audience, so that even his sweet sounds signify something beyond themselves. Thus, he fits his use and understanding of rhetoric to the fullness (the sum) of divine reality. Consequently, it is a good, true and beautiful rhetoric, and it is one that ought to be taught.

Augustine’s understanding of the significance of rhetoric therefore depends upon such additional terms as *ordo* that situate and order the subject for his new purposes as well as elucidate his criticisms and praise of other rhetorical forms, i.e., sophistic and Ciceronian. This project suggests that study of such metarhetorical terms, many of which are interconnected in Augustine’s thought, are necessary for appreciating the depth of his contribution to rhetorical history. He develops a metarhetoric of order that in turn permits him to propose an ordered rhetoric that is appropriate for use in Christian discourse and education and that is directed toward the final end of Christian life, the fullness of happiness found in the enjoyment of God. “Order is that which will lead us to God” (*ord.* I. 9.27). *De ordine* is an insightful source to inform scholarship on the transition in Augustine’s thought from secular to religious rhetoric. His metarhetoric of order from this early period of his life, between his final conversion and formal resignation of his teaching position in the sophistic school, could likely shed light on his later writings on rhetoric, including Book IV of *De doctrina Christiana* and *Confessiones*. For

scholars interested in this historical period and in its relevance for our own time, there is much more to discover and express in Augustine. This study seeks to be a means to further the discussion.

Through *De ordine*, Augustine particularly invites contemporary scholars to consider our current education system through the lens of his *philosophia*. Most fundamentally, what is its purpose, and how does *what* we teach and *how* we teach it contribute to this purpose? If moral virtue and intellectual discovery are necessarily united in the human person, does our educational approach cultivate both? Also, do our current institutions demonstrate the integrity of philosophy and rhetoric in teaching and in practice? While such questions may seem removed from the every day demands of today's teachers, Augustine argues that they are fundamental. First principles inform our educational system whether we intentionally apply them or not, and our philosophical assumptions have grave implications for the moral and intellectual development of our students and our society. While Augustine's *philosophia* has theological roots, his approach is also profoundly philosophical and rhetorical. Our questions and answers concerning first principles have consequences for us all – practically and contemplatively, personally and socially.

Secular education has largely abandoned and neglected philosophical categories as an attempt to avoid disagreements and establish an environment of tolerance (Topping, *Case 18*). However, one could suggest that ignorance of the soul is ignorance of the human person. At the very least, Augustine invites secular education to reconsider the significance of philosophy. To do so, they must recognize the existing implications of having first neglected it and then decide how to approach it within a diverse society.

Rhetoric, as the art of discourse, ought to be part of the solution, for it has a way of “getting to the bottom of things” (Pernot 116). In Western culture, rhetoric has played a unique role as “one of the most consequential and serious of all academic subjects and of all human activities” (Ong 15), although this significance needs to be recovered. Augustine would suggest that this ought to be a philosophical rhetoric (as opposed to a strictly political one), in the sense that it finds a way to express the relationship between the particular needs of this time, place and audience and the general principles that necessarily teach and remind us of who we are. In this sense, it functions as epideictic rhetoric.

Furthermore, this rhetoric is an ethically constrained one, a matter of considering what we say and how we say it in light of first principles. As an example, this approach could foster a means for secular education to more fully consider the human soul in its content and forms of instruction as well as encourage religious education to take the positions of society seriously as it frames the content and form of its teachings. Philosophy and rhetoric work together to engage in reasonable discourse, not primarily of abstract topics but of how our assumptions about essential things shape the futures of our students and our society. What are the implications of our current educational practices, not primarily for the professional success of our students but for their happiness? How can we reform our educational content and instruction to more fully prepare our students to discover and express something of the kind of happiness that lasts?

Liberal arts schools have an opportunity to particularly facilitate this debate because they implicitly understand the order of things, their unity and distinction, through the arts. Perhaps by reminding students of this relationship, this order, between ways of knowing and speaking, we will equip them to resolve some of the dilemmas and depravities of the existing educational system. In a society preoccupied with pragmatism, this debate will be difficult. We have largely

lost our understanding of the significance of the arts. If we follow Augustine's reading, however, it is more likely that our culture has disintegrated the arts than found them to be obsolete.²⁶ We have the task before us to demonstrate and discuss their integrity and the implications that their unity has for a fuller discovery and expression of reality. Moreover, as we discern the purpose of education, Augustine invites us to see that not only knowledge, but also happiness, is at stake. *De ordine* addresses this reality "in which the tension of the whole person toward truth and happiness finds its complete satisfaction" (Pacioni, "Order" 598). He can teach us something of great value if we dispose ourselves to his wisdom and eloquence.

In the words of Augustinian scholar James J. O'Donnell, "What we can learn from Augustine...is intellectual and spiritual integrity: fidelity to scripture and the church that is at once complete and at the same time resourceful, imaginative, and enriched" ("Authority"). In other words, "To read Augustine is to encounter one who has made of orthodoxy, of 'thinking with the church', an adventure." Study of Augustine's work thus not only informs our understanding of historical dynamics of his time, but also when ingeniously considered, gives us much to consider for and appropriately apply to our own. In particular, Augustine invites us to recognize the seriousness of our own exigency: that the purpose of education – whatever motivates the discovery and expressions of our study and scholarship – has consequences for our culture and our happiness; it matters where we find our joy.

As a final note, one might also suggest that the educational exigency of our day relates to one of Christian evangelization, for we ultimately cultivate the disposition of the soul, and

²⁶ For example, one could suggest that secular schools today do teach and promote a certain kind of rhetoric commonly described as a freedom of expression that explicitly denies any measure by which we are made (Topping, *Case* 41). If religious teachers seek to defend objective goodness, truth and beauty created by God then they must do so in a way that demonstrates why such traditional teaching is "not a shackle but...a wellspring and vital power" for the human person (Pernot 145). A "conative" approach is perhaps most appropriate (Scanlon 39).

hopefully of a given society, for a divine planting – for conversion. In the words of Pope John Paul II, our time requires new “ardor, methods and expressions” for sharing the Gospel. The Pope’s message of a “new evangelization” comes at a time of increased secularism and hostility toward the Christian religion, even in places of the West that have strong cultural roots in the Christian tradition. In some ways, the Pope’s call is a distinctly rhetorical summons, for the Good, the True and the Beautiful do not change. Rather, the pontiff is encouraging all Christians to express the good news of the Gospel in fresh ways, to re-invite participation in the fullness of divine reality as revealed through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

As we consider the “what” and the “how” of this call to communion, to unity with God and neighbor in the divine life, for our distinct time and place, Augustine invites us to discern the available means of persuasion. Perhaps our effort to evangelize, like Augustine’s in *De ordine*, ought to be responsive, metarhetorical and ordered. By making our evangelical rhetoric responsive, we acknowledge that culture informs the way that we think and speak about reality as a society. To be effective we therefore must engage the culture of those that we seek to evangelize, particularly their assumptions and questions concerning reality and its relationship to the divine. This engagement can include both praise and criticism of prevailing practices in light of the Gospel but moreover ought to be an ingenious evaluation of what is good, true and beautiful within them. Diverse authorities and approaches may be useful, but in general, appeals to reason and revelation are privileged.

One might describe this responsive character of evangelization as an expression of mercy, seeking to find and share an opening, what Pope Francis describes as a kairoic moment, with others (6), for “divine assistance fulfills its office of mercy in favor of all peoples, and more abundantly than many imagine” (*ord.* II.10.29). To accomplish this rhetorical task well is

difficult, however, for it requires that one be able to relate lower things to higher things (preferably through broad learning in the liberal arts) as a means to bring others toward a fuller appreciation for divine reality. We may begin by meeting the audience “where they are,” but this is not the final goal. We must attend to the gradual development of mind, body and soul (e.g., the corporal and spiritual works of mercy) among the diverse groups that we seek to engage.

Such evangelical rhetoric also ought to be metarhetorical in that it uses the breadth of rhetorical knowledge and wisdom in union with the fullness of divine truth and beauty. In other words, it works with the other disciplines, such as theology, philosophy, science, and art, to present the “what” and the “how” of its particular message. Augustine understood the temptations of an isolated rhetoric, the appeal to lower or to limit one’s rhetorical practices for the sake of a rhetorical goal, i.e., persuasion separated from truth. By remaining in discourse with the other disciplines, this evangelical rhetoric is enriched by other ways of knowing and thinking. Eventually, the united work of these disciplines develops a dynamic discourse that teaches, delights and moves the audience through the good, the true and the beautiful, and ultimately toward Christ Himself, the divine authority that relates all things through the humility of the Incarnation (*ord.* II.9.27). We may start with a response to the particulars of a given rhetorical situation – drawing attention to good actions, truthful discourse and sweet speech – but we move toward unity, toward universals, through a metarhetoric that uses the natural to point to the supernatural.

Most fundamentally, this evangelical rhetoric is ordered; it relates particular goods, truths and beauties to the One who is goodness, truth and beauty itself. Through reason and revelation, we relate the givens of a particular moment to that which is beyond the givens of a particular moment. In this way, our discourse is constrained by divine truth, by an objective reality that is

both discoverable in everything and beyond everything. We willingly ground our rhetorical efforts, which may be very ingenious and eloquent, on a “given” truth (Weigel 44), on that which is revealed to us through faith and through reason, and not solely on an invented one. Perhaps this quality of Christian discourse is strange to the secularist, although it ought not be. As Augustine has shown, this way of thinking is natural to reason, to philosophy (*ord.II.5.16*). From a Christian perspective, we foremost speak because we believe, and we believe because the Word of God has spoken to us. Divine mercy unites to divine justice, and our intentions and desires are always subject to divine authority. We measure our rhetoric in relationship to the One who spoke first, as a response to the divine logos.

Amidst the difficulties of evangelism today, we must not despair of finding the right audience for such evangelical speech, for every heart is restless until it rests in the Lord (*conf. I.1.1*). We all long for a peace that the world cannot give. Indeed, “the Church does not *have* a mission...the Church *is* a mission, and everything the Church does is ordered to that mission,” which is the proclamation of divine truth (Weigel 85–86). As George Weigel writes in his timely book, *Evangelical Catholicism*, our expressions unite “the criterion of truth” to “the criterion of mission,” (93) inviting others to “holiness” in imitation of Christ (105). In Augustine’s *philosophia*, the disciplines of philosophy and rhetoric work together to inform, frame and bolster this evangelical effort. May we follow him in using them wisely to cultivate the ground for a divine planting.

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