



Faculty of Languages
Nicolaus Copernicus
University in Torun



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Scrinium Augustini – International Symposium and Workshop on Augustine’s Letters, Torun 25-26.06.2015

(sponsored by the National Science Centre, Poland)

Faculty of Languages, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, Collegium
Maius, Fosa Staromiejska 3, room 307

25.06.2015 (Thursday)

9.30 – 11.00

Chairing - Danuta Shanzer (University of Vienna)

a) Rafał Toczko (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń): „**Debating through the letters vs. live discussions. The patterns of *ars disputandi* in Augustine's correspondence**”

In my paper I put under scrutiny the questions of the peculiarity of letter writing and of using letters as a medium of thought exchange as they are reflected in the correspondence of saint Augustine of Hippo. Putting the Augustinian stance in the context of the ancient epistolary theories and practices, I highlight the characteristic features of his thinking on the letter as a genre, its in-between position, public dimension, advantages and disadvantages for a Christian writer.

Using the scrinium.umk.pl tool I make an analysis and systematization of all the important passages in the *corpus epistularum Augustini* touching upon the reflective remarks on the process of writing and reading letters. The major part of my paper is dedicated to the discussion of those passages and drawing conclusions based on them. The differences between oral, live debates, discussions through letters and written treatises are of special interest here. The shifting preferences of Augustine are presented and explained. The outcome of this study is to propose a full picture of Augustine’s thinking on the epistolary genre as a medium of debates and discussions with different groups of addressees.

b) Sigrid Mratschek (University of Rostock): “**The Unwritten Letters of Augustine of Hippo**” (the paper will be read in the author’s absence)

11.00 – 11.30 - *coffee break*



11.30 – 13.00

Chairing – Mateusz Stróżyński

a) Gillian Clark (University of Bristol) – „**Letters and the City of God**”

Scrinium offers a very useful category of ‘autoreferences to Augustine’s works’. For *de civitate Dei*, these include a letter first published in 1939: *ep.* 1A* to Firmus. In this letter, sent with a complete copy of the 22 books, Augustine advises Firmus on how to have them bound into *codices* which correspond to the overall structure of the argument; asks him to allow further copying; and encourages further correspondence. *Ep.* 1A* is instructive for several reasons. It shows the practicalities of exchanging letters and distributing books. It is a clear reminder that Augustine’s letter-collection is incomplete: he did not have time to catalogue his letters (or his sermons) as he did his books, so there are gaps and uncertainties, and new discoveries are possible. Until 1975, the addressee of *ep.* 1A* was assumed to be Firmus the priest (*ep.* 184A) who had carried letters for Augustine; but that was disproved by *ep.* 2*, one of the ‘Divjak letters’. Together, *ep.* 1A* and *ep.* 2* show Augustine using letters to build a community of readers who would, he hoped, be citizens of the city of God

b) Elia Marinova (Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”): „**What Good Are the Books“? Knowledge, Will, and Judgment in Augustine’s Letter to Firmus (Ep. 2*)**

Letter 2* to the Carthaginian senator Firmus reveals some interesting aspects of Augustine’s way of using his correspondence, especially if set against the major group of letters discussing the circulation and the effect of his own works. When Augustine sent about the end of 426 a full copy of the *City of God* to the catechumen Firmus, he hoped in this way to give him assistance for receiving the sacrament of Rebirth. The only recompense for his literary labour, however, were some flattering comments of Firmus on Books I-X, as well as sophisticated excuses for delaying the final step to baptism. Augustine’s disappointment culminated in the question what good, then, these books were, if they failed in convincing Firmus to enter the City of God.

The paper is focused on this question in the context of the evolution of Augustine’s earlier views on the method of catechizing people like Firmus, for whom books were the most effective means of moving them to associate the Church. Another point of discussion is the role of the letter in cases when a person did not act according to this knowledge; if books failed to persuade a hesitating convert, how could a letter have better chances to move the minds “urging them to do what they already know ought to be done“? Correspondingly, a starting point of our questioning is the remarkable way in which Augustine built the structure of his letter around the notions of knowledge, will and judgment, even as to present a vivid portrait of Firmus’ family. As a letter of rebuke and exhortation, *Ep.* 2* did not confine itself to directing to the neglected books of *De civitate Dei*, but rather represented a

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polyphonic answer using the argumentation of Augustine's last works, in the first place *De gratia et libero arbitrio* and *De correptione et gratia*.

13.00 – 14.30 *lunch*

14.30-16.30

Chairing – Mathijs Lamberigts

a) David Hunter (University of Kentucky): **“Family Matters: Augustine’s Letters as a Source for his Views on Marriage and Family Life”**

Augustine’s letters provide the modern reader with a unique opportunity to see him applying the principles of his moral theology in pastoral practice. This paper will present an overview of Augustine’s discussions of marriage and familial relations as they are found in his correspondence. Special attention will be given to his letters to Proba (130), Ilarius (157), Boniface (220 et al.), and Ecdicia (262). While Augustine is perhaps better known for his insistence on the pernicious effects of *concupiscentia carnis* on sexual relations, Augustine’s letters show him to be equally concerned with marriage and family life as an institution that provides for social stability, the education of children, and growth in holiness.

b) Przemysław Nehring (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń): **“Misbehaviour of clergy in the light of Augustine’s letters”**

Augustine as the bishop of Hippo charged the clergy under his jurisdiction with the obligation to meet high moral standards. For him, it seemed *self-evident that the deacons and presbyters should live in monastic communities and abide by the same rules as those observed by monks: they were expected to live a celibate life and relinquish their private property*. However, the corpus of Augustine’s correspondence includes several letters which demonstrate that the clergy of all ranks were not always able to meet these stringent requirements. Their transgressions noted by Augustine usually fall into the following three categories: sexual misconduct, pecuniary matters or violence. In my paper, I will discuss each of these categories as they are evidenced in the letters and focus on the various types of offences allegedly committed by members of the clergy of all ranks, the disciplinary procedures instituted or advised by Augustine and his perception of fault, punishment and the injured party in the discussed cases. The analysis of several case studies will contribute to the study of episcopal authority in North Africa in the time of Augustine (exercised by the bishops for just or wicked purposes) and the problems which occurred at the interface of the secular and ecclesiastical jurisdictions.

16.30 – 17.00 *coffee break*

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17.00- 18.30

Chairing: Stanisław Adamiak

a) Angela Zielinski Kinney (University of Vienna): **“From Ivory Tablets to Honeybees: Deciphering Augustine's Letter to Romanianus (Ep. 15)”**

Augustine's fifteenth epistle is a short missive written to Romanianus, his patron and friend from childhood. The letter prompting Augustine's response is not extant; using Augustine's response, however, one can piece together the type of letter Romanianus must have written to elicit this reply.

Augustine's letter is bipartite. The first half concerns realia, especially the material upon which the letter is written. This section raises a number of questions – among them, why does he spend so much time discussing the letter as a physical object?

The second half of the letter is an exhortation to contemplation, including a quotation from the *Aeneid*. Romanianus must have shared some good news with his friend, as Augustine encourages him to consider the value and dangers of his earthly success in a paragraph containing Christian, philosophical, and pagan reminiscences. The threat of death looms over this section of the letter, which ends with a curious line about the risk of bees drowning in their own honey. My analysis of this paragraph attempts to answer questions about the nature of Romanianus's good fortune as well as Augustine's rhetorical methods of engaging his friend and patron. I will also discuss possible sources and discursive literary contexts for the letter's closing image.

b) Bernard Marciniak (The Higher School of Hebrew Philology, Torun): **„Health/hygiene in Augustine's letters”**

The subject of health and hygiene in Augustine's letters seems to be marginal. Indeed, amongst theological, disciplinary, philosophical, literary and many other issues he takes up in his letters, the issue of health occupies a little space. Sufficiently, though, one may form a picture of the state of Augustine's health and, above all, his knowledge of health matters.

Secondly, the biblical doctrine on the Body of Christ, which is the Church, and a widely spread metaphor of the health of this Body, the bishop of Hippo is referring to, and developing into a complete doctrine, for entire centuries becomes justification of the Church practice towards wrongbelievers, schismatics and pagans. Hence one may say that the subject of the history of the Inquisition has its roots in Augustinian metaphor of health.

Besides the statements of purely autobiographical character the use of metaphors constitutes the biggest part of the article. In total 28 Augustine's texts were found (among them two by the Pope Innocent I) referring to Priscillianism, Manichaeism, Donatism, Pelagianism, Judaism and other issues falling within the scope of concern for the unity of individual church communities or the integrity of individual members. Hence the brought up issues: pride and doggedness, living in monastic

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community, vocation for evangelical life. In the letters there are four texts justifying administrating disciplinary measures according to healing procedures, in the face of all pathological occurrences.

Moreover, the article attempts to answer the questions: What image of Augustine's health emerges from his letters? What issues does Augustine describe in medical language? What image of the level of medicine in the days of Augustine occurs? To what extent is Augustine competent when talking on medical subjects, where from does he draw the standards for formulating doctrinal-social issues? What biblical texts are an inspiration for him?

20.00 – *reception*, restaurant in the Higher School of Hebrew Philology, Torun

26.06.2015 (Friday)

9.30 – 11.00

Chairing: Rafał Toczko (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń)

a) Mathijs Lamberigts (KU Leuven): "**African's conditioned obedience to Rome**" **The exchange of letters between Innocent and the Africans in the context of the Pelagian Controversy**

In quite a lot of literature on Zosimus, the successor of Innocent as bishop of Rome, Zosimus is described as arrogant because of his rather critical attitude towards the African bishops who condemned Pelagius and Caelestius in 416, thus reacting against a decision of their confreres at Diospolis who set free Pelagius. Indeed, Zosimus explicitly condemns the way in which the Africans, without taking into account any defense from the side of both Pelagius and Caelestius, decided to condemn both.

The African bishops were upset. They reacted by condemning Pelagius in two Episcopal gatherings, one held in Carthage, the other in Milevis. The two gatherings informed Rome of their decision (*Epistulae* 175-176). Furthermore, five bishops, including Aurelius of Carthage and Augustine of Hippo, explained in a detailed way why they wanted Pelagius to be condemned (*Epistula* 177).

Innocent was very happy with the African appeal to Rome, considering himself as the defender of the Roman primacy. In this paper I first will pay attention to the way in which the African bishops address themselves to the bishop of Rome, successor of Peter and Paul. Then, I pay attention to the pope's reply (*Epistulae* 29-31; in the *Corpus Augustini, Epistulae* 181-183). I will present the way in which Innocent considers himself as the successor of the two apostles, thus claiming that the Africans rightly appealed to Rome and in fact had to do so. By way of excursus, I will compare the self-image of Innocent with that of Zosimus, thus showing that the so-called arrogance of Zosimus comes very near to the self-confidence of Innocent.



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In a next stage, I will argue that Innocent was not really familiar with or aware of the details of the African positions on original sin and the issue of the baptism of children, very much related to it. In my opinion, this unfamiliarity of Innocent with these burning issues (at least in the eyes of the Africans) makes clear that the African doctrine of original sin was not yet spread all over the Western Roman Empire and was certainly unknown to the bishops present at Diospolis.

I thus suggest that Innocent supported the African condemnations for opportunistic reasons, and that his own positions on the fall of Adam and its consequences cannot be described as identical to those of Augustine c.s.: Innocent acts as a self-confident man who likes to be praised and respected, but who is not very much aware of the consequences of the doctrine of original sin.

Innocent's support of the African position in a sense can also be interpreted as an implicit or explicit support his own position as leader of Western Latin Christianity.

b) Jennifer Ebbeler (University of Texas): **„Augustine's Letters and the Pelagian Controversy”** - (the paper will be read in the author's absence)

11.00 – 11.30 – *coffee break*

11.30 – 13.00

Chairing: David Hunter (University of Kentucky)

a) Danuta Shanzer (University of Vienna): **„Evodius' Ghosts: Ruminations on Augustine, Ep. 158”**

This paper's starting-point is Augustine, *Ep.* 158 (414/415 CE) a letter of Evodius', Thagastan, former *agens in rebus*, Augustine's interlocutor on the soul, his co-monastic, and eventually Bishop of Uzalis, and custodian and promoter of the translated relics of Stephen. The letter stands first in an Evodian dossier that includes 4 letters to Augustine and 4 replies from Augustine. The paper will include a short summary of the content and structure of *Ep.* 158 and will also take Augustine's reply, *Ep.* 159, into consideration.

Letters can point in many different directions, particularly a letter as layered and even “zerstreut” as this one, whose very form reflects its author's agitation and mental excitement. Usually read as a philosophical letter, it is also a letter about the preternatural—about ghosts—and has been studied through that lens by Schmitt. After a brief survey of the scholarship on it, I will unashamedly pursue various perhaps eccentric lines of interpretation. I plan to discuss the intellectual culture of the question, what happens to questioning when death's boundary intervenes, loss, love, spiritual channeling, anxiety about sexuality, and homosociality. I then move outwards to the ways in which a series of narrated deaths followed by urgent discussion and questioning invert the structure of a



Platonic Περὶ Ψυχῆς. I also hope to discuss (underexplored) connections with Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram*.

b) Mateusz Stróżyński (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań): **"Neoplatonism in Augustine's Letters"**

In *Confessions 7* Augustine described his encounter with *libri Platoniorum* (Plotinus and, perhaps, Porphyry) as a crucial step in his conversion and his first works written in Cassiciacum were heavily focused on Plotinus' ideas. One of long debates among students of Augustine concerns the place of Neoplatonism in his thought. Some tend to see Neoplatonism as an early phase in Augustine's development, something he grew out of later on; others argue that he held Neoplatonic views also in his later works, even against mainstream Catholic beliefs. This paper is an attempt to give a general view on the place of Neoplatonic ideas in Augustine's letters throughout his life. In this brief outline, I will present three thematic areas in the letters, in which Augustine uses Neoplatonic ideas and arguments: first, relationship between Christianity and philosophy in general, second, the difference between the spiritual and the material, and third, the nature and origins of the human soul. It seems that those ideas appear in two phases: in the early letters, written before his ordination as a priest (386-391), and in the letters written somewhere between 410 and 420. Interestingly, philosophical issues are almost entirely absent in between those two phases and in the last decade of Augustine's life. The comparison of the role played by Neoplatonism in early and later letters may be a invaluable contribution to the wider discussion about Augustine's Neoplatonism.

13.00-14.30 *lunch*

14.30 – 16.00

Chairing: Elia Marinova (Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski")

a) Stanisław Adamiak (University of Warsaw): **"Asking for Human Mercy. Augustine's intercession with the men in power"**

Augustine of Hippo appears in many of his letters as a towering figure teaching, encouraging and quite often correcting the others. However, there are cases when Augustine is forced to take a much more humble approach. This happens when he writes to the men in power, imperial and municipal officials, or simply rich people exercising their will over others. Never does the bishop of Hippo ask for anything for himself, but several times he makes requests in the name of the others, usually threatened with various punishments, including the death penalty. Augustine sometimes asks for mercy for people who are innocent, sometimes for those whose guilt is beyond doubt. Augustine's correspondence shows us the down to earth details of the everyday life of the Roman Africa of the early 5th century. We learn about people who get in trouble with the law due to their poverty, low social standing or others' dishonesty; we observe those who seek asylum in churches. The paper refers the general

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attitude of Augustine towards civil justice, presents several case studies of his intercession on behalf of the others and tries to assess the efficacy of such intercession.

b) Philip Polcar (University of Vienna): **"Tu videris! - Mode of communication between Augustine and Nebridius in ep. 3"**

Augustine's first extant epistle to Nebridius (Ep. 3) is one of 9 letters that bear witness to the warmhearted intellectual relationship of the two men. At first glance the letter appears to be in line with the other surviving letters in the dossier: Though Nebridius' preceding letter is lost, it becomes clear that it had initiated a discussion about the beata vita, and Augustine provides a dialogic soliloquy about questions ranging from whether Nebridius really believes Augustine is a beatus, to how sensuality acts against the soul and cognition. At the end of the letter, Augustine presents Nebridius with a few grammatical problems. The pattern is familiar: Nebridius usually sent either a thesis or multiple questions for Augustine to discuss. After a closer look, one notices that the tone of the letter is odd. When in Ep. 3.5 Augustine finally starts discussing the normative infinitive of several simple verbs, it becomes clear, that the professor of rhetoric in Milan, is not that serious. The goal of the paper will be to explore whether the tone of the letter may perhaps be playful, and analyze the outcome with regard to the two friends' strategies of philosophical communication. Are there some real problems hidden within the joking lines? How might the letter have been received by Nebridius? Is it truly a friendly letter or might there be some hidden reproach in it? What does Augustine really mean, when he says "tu videris" (Ep.3,5,100) to Nebridius?

16.00 – 17.00 – „*Scrinium Augustini and beyond*” - the „round table” on the evaluation and possible continuation and afterlife of the *Scrinium Augustini Project*

Chairing: Przemysław Nehring and Rafał Toczko (Nicolaus Copernicus University)

Subjects to discuss:

- a) How it all began? The story of the Scrinium Augustini Project.
- b) Where have we landed? The assessment of pros and cons of Scrinium Augustini.
 - What is your opinion about the general grid of the themes proposed by Scrinium?
 - How helpful has Scrinium already been in your work?
 - What obstacles have you met during your work with Scrinium?
 - How would you evaluate the interface/engine of the website?

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c) Which way to go from here? The possibilities of developing Scrinium Augustini Project.

- What do you think the next direction of research with the use of this instrument should be: other works of Augustine or other epistolary corpus?

- What add-ons would you suggest for the existing website (e.g.: maps, detailed statistics of addressees, English translations etc.)

27.06.2015 (Saturday)

A full-day trip to Malbork (guided visit in the biggest Teutonic Knights castle in Europe) and Gdańsk. (depart – 8.00 a.m., return – ca. 8.00 p.m)

All participants of the conference will be lodged in the guest rooms of the Higher School of Hebrew Philology, ul. Poznańska 49, 87-100 Toruń

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