LACAN AND AUGUSTINE'S *DE MAGISTRO*

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Strewn liberally throughout Lacan's corpus are references to the Church Fathers. One example comes towards the end of the first year of his 'seminar' 1953-1954 (henceforth S1), where there is a discussion of St Augustine's *De magistro*[1]; a treatise, to use the late Professor Burnyeat's elegant and exact expression, on the complexity of understanding[2]. The work bears an important relationship to Augustine's exegesis of scripture, which was semiotic in character, and to his view of the way man acquires knowledge, including self-knowledge, and its relation to belief. Here he introduces, for the first time, his celebrated theory of interior illumination and raises questions about language which have, in our time, preoccupied thinkers as dissimilar as Wittgenstein and Derrida[3].

Lacan professed to having already read the *De magistro* before the discussion recorded in 1954 and said that traces of what he remembered of Augustine's text can be found in his previous lecture[4]. He expresses a marked enthusiasm for the treatise, saying he had read the treatise again ('*relire*') for this occasion (S1 F 273/E 248).

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[1] S1 E 247-60 (23rd June 1954).

[2] Jean Grondin described it as a dialogue 'on the *inconvenience* of language for thought' but this rather misses the point (*The Philosophy of Gadamer* 133, trans K. Plant. Chesham: Aumen, 2003).

[3] Madec assembles some of the key passages from Augustine's works on the theme of interior illumination in his complementary note 6 (1976: 543-5). The doctrine has been widely interpreted and seems to rest, to some extent, on Plotinus *Enn.* VI.4.[22].12. On its relevance for modern linguistics see: Mandouze, A. (1975). Quelques principes de "linguistique augustinienne" dans le De magistro. Communication à la VIe Conférence internationale d'études patristiques, Oxford, 1971. *Forma futuri. Studi in onore del Cardinale Michele Pellegrino* 789-95. Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo.

[4] If Lacan is referring to his lecture of 16th June 1954, then traces of Augustine's thought are not immediately apparent. However, there are various remarks throughout S1 on aspects of language and language learning, an account of which Augustine had given in the *Confessions* (I. viii. 13), and which Wittgenstein famously used as a stalking horse to open the *Philosophical Investigations*. As Burnyeat (1987: 4-5 and n.4) shows, the way PI 1-5 is normally read (e.g. Baker and Hacker 1980) implies that Augustine's account in the *Confessions* is his earlier, more primitive view, one he later corrects in the *De magistro*. But this is clearly not the case as the *De magistro* pre-dates the *Confessions*. To this we might add that it also mistakes Augustine's theological purpose in the *Confessions* for autobiographical memory. See Baker, G. P. and Hacker, P. M. S. (1980). *Wittgenstein. Understanding and Meaning* 61. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

> ...in Saint Augustine's text, which is one of the most glorious one could read...Everything I have been telling you about the signifier and the signified is there, expounded with a sensational lucidity...
>
> <div align="right">Lacan S1: E249</div>

He returns to the *De magistro* in the following two lectures that year[5] and at various intervals over the next few years[6]. This paper aims to give some background on Augustine's text in relation to the manuscript tradition and the editions, its structure and on the immediate context of Augustinian studies in Paris at the time of Lacan's discussion.

Augustine's *De magistro*

The *De magistro* is a relatively short work which Augustine wrote in 389, two years after his baptism. Although not the most important of his writings it nonetheless became the subject of medieval commentaries. Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure both wrote a treatise of the same name[7]. In it, Augustine argues that nobody can teach another to understand something. He does this by discussing the way we learn by means of 'signs'. Augustine argues that all words, not just nouns, are signs and distinguishes between what a word signifies (its meaning) and the way it signifies something. While words can be used to signify things to another and stimulate another to think, knowledge in the sense of understanding involves 'seeing' things within. This can only be brought about by God who illumines the mind. He presents his doctrine of the interior teacher with an allusion to Matt. xxiii, 10: '*quod unus omnium magister in caelis sit*' (there is one in heaven who is the teacher of all; *De mag.* XIV.46, 22-3[8]). The doctrine is repeated in other of his works[9]. From Aristotle the theme of signs had recurred regularly in Greek philosophy and it became the focal point of Stoic-Epicurean debate (Markus 1957: 60). These accounts throw into relief the originality of Augustine's contribution.

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[5] S1 (30th June 1954) E 262-3; 264; 266-7; (7th July 1954) E 280.

[6] S2 (15th June 1955) E 291-2 and (29th June 1955) E 309-10; S3 (30th November 1955) E 32 and (8th February 1956) E 137.

[7] One interesting aspect of Thomas' treatment is the Aristotelian distinction he makes between the active aspects of the mind (*intellectus agens*) and the passive (*intellectus possibilis*). It leads him to the view that the student can be taught because he is self-active, see: Egan (1940: 49-52, 79). On the background: Rist, J. (1963). Notes on Aristotle De Anima 3.5 *The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter* 444.

[8] See the complementary note 7 in Madec where he usefully assembles passages from Augustine's other works on the theme '*unus est magister vester Christus*' (Madec 1976: 545-8).

[9] See Colleran (1950: 223 n. 12).

The manuscripts and editions

Although six earlier editions[10], all published between 1491 and 1576 pre-date it, that of the Maurists' (sometimes referred to as μ) was the first critical edition. That is to say, it was an attempt to establish an accurate text from a review of a number of manuscripts[11]. It was printed at Paris by Muguet in 1679 (republished by Gaume in 1836), the first of an eleven-volume edition of the complete works of Augustine that the Benedictines prepared and published between 1679 and 1700[12] (c541-564). In 1841 Migne re-published the Maurist text with a few new MSS readings, as volume XXXII (c1193-1220) of the *Patrologia Latina* (PL). In 1970, Daur published a critical edition in the *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (CCL) volume XXIX (157-203)[13]. The latter is substantially the work of Martin Skutella, who earlier had edited Augustine's *Confessions* in the series *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana* (1934)[14]. Skutella had prepared the text of *De magistro* but died before completing the introduction. On his death, his widow handed over the preparatory work on the introduction and the draft edition to Daur who claimed responsibility solely for the punctuation. In the meantime, in 1961, without having recourse to Skutella's preliminary work, Günther Weigel edited the text in the series *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (referred to either as CSEL, the Vienna Corpus or simply V) volume LXXVII. Daur's

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[10] The most important of these early editions are: b (= in the opera omnia edited by Amerbach, Petri and Froben, Basel 1505-1506); Er. (= in the first volume of the Erasmus' edition, also published in Basel by Froben 1528-1529); and Lou (= the Louvain edition tome I, published in Antwerp by Plantin in 1576). Amerbach had begun publishing Augustine's works in 1489 from German and French MSS, eventually publishing the entire corpus in eleven volumes in collaboration with Johann Petri and Johann Froben. Most regard this as having become, henceforth, the standard version. However, Visser argues that it was, in fact, Erasmus' edition that became the basis for all future editions of Augustine as it was reprinted no fewer than ten times, see: Visser, A. (2008). Reading Augustine through Erasmus' Eyes: Humanist Scholarship and Paratextual Guidance in the Wake of the Reformation *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* 28: 67-90; also see Petitmengin, P. (1998). Editions princeps et Opera omnia de saint Augustin *Augustinus in der Neuzeit* (eds) K. Flasch and D. de Courcelles. Turnhout: Brepols. On the background to the Basel editions see Sebastiani, V. (2014). Froben Press Editions (1505-1559) in the Holdings of the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies Library: A Brief Survey *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 37 (3): 213-34.

[11] On the background see: Kukula, R. C. (1890). *Die Mauriner Ausgabe des Augustinus.* Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Literatur und der Kirche im Zeitalter Ludwigs XIV. Vienna: Tempsky; Wilmart, A. (1931), La tradition des grands ouvrages de S. Augustin *Studi Agostiniani* 257-315; Clark, A. K. (1979). Unity and Method in Augustine's "De Magistro" *Augusttinian Studies* 8: 1-10; McDonald, P. (1980). The Maurist Edition of St. Augustine *American Benedictine Review* 31 (2): 153-81; Gorman, M. M. (1981). The Maurist Manuscripts of Four Major Works of Saint Augustine, with some remarks on their editorial techniques *Revue Bénédictine* 91: 238-79; and Coyle, T. J. Van (1990). Maurist Manuscript Sources for Augustine's Two Treatises "De Moribus" *Augustiniana* 40 (1): 3-18.

[12] For the dates of publication of each volume see Joseph de Ghellinck (1930: 767): L'édition de saint Augustin par les Mauristes *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 57 (9): 746-74.

[13] Although these series tend to overlap one another, V replacing the earlier Maurist and PL volumes, and CCL in its turn replacing some of the volumes in V, each series has volumes which are the only critical editions of particular works. Many learned reviews of individual volumes have shown that in both the V and CCL series editorial competence has varied considerably.

[14] Skutella's edition of the *Confessions* was re-published in the series Bibliothèque Augustinienne (1962) with extensive notes by A. Solignac and a French translation by E. Tréhorel.

edition gives μ, PL and V pagination in the margin, so comparing these editions is relatively easy.

The manuscript tradition is discussed in some detail by Weigel (ix-xxix); and more briefly in the *Einleitung* by Daur (143-53). There are a vast number of codices that contain the work. The Maurists used seven MSS[15], though none prior to the twelfth century, and four editions[16]. Weigel examined many further MSS and identified forty-nine as more important. Of these he selected twelve which he considered primary and thirteen secondary. Nearly all date from the ninth to the twelfth century with one from the fifteenth. Daur lists ninety-three (340-43) and follows the Vienna edition closely, using the same primary MSS and the same *sigla* as Weigel, although he dates some of the MSS slightly differently and collates five further codices[17]. Daur does not refer in his introduction to Weigel's secondary MSS and disagrees with him on five passages[18]. Weigel's *stemma codicum* or family tree shows that all the MSS come from one source (*Π*) with two families or branches. These two 'hyparchetypes' or ancestors are signified with ψ and ξ. Three MSS descend directly from ψ as do three further hyparchetypes from which six MSS descend; these are, respectively, *S* and *T*, *P* and *Q*, and *A* and *G*. The second branch (ξ) Weigel sees as the source of three MSS; but he also sees the influence of ξ on all three of the sub-archetypes that descend from ψ.

As both his *consensus codicum* and *stemma* show, Daur draws a rather more complex picture of the genealogy of the MSS. This is not just the result of collating five additional codices but also because he: (i) adds seven hyparchetypes; (ii) re-traces the descent of P and Q through ψ, as well as through υ; and (iii) traces θ through what is, in effect, a further branch rather than from ψ. From this third division he sees *F*, *A*, *G*, and *b* descending. This demands that he posits the original source, which he calls Ω, prior to Weigel's *Π*.

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[15] 'Liber Fiscannensis', Rotomagensis (Rouen) Bibliothèque municipale 477, f. 69-83, saec. XII; 'Michaelinus' Abrincatensis (Avranches) Bibliothèque municipale 163 f. 3ff, saec. XI-XII ; 'Victorinus' Paris Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal 350 f. 325-42^v, saec. XV; 'Beccensi' (Bec) ; 'Navarricis' Paris Bibliothèque Mazarine 1639, f.323^v-329, saec. XIV; 'Remensis' (R)eims Bibliothèque municipale 392, f. 1-31, saec. IX; and 'Vaticanus' Vatican Apostolic Library 445, f. 82-88^v, saec. XV.

[16] Listed in the *lectiones variantes* on page XLVIII as: Bad. (= a in Daur: *Opuscula diui Augustini longe prestantissima cum duplici indicio rursus parrhisiis coimpressa per Jodocum Badium*, 1502); Am. (= b in Daur); Er. and Lov. (= Lou in Daur). For all save Bad. (a) see: op. cit. n. 10.

[17] Not four as Bieler (1978) suggests: Corpus Christianorum *Scriptorium* 30 (1): 65. They are: *H* = Monacensis (Munich) 6331/Freising 131, saec. X; *J* = Monacensis (Munich) 6322, saec. X-XI; *O* = Paris Bibl. n.a. lat.371/from the abbey of Floreffe, Namaur, saec. XI; *X* = Vindobonensis (Vienna) Nat. Libr. 1009/from St Georg zu Weltenburg, saec. XV; and *F* = Florence Laurentianus (Florence) S. Croce XVII d 7, saec. XII.

[18] Daur 144-7. In his review Bieler mostly comes down on the side of Daur (ibid).

English translations

At least five English translations of the *De magistro* can be found. In 1924 a version by Francis Tourscher, with notes, was published as *The Philosophy of Teaching, a Translation of St. Augustine's De Magistro* (Pennsylvania: Villanova College)[19]; in 1938 another appeared, this time by George Leckie under the title *Concerning the Teacher and On the Immortality of the Soul by St Aurelius Augustine* (New York: D. Appleton-Century); in 1950, Joseph Colleran brought out a translation of the Maurist edition as No. 9 in the Ancient Christian Writers series (New York: Newman Press); in 1953 John Burleigh made a translation which was published in *Augustine: Earlier Writings* as volume VI in the series The Library of Christian Classics (London: SCM Press). And in 1968 Robert Russell produced a translation of Weigel's text with a short introduction (Washington: Catholic University of America Press).

Lacan, the Assumptionists and the Augustine congress in Paris

Augustine's *De magistro* was discussed by Lacan on 23rd June 1954 and forms chapter xx of the published version of S1. The relevance of the *De magistro* for S1 had been brought to Lacan's attention by Louis Beirnaert, one of a small group of Jesuits involved with Lacan. He expounds some early passages from the text with interjections from Lacan[20].

For those studying Augustine 1954 was a particularly important year. Celebrations were taking place to mark the sixteenth centenary of the birth of the saint, including an international congress from 21st to 24th September at the Institut Catholique in Paris. By that time, Paris had become the centre of Augustinian studies, due largely to the efforts of the Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption (Assumptionists). The congregation had been founded in France in 1843 by Emmanuel d'Alzon. After the expulsion of the religious orders and congregations from France in 1880, they established a seminary in Louvain. There they started building a library and in 1902 began publishing the *Revue augustinienne*[21]. Their scholarly

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[19] Fr. Tourscher was an Augustinian and the librarian at Villanova College (later University), Pennsylvania, from 1923 until his death in 1939. His work on the *De magistro* spawned a number of interesting studies by students at the college. These include 'Saint Augustine's De Magistro' by Mary Leobalda Bowman (1929); Egan (1940); 'The Nominal Forms in Saint Augustine's De Magistro' by Marie Estelle McCafferty (1942); 'Vocabulary of the De Magistro of St. Augustine. A Semasiological Study' by Mary William Joseph McMenamin (1943); and 'Figures of Amplification, Repetition, and Sound in Saint Augustine's De Magistro' by Mary Gregory Campbell (1943).

[20] For an account of Beirnaert's involvement with Lacan see Agnes Desmazières (2014). Spiritualité Jésuite et Psychanalyse Lacanienne Louis Beirnaert, Lecteur d'Ignace de Loyola *Jésuites Français et Sciences Humaines (Années 1960). Actes de la Journée d'Études Organisée par le Conseil Scientifique de la Collection Jésuite des Fontaines et l'Équipe Religions, Sociétés et Acculturation du Laboratoire de Recherche Historique Rhône-Alpes. Lyon, 6 Juin 2012* (ed) E. Fouilloux and F. Gugelot 135-56. Lyon: RESEA/LARHRA

[21] In 1955 this became the *Revue des Études augustiniennes*.

work was interrupted by the first war but was resumed in 1921, due largely to the efforts of Fulbert Cayré, a priest of the congregation who founded the series *Bibliothèque Augustinienne*. The series was dedicated to scholarly bi-lingual editions of Augustine, each work with a critical commentary and notes. In 1934, the seminary was moved back to France and in 1943 the Centre des Études augustiniennes was opened with Père Cayré as its first director. The Centre soon acquired a considerable scholarly reputation and in 1956 another learned Assumptionist, Georges Folliet, succeeded Cayré. Folliet and Cayré were central figures in organising the 1954 congress. Many respected scholars attended it including Christine Mohrmann, Henri-Irénée Marrou, Henri de Lubac, Henry Chadwick, Aimé Solignac and Pierre Courcelle (Van Steenberghen 1954). Although the congress itself was held three months after the discussion in S1, various press releases had been made and papers had been sent to the organising committee well in advance. Paul Henry, a Jesuit confrere of Beirnaert, was a member of the organising committee. He was a distinguished scholar and had taught at the Institut Catholique since 1944. Père Henry specialised in Plotinus and Neoplatonism in Western thought and in 1951 with Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer had brought out a critical edition of the *Enneads* as well as a number of studies on Plotinus[22]. It was from this perspective that he approached Augustine and as a result a Plotinian focus dominated the congress. Over a hundred papers from the congress were later be published in a number of volumes under the title *Augustinus Magister* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1954)[23]. In the introduction, Pierre Courcelle explains that the title, based on a passage from Paulinus of Nola, had been proposed by Georges Folliet and discussed at some length (Benoit 1956).

Thonnard and chapter xx of Lacan's first seminar

Readers of S1 cannot fail to notice that the title of chapter xx is in Latin. It reads '*De locutionis significatione*'. This is the case both in the original French edition, published in 1975 and in the English translation published in 1988. They will also learn from the first few pages that the chapter title is taken from Augustine's work which 'falls into two large parts' (*deux grandes parties*), as '*la première est la* Disputatio de locutionis significatione' (S1 F 274; E 250). Although the French text gives no direct indication which edition of the *De magistro* Beirnaert and Lacan had before them, the more diligent students may notice the English editor directs

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[22] Later, this led him, together with Pierre Hadot, his former student, to prepare the critical edition of Marius Victorinus (Sources Chrétiennes 68, 1960).

[23] The Assumptionist community was then living in rue François 1ière. This was to be its heyday and it subsequently declined. The Etudes augustiniennes is now housed in the former abbatial palace of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, a stone's throw from where the Maurists had first planned their edition. Cf. Dominic J. O'Meara (1982). The Neoplatonism of St. Augustine *Neoplatonism in Christian Thought* 34-44 (New York: State University of New York Press).

his readers to the critical edition of Augustine's work in the CCL series (S1 E: 249 n. 1). However, should they get as far as looking this up they will no doubt be dismayed to find no phrase resembling the Latin chapter title of Lacan's seminar there or indeed any clear two-fold division in the text. Realising that the CCL edition was not published until 1970 (and V not until 1961, seven years after the discussion with Lacan took place), they might conclude that despite John Forrester's note, the version Beirnaert and Lacan had to hand was that of Migne (PL), the most well-known and readily available edition. But further investigation would quickly show such a conclusion to have been rash.

One further version was available. This was in volume VI (42-153) of the *Bibliothèque augustinienne* series. It had been published in 1941 with a second edition appearing in 1952 and was edited and translated with notes by F.-J. Thonnard, another Assumptionist. He would also attend the congress in 1954. The Latin text published by Thonnard was that of Migne (see Thonnard's introduction p.11). Furthermore, unlike PL, V or CCL this edition also contained a French translation. That this was indeed the edition used by Beirnaert can be confirmed as: (1) here the treatise is divided into two parts; (2) the chapter title of Lacan's seminar appears as the heading of the first part; and (3) hidden in the French text of S1 there is a reference to 'frère Thonnard' (S1F: 280). In the English translation the editor corrects '*frère*' with Father but misspells Thonnard's surname 'Tonnard' and adds a curious footnote: 'Père François-Joseph Tonnard, translator of *De Magistro*' (S1E: 256 and n.4). Forrester clearly knew enough to correct the French *frère*, to add Thonnard's religious name and record that he was the translator of Augustine's treatise. But not enough to realise that the Latin text that lay behind S1 was also there in a redacted form beside Thonnard's translation; not enough to realise that referring to the CCL edition was, without explanation, confusing; and not enough to spell Thonnard's surname correctly. In short, Forrester had not examined Thonnard's edition nor compared it to CCL.

Thonnard (1941) divided the treatise into two parts adding headings both in the Latin and French text as follows: (i) *Disputatio de significatione locutionis* ('*Discussion sur la signification du language*') (I.1-XI.37); and (ii) *Veritas magister solus est Christus* ('*Le Christ seul maître de vérité*') (XI.38-XIV.46). Beirnaert refers, precisely, to these headings, further evidence that he was relying entirely on Thonnard's edition.

Thonnard, in fact, did not restrict himself to the interpolation of two thematic headings but divided the first into two further sections, the first entitled *De signis* (*Valeur des mots*) (I.1-

VIII.21) and the second *Signa ad discendum nihil valent* (*Impuissance des signes pour instruire*) (VIII.22-XI.37). To this he also added no less than twenty-two structural subheadings. In the first section: *Propositio prima* (I.1-2); *Quaestio prima* (II.3-4); *Quaestio secunda* (III.5-6); *Quaestio tertia* (IV.7-9); *Quaestio quarta* (IV.10); *Quaestio quinta* (V.11-16); *Quaestio sexta* (VI.17-18); *Recapitulatio* (VII.19-20); and *Pausa* (VIII.21). The second section: *Rursus, de signis. Quaestio prima* (VIII.22-24); *Quaestio secunda* (IX.25-28); *Quaestio tertia* (IX.28,115-X.30); *Objectio* (X.31-); *Propositio tertia* (X.32-); *Propositio quarta* (X.33-XI.36); *Expositio* (XI.37). In the second section: *Propositio* (XI.38-XII.40,40); *Quaestio* (XII.40,40-73); *Demonstratio* (XIII.41-44); *Conclusio* (XIII.45-XIV.46); *Conclusio generalis* (XIV.46,27-45).

Beirnaert comments that '*de la valeur des mots*' (of the value of words) is a bad translation. But what he seems to have failed to notice is that it is not a translation of Augustine's text at all but a heading introduced into the text by Thonnard. Had he looked at Migne, which would have been readily available, it would have been obvious that the phrase '*Disputatio de locutionis significatione*' is not used there to denote the first or any part of the work; neither is it the title of a chapter or a sub heading as there are no such headings. In fact, the expression does not at any point appear in the text. Moreover, I have not been able to find this expression in any secondary source. For example, it is not mentioned in Andrea Martin's summary of the *De magistro* in *Augustini Hipponensis Episcopi Philosophia* (ed. J. Fabre, Paris: A. Durand, 1863: 204-8). Gilson, whom some think had influence in Lacan's circle, discusses Augustine's *De magistro* in his *Introduction a l'étude de saint Augustin*, published in 1929, but does not use the expression (Gilson 1943: 88-)[24].

It is curious that Beirnaert did not smell a rat merely by glancing at the layout of the text. It looks quite unlike anything Augustine wrote and much more like the formal, systematised medieval *disputatio* we find in Thomas. His *Quaestiones Disputatae* were the result of regular debates, on a variety of philosophical themes, held in the medieval university at intervals throughout the academic year. Thomas' treatise *De magistro* is the eleventh question of the *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate* (disputed questions on the theme of truth). Here he discusses the various senses in which we use the word 'true' and we often find him making his own statements of Augustine to whom he was profoundly indebted. Yet despite this the way his thinking proceeds is very different indeed.

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[24] Burnyeat is dismissive of Gilson's study of the *De magistro*, referring to it as 'frequently inaccurate' (1987: 16 and n.19).

Thonnard's structural subheadings do not have an equivalent in the French translation where the subheadings are descriptive or thematic. Just one example will suffice. In the first part of the first section where the Latin has *Propositio prima*, the French has '*Le but du language: enseigner et faire souvenire*'. The inescapable conclusion is that Thonnard not only added thematic headings in the translation to guide the reader but dressed up the Latin text in full scholastic fig to make it appear Thomistic in its form of argumentation and overall conception. His attitude can be seen in his brief introduction where he writes of Thomas' *De magistro*: '*Avec sa claret habituelle, il y précise le sens de la thèse augustinienne et l'on peut voir que, l'essentiel, les deux grand docteurs sont d'accord*' (1941: 10-11). In his eagerness to detect a similarity between Augustine and Thomas and in his admiration for the latter, Thonnard misleadingly set out the treatise as if it were the work of a medieval theologian. However, if anything, Thonnard's schematising of the work draws the reader's attention to its lack of systematic structure. Even the dialogue form Augustine used is far removed from the thirteenth century *disputatio*.

Madec's edition

Thonnard's edition has long since been replaced. In 1976 Goulven Madec, another Parisian Assumptionist, revised Thonnard's *Bibliothèque Augustinienne* edition. He replaced the Latin text with that of the CCL but kept '*une refonte*' of Thonnard's translation (see title page), which he referred to misleadingly as distinguishing two 'sections' in the treatise (1999 [1976]: 17). He also wrote a new introduction[25] which, he tells us, was the result of a seminar held during the academic year 1970-1971 and co-led by André Mandouze and Marrou[26]. Here Madec covers much the same ground as he had set out the year before in an article entitled '*Analyse du* De magistro. *A la mémoire de F.-J. Thonnard*'[27]. He discusses the structure of the treatise with the stated aim of justifying the subtitles introduced into his edition giving a precis of the opinions of former commentators, taking note particularly of a study on the dialogue form in early Christianity by Voss (1970)[28], who divided the treatise into three parts. Madec also discussed an analysis of Augustine's text made by Wijdeveld. The latter had published Augustine's text

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[25] Madec repeated his conclusions in an article the following year (1977: 562), see: Verus Philosophus est Amator Dei: S. Ambroise, S. Augustin et la Philosophie *Revue Des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 61 (4): 549–66. Madec also edited Bonaventure's *De magistro* (*Saint Bonaventure, Le Christ Maître*. Edition, édition, traduction, commentaire du sermon universitaire *Unus est magister noster Christus*. Paris: Vrin, 1990).

[26] Other distinguished Augustine scholars attended the seminar and an account was published in the *Revue des etudes augustininnes* (1970: 442).

[27] Pages 63-66 of the article are repeated verbatim as pages 17-21 in the later introduction.

[28] The study by Voss complements that by Hirzel, who traced the prose dialogue in the literature of Graeco-Roman *paideia* through the Attic period to its decline and briefly its revival in Augustine, Boethius and in the Middle Ages, see: *Der Dialog. Ein Literarhistorischer Versuch* (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1895).

in 1938 in Dutch with a learned introduction, given a bibliography with a summary in French with useful notes. Wijdeveld divided the text into two parts based on its form, which changes from a dialogue between Augustine and his son Adeodatus (I.1-X.32) to a continuous exposition by Augustine (X.33—XIV.46). After X.32 Adeodatus only speaks once again at the conclusion of the treatise (XIV.46,34-45)[29]. In the end, despite reviewing these two studies, Madec concurs with Thonnard on a twofold division of the work, although importantly he removes the former's interpolations from the Latin text, reserving his own headings only for the translation. Nevertheless, as is clear from the long-winded synopsis of the treatise which he sets forth in his 1975 article, the schematic headings do not help much in summarising Augustine's argument.

Thonnard's edition has mostly been forgotten by those who study Augustine. And it would have long since been entirely forgotten had it not been for its use in Lacan's seminar. For in the secondary literature on Lacan its fiction lives on, commentators repeating Thonnard's Latin headings. And some even expand on them. To give just one example, Anthony Wilden calls the first heading a 'chapter title' in Augustine's work (Wilden 1981: 239). He was no doubt misled by the fact that it forms the title for the chapter in Lacan's seminar.

The structure of the *De magistro*

The *De magistro* is divided into fourteen chapters with forty-six numbered paragraphs and no chapter headings. It starts without any preface or introduction. Augustine himself divides it into four questions:

> *...haec tria ut invenirentur laboratum est: utum nihil sine signis possit doceri et utrum sint quaedam signa rebus quas significant, praeferenda, et utrum melior quam signa sit rerum ipsa cognitio. Sed quartum est, quod breviter abs te vellum cognoscere, utrumnam ista inventa sic putes, ut jam de his dubitare non possis.*
>
> Aug. *De mag*. X. 31, 57-61

> ...we have laboured to discover these three points: whether it is impossible to teach anything without signs; whether certain signs are to be preferred to the things they signify; and whether the knowledge of realities is better than the signs. But there is a

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[29] He says that what he has learnt from the discussion is that nobody can teach another anything! Of course, this sounds like nonsense. But it hangs on the meaning of *scientia*, as Burnyeat explains (1987).

fourth, and this I would like you to inform me about briefly: whether you think our conclusions to be such as to put them beyond any doubt on your part.

(trans) Colleran 1950: 170; cf. Egan 1940: 17 n. 1

Most commentators refer, one way or another, to its loose structure but nonetheless attempt with varying degrees of success to discern a pattern to it based either on its themes or form. While the latter which changes from a dialogue to a monologue is straightforward enough, the former although tempting fundamentally mistakes Augustine's purpose. As well as Wijdeveld (1938) and Voss (1970), discussed by Madec, his own commentary (Madec 1999 [1976]) and those of Colleran, Burnyeat and Markus are worth noticing.

Colleran (1950: 116-7) considers the work made up of an introduction in two parts (I.1-2 and II.3-4), two propositions (III.5-6 and X.33-35, XII.39-40, XIII.45), a conclusion (XI.38 and XIV.45) and a corollary (XI.36 and XIV.46). Added to this he sees complex clarifications forming a parenthetical section after the first proposition. This itself he subdivides into three parts, the first of which is further divided into two, thus (IV.7-6.18, IV.7f., VIII. 21-24, IX.25-28). Colleran states the two propositions as: (i) Nothing can be made known without a sign, except actions which one is not performing when a question is asked; and (ii) Even words are not the reason for our attaining truth – i.e. *not even with words do we teach*. The weakness of Colleran's schema is immediately apparent. Much of the text is unaccounted for and the arguments do not follow consecutively. Like Thonnard he tries too hard to squeeze Augustine's argument into a plan.

Burnyeat (1987: 8) refers to a first and second section, argument or thesis. The first being the argument that will be worked through and eventually overthrown, namely, that all teaching is effected through words or signs (I.1-X.31). The second, that no teaching is effected through words or signs (X.32-35). The second argument prevails and the rest of the dialogue (XI.36-XIV.46) explains how we can and do learn, given that words and signs teach nothing. Burnyeat's analysis of the pattern of the text is more than plausible and a huge improvement on that of Colleran. He notices that the two sections are far from equally weighted. And importantly that one of the weaknesses in Augustine's argument is its failure to account fully for explanation (Burnyeat 1987: 21). In the session following the one under discussion, Lacan shows he had not grasped this crucial point, staying with Augustine's hard distinction between sense experience and inner illumination (Lacan S1: E263-4).

More precisely, Markus (1957) refers to a first and second part of Augustine's argument. The former extending from chapter II to VI of the treatise and being summarised in chapter VII; and the second beginning with VIII.24. He takes a broader perspective than most other commentators, holding that Augustine means both parts of the seemingly contradictory thesis to be taken seriously (69), and discussing the work in relation not only the history of the theory of signs prior to Augustine, but also in relation to Augustine's later thinking on language as it is presented in his *De doctrina Christiana* II-IV[30]. Thus, he argues that Augustine's understanding of language developed considerably in the years after he wrote the *De magistro*. This seems convincing but only with the rider that although Augustine in the *Retractationes* is often highly critical of his work, he does not mention the discussion of signs in the *De magistro* there at all[31]. Burnyeat concludes, rightly in my view, that Augustine had not revised his opinion.

Lacan refers to 'spiritual commentators' on the treatise and the implication is that he takes a different position. This may reflect Beirnaert's original comment, recorded by Lacan: '...Wouldn't everything you have been saying on the subject of signification be illustrated in the *Disputatio de luctionis significatione*, which constitutes the first part of the De magistro?' (S1: E248). Of those mentioned above it might not be unreasonable to put Thonnard, Madec and to a lesser extent Colleran, into such a category. But of these only Thonnard pre-dates Lacan's remark and we may thus assume that his remark was directed at Thonnard and possibly Gilson. Although it postdates S1 Madec's position in relation to the question of 'spiritual' commentary is worth looking at. His commentary is far more erudite than Thonnard's. But it is no less spiritual. Indeed, it is more than generally spiritual, it is precisely Christian. For example, in expounding Augustine's doctrine of the interior master, Madec weaves together three New Testament passages: Matt. xxiii, 10; Eph. iii, 16-17; and John i, 9.

> ...*la source véritable de la thèse du Maître intérieur est simplement et incontestablement chrêtienne: évangelique et paulinienne. C'est Jésus lui-même qui a dit: 'Vous n'avez qu'un seul Maître, le Christ' et saint Paul: 'C'est dans l'homme intérieur que le Christ*

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[30] Augustine wrote up to Book III. 25, 35 in 397, adding the rest of Book III and Book IV in 427.

[31] '*in quo disputatur et quaeritur et invenitur magistrum non esse, qui docet hominem scientiam, nisis deum secundum illud etiam, quod in evangelio scriptum est: unus est magister vester Christus*' Retract. I, 11 see: *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Retractationum libri II.* (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 57) (ed) A. Mutzenbecher. Turnholt: Brepols, 1984. The *Retractationes* lists, pretty nigh chronologically, Augustine's works giving a summary of each, circumstances of origin and correcting mistakes. For an overview see: Müller, H. (2016). Augustine's Retractationes in the Context of his Letter Corpus: On the Genesis and Function of an Uncommon Genre *Revue d'études augustiniennes et patristiques* 62: 95-120.

habite' ...*et le Verbe au sujet duquel il lisait dans le Prologue johannique, qu'il est 'la Lumière véritable qui illumine tout homme venant en ce monde'.*

<div align="right">Madec (1999) [1976]: 37, 29, 30.</div>

More than anything this is, perhaps, a question of emphasis. Perhaps over emphasis. It is hard not to sense an apologetic aim. The accounts by Burnyeat and Markus could not, however, be described as spiritual commentaries and are the more convincing. Nevertheless, Augustine himself would not have recognised any part as separate to the one argument that knowledge of the truth cannot come from without but only from within, through an illumination from Christ, the interior teacher dwelling in the mind. In this, the *De magistro* illustrates how Augustine weds ideas from Plato and Neoplatonism to a biblical exegesis that takes account of the figurative as well as literal meaning of scriptural passages to create his own distinctive Christianised Platonism. Stumbling across Lacan's references to it, the student of psychoanalysis may well be tempted to kick it into the long grass. But for those interested in the background to Lacan's thought, there is much to be gleaned.

Conclusion

Augustine was in the air in Paris in 1954 and Lacan was not untouched by it. Some Jesuits were involved in the organisation of the Augustinian congress and others were in Lacan's circle. Père Henry was a central member of the organising committee of the congress. Although we cannot know for sure, it is quite likely that it was Henry who suggested to his Jesuit confrere Louis Beirnaert that the *De magistro* was relevant to Lacan's theme. Markus found only one hint, before Augustine, of the attempt to bring the notion of signification to a central place in a theory of language (1957: 64). It is a suggestion in a passage by Plotinus that Augustine may have known. In his discussion of the categories of being, Plotinus asks to what category do words belong. His argument is a criticism of Aristotle's view that since words are measured by syllables, speech is a mere ποσόν (*Categ.* VI.4b 32-35). Plotinus denies this and says that it is significant (σημαντικόν) and should be defined as 'meaningful action' (ποίησις σημαντική – *Enn.* VI.I.[42].5). There is no direct reference to this in Augustine but it was known to Marius Victorinus. Like Augustine, Victorinus was an African and we hear about the strong impression he made on Augustine in the *Confessions*. Victorinus had translated some of Plotinus into Latin in around 350. Although Markus goes on to say that it is scarcely possible to trace back this hint in Plotinus as the source for Augustine's theory of language as a system of signs and meaning, for us there remains one other interesting point of which to take note. Namely, that this 'hint' in Plotinus had been discussed by Henry in *Plotin et l'Occident* (1934: 55, 228-29

cited by Markus 65 n.1). If, as I suspect, it was indeed Henry who pointed Beirnaert in the direction of the *De magistro*, it was because he knew precisely its relevance for the topic Lacan was examining.

It is clear that Beirnaert was not at all familiar with the *De magistro*. Augustine's treatise does not have chapter headings and no part is entitled *Disputatio de locutionis significatione* or *Veritas magister solus est Christus*. Beirnaert merely took Thonnard at face value. This seems to have gone unquestioned by Lacan. Or was it? Near the beginning of Beirnaert's exposition, Lacan asks Beirnaert how he would translate the expression '*parole pleine*' into Latin. Beirnaert suggests tentatively that '*sententia plena*' might do[32]. Lacan was not satisfied with that, saying it simply means a composite sentence, and re-poses the question. Beirnaert seems not to want to be drawn on it, pressing to move the discussion on adding that 'perhaps we will come across it going through the text' (Lacan S1. E50). The question is a very odd one because the obvious thing would have been for Beirnaert to give his exegesis from the Latin text, translating key passages into French as he went along. Was Lacan's question, perhaps, a jibe indicating that he knew full well that Beirnaert's earlier Latin expression had nothing, in fact, to do with Augustine? Perhaps Lacan had, in fact, done his homework. It is tempting to think so.

In the *De magistro* Augustine tells us something about the nature of teaching. That nobody can bring another to understanding. In a complex sequence of about-turns Augustine, like Plato before him 'is determined not to tell us how to read his writing' (Burnyeat 1987: 14). Lacan, who was himself engaged in teaching, seems to have thought that in so doing, Augustine had hit the nail on the head. The overall form of Lacan's teaching with its lengthy detours cannot be separated from the complex, zigzagging structure of an analysis, in which the analyst realises the futility of telling the analysand anything. '*Analysant*' was, in fact, the term Lacan preferred over 'patient' precisely because, as it is derived from the gerund, it signified that the work of analysis can only be done by the analysand himself (Evans 1996). Furthermore, Lacan referred to psychoanalysis as an exegesis. Commenting on a text and analysis are both characterised by modes of thought in which digressions and wandering are an essential part. One might say of the analyst that as the philosopher his purpose is not to give over his thoughts to others, so much as to 'stimulate someone to thoughts of his own' (PI

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[32] Cf. Plat. *Soph.* 262a.

Preface). For it is not enough to tell others a truth in order to convince them. They must, in Wittgenstein's words, 'find the *path* from error to truth' for themselves (Burnyeat 1987: 8)[33].

In wrestling with the thought of Augustine, Lacan, without a doubt, sharpened his own ideas, presenting a picture of language and thus of the world which takes heed of the tradition of Platonism in Christian philosophy. In so doing he incorporated something of it into his psychoanalytic schema while at the same time striking out on his own.

Abbreviations

Arist. *Categ.*   Aristotle. *Categories. On Interpretation. Prior Analytics* (trans) H.P. Cooke and H. Tredennick. Loeb Classical Library 325. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938.

Aug. *Conf.*   *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin. Les Confessions.* Bibliothèque Augustinienne 13 and 14 (ed) M. Skutella. Paris: Institut D'Études Augustiniennes [1962], 1998.

Aug. *De mag.*   S. Aurelii Augustini. *De Magistro* (ed) K.-D. Daur (Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 29: 143-203). Turnholt: Brepols, 1970.

Plat. *Soph.*   Plato. *Theaetetus. Sophist* (trans) H.N. Fowler. Loeb Classical Library 123. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921.

Plot. *Enn.* VI   Plotinus. *Ennead*, Volume VI: 1-5 (trans) A.H. Armstrong. Loeb Classical Library 445. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.

P.I.   Wittgenstein, L. (1999). *Philosophical Investigations* (trans) E. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell.

S1F   Lacan, J. (1975). *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre 1. Les Écrits Techniques de Freud 1953-1954* (ed) J.-A. Miller. Paris : Éditions du Seuil.

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[33] In his interventions concerning use Lacan might be making an allusion to Wittgenstein. Although it is not explicit in the text the English editor adds a note at the beginning of section two referring to PI 32 (S1: 259 n.6).

S1E	Lacan, J. (1988). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book 1. Freud 's Papers on Technique 1953-1954* (ed) J.-A. Miller, (trans) J. Forrester. Cambridge : CUP.
S2E	Lacan, J. (1991). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book II. The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955* (ed) J.-A. Miller, (trans) S. Tomaselli. New York/London: W.W. Norton and Company.

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