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APULEIUS, QUI NOBIS AFRIS AFER EST NOTIOR: AUGUSTINE'S POLEMIC AGAINST APULEIUS IN *DE CIVITATE DEI*

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Abstract. Augustine studied his fellow-African author Apuleius intensely. Various links between these authors can be traced, as shown in the polemic of Augustine in *De Civitate Dei* against Apuleius' writings on demonology. Augustine's discussion of Apuleius must of course be considered in the context of the general aims of his work. Nonetheless, it shows a remarkable one-sidedness and does not fully do justice to the actual content of Apuleius' text.

Like so many church fathers, Augustine (AD 354-430) occupied himself intensely with the authors of non-Christian ancient literature.[1] In Augustine's day, pagan culture was essential to the cultural elite from which he had sprung. Formal training in the classics was a standard element in the education of young men, and by this means Greco-Roman culture was the natural setting within which Christians found their personal direction. Augustine himself was well versed in classical philosophy and rhetoric, and could expect much the same from the audience he usually addressed.

It is, therefore, no surprise that Augustine's works show pervasive influences from pagan authors.[2] Some of his favourites belong to the top of the Latin canon: Cicero and Vergil are mentioned or referred to most often. But other authors seem less obvious: Sallust, for example, provides him with both arguments and fine phrases to support his rather dark views on Rome and its historical development. Sallust's moralistic analysis of the decline of Rome seemed a welcome point of reference to Augustine.

One of the least expected names here is that of Apuleius of Madauros (*ca.* 125-*ca.* 180).[3] According to the *Augustinus-Lexikon*,[4] Augustine pays more

[1] I thank S. J. Harrison (Oxford) and the referees of *Scholia* for their valuable suggestions.

[2] The standard reference work is: H. Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics* 1-2, (Gothenburg 1967). Cf. further S. MacCormack, *The Shadows of Poetry: Vergil in the Mind of Augustine* (Berkeley 1998). For a recent survey in Dutch, see G. J. M. Bartelink, 'Augustinus en de klassieke auteurs', *Hermeneus* 74 (2002) 103-13.

[3] Many details concerning Apuleius' life remain vague. Only his date of birth is relatively certain, since it can be deduced from indications in his work. The date of death depends on the date one assumes for Apuleius' novel *Metamorphoses*, which is a highly debated question; see

attention to Apuleius than to any other post-classical author from Latin literature. Starting from this curious fact, the following contribution aims to examine this relationship more closely. After a survey of some scattered references to Apuleius, I shall focus on Augustine's treatment of Apuleius in *De Civitate Dei*, a polemic discussion that dominates most of books 8 and 9, and attempt to analyse to what extent Augustine's criticism is justified by Apuleius' texts as we know them, and what may have caused the bishop to deal with the earlier author in the way he does.[5]

Africa

The first reason for Augustine's knowledge of Apuleius is a simple one: they share a native country, being both from Africa and originating from the same Roman culture. Augustine himself explicitly makes the link:

> Apuleius enim, ait ut de illo potissimum loquamur, qui nobis Afris Afer est notior . . .
>
> (*Ep.* 138.19)
>
> But, to speak more especially of Apuleius, who as an African is better known to us Africans . . .[6]

Their fathers belonged to the higher classes, although Augustine's father does not seem to have been very rich.[7] While there is a gap of time of more than two centuries between both authors, in antiquity this distance in time was probably felt to be less important than it would be nowadays. Apuleius certainly

V. Hunink, 'The Date of Apuleius' Metamorphoses', *Hommages à Carl Deroux* (Brussels 2002) 224-35.

[4] C. Mayer (ed.), *Augustinus-Lexikon* 1 (Basel 1986) 423.

[5] For earlier studies of Augustine's attitude to Apuleius, see Hagendahl [2] 17-28 (*testimonia*) and 680-87 (analysis); C. Moreschini, *Apuleio e il Platonismo* (Firenze 1978) 219-25; N. Fick, 'St. Augustin pourfendeur des démons païens', in M.-M. Mactoux and E. Geny (edd.), *Discours religieux dans l'Antiquité: Actes du colloque Bésançon, 27-28 janvier 1995* (Paris 1995) 189-206.

[6] W. Parsons, *Fathers of the Church Saint Augustine Letters* 3: *131-164* (New York 1953) 51.

[7] On his father Patricius, cf. Aug. *Conf.* 2.5: . . . *patris, municipis Thagatensis admodum tenuis* ('my father, who was a rather poor citizen from Thagaste'). Cf. G. Wills, *Saint-Augustine* (London 2000) 3, who assumes Patricius was a local town-councillor, a *decurio*. We are informed by Apuleius that his own father had held the office of *duumuir*; cf. Apul. *Apol.* 24.9. Apuleius' father seems to have been rather wealthy: *Apol.* 23.1.

remained a famous writer for many centuries after his death, and it is beyond doubt that this must also have been the case in his native town Madauros.

It was in this city Madauros where Augustine went to school from 366 to 370.[8] He was already a techumen, but had not received baptism, and his studies were not yet directed towards the teaching of Christianity. On the contrary, he was an avid and passionate reader of Vergil and he detested Greek (*Conf.* 1.20-23). Given his preference for Latin and Latin literature, it is simply unimaginable that during his formative years in Madauros, the young, fiery Augustine did not read the works of Apuleius, with all their thrilling rhetoric and fascinating stories about magic.

Apuleius' fame was even manifest on the streets in African towns. Apuleius himself tells of statues erected for him in Carthage,[9] which may still have been extant in the year 370. Augustine also mentions a statue of Apuleius in the town of Oea (*Ep.* 138.19). Likewise, Apuleius' native town almost certainly had erected statues of its celebrated author. In the town, a base of a statue has been found with the following inscription: *<phi>losopho <Pl>atonico <Ma>daurenses ciues ornamento suo* ('The citizens of Madauros to the Platonic philosopher who confers glory upon them').[10] Apuleius, who was commonly known as a *philosophus Platonicus*, seems to be the only candidate for the statue, as is widely held by modern scholars.[11] We do not have any solid evidence for Apuleian readership in fourth century Madauros, but we may readily assume that his works were circulating and were widely read.

Augustine's later writings prove that he did know several of Apuleius' works.[12] First, there is Apuleius' great speech in defence of himself, the *Apology*, delivered in 156 in Oea.[13] The author had stood trial for 'magical practices', with which he allegedly bewitched a rich widow, Pudentilla, who was a local celebrity, into marrying him, even though he was a poor man and an

[8] Wills [7] 5-10.

[9] See Apuleius, *Florida* 16 and notes in V. Hunink, *Apuleius of Madauros: Florida* (Amsterdam 2001) 153-70, esp. 153-55. Apuleius' fame may also be due to his holding an official priesthood; cf. J. B. Rives 'The priesthood of Apuleius', *AJPh* 115 (1994) 273-90.

[10] Cf. *RE* 14.1.202 *s.v.* Madauros; S. Gsell (ed.), *Inscriptions Latins de l'Algérie* 1 (Rome 1965) 196 no. 2115.

[11] Cf., e.g., S. J. Harrison, *Apuleius: A Latin Sophist* (Oxford 2000) 8 with n. 32.

[12] For a discussion of all the passages where Augustine mentions Apuleius, see Hagendahl [2] 17-28 and 680-87; further M. Horsfall-Scotti, 'Apuleio tra magia e filosofia: la riscoperta di Agostino', in *Dicti Studiosus: Scritti di filologia offerti a Scevola Mariotti dai suoi allievi* (Urbino 1990) 295-320.

[13] For a new English translation with introduction and notes, see S. J. Harrison *et al.* (edd.), *Apuleius: Rhetorical Works* (Oxford 2001) 11-121.

outsider. In the speech, a brilliant, and indeed unique, piece of Latin oratory, the speaker uses all the possible means of ancient rhetoric to deny the charge and refute all the arguments of the prosecution as clumsy lies, forged by silly, evil, envious barbarians, and to praise himself and celebrate his own splendid achievements. Meanwhile, the reader easily observes that the charges may have been misplaced but that Apuleius knew quite a lot about ancient magic. It is, to put it briefly, a text that is un-Christian to the highest degree.[14]

Put against this background, it is rather surprising to find Augustine extolling the speech as a magnificent piece of literature:

> Huius autem philosophi Platonici copiosissima et disertissima exstat oratio, qua crimen artium magicarum a se alienum esse defendit seque aliter non vult innocentem videri nisi ea negando, quae non possunt ab innocente committi.
> (*De Civ. D.* 8.19)
> But of this Platonist philosopher [Apuleius], there survives a very full and elegant speech, in which he defends himself against the charge of practising the arts of magic and shows no desire to appear innocent except by denying actions which cannot be performed by an innocent man[15]

The brief quotation already shows some of Augustine's ambivalence towards Apuleius. As an oratorical achievement, the speech is given lavish praise, but the speaker himself does not seem entirely free of charges. For whoever denies only what cannot possibly be admitted, one could say, is probably not without blame and may even take pride in it. Any reader of the *Apology* will readily agree with the implication of Augustine's words, for in the speech Apuleius even ventures to show off his knowledge of magic, and does not even shrink from using menacing words that look like magical incantations.[16]

[14] There may even be some anti-Christian allusions in the speech; cf. V. Hunink, 'Apuleius, Pudentilla, and Christianity', *VChr* 54 (2000) 80-94.

[15] D. S. Wiesen (tr.), *Augustine, City of God* 3: *Books 8-11* (Cambridge, Mass. 1988) 89.

[16] E.g., *Apol.* 64.1f.: *At tibi, Aemiliane, pro isto mendacio duit deus iste superum et inferum commeator utrorumque deorum malam gratiam semperque obuias species mortuorum, quidquid umbrarum est usquam, quidquid lemurum, quidquid manium, quidquid larbarum, oculis tuis oggerat, omnia noctium occursacula, omnia bustorum formidamina, omnia sepulchrorum terriculamenta, a quibus tamen aeuo et merito haud longe abes* ('May this god, the messenger between upper world and underworld, call the wrath of the divine powers of both upon you, Aemilianus, as a punishment for your lie! May he continually bring appearances of the dead before your eyes, and whatever shades, malevolent ghosts, spirits and spooks there are; and all nocturnal phantoms, all fears of the grave—from which you, through age and merit, are not that far away'; tr. V. Hunink in Harrison *et al.* [13] 86).

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Magic

Nowadays, Apuleius' fame rests chiefly on his novel *Metamorphoses* or *Asinus Aureus* ('The Golden Ass'). In this book, the protagonist Lucius shows a marked interest in magic and wishes to be transformed into a bird. His metamorphosis, however, ends rather differently than had been envisaged, for by accident he is changed into an ass. In this asinine form, he goes through various adventures and misfortunes, to be changed into a man again at the end of the book, by the intervention of Isis, after eating roses out of the hands of her priests. He then becomes a priest of the goddess and enters in her service in Rome.

The reception of Apuleius' novel in antiquity is a largely obscure matter. Except for a few scattered remarks in late sources,[17] we do not know to what extent the novel found favour with contemporary readers and later generations. But the way Augustine mentions the novel may well be symptomatic. In a key passage in *De Civitate Dei*, he tackles the subject of 'transformation of men into animals'. Expressing his personal disbelief in the whole phenomenon, Augustine goes on to warn his readers against the many, widespread stories about it. He tells how in Italy he had heard stories about female innkeepers who used to enchant visitors and temporarily change them into beasts of burden, without their losing their human capacity for thought.

> . . . sicut Apuleius in libris, quos asini aurei titulo inscripsit, sibi ipsi accidisse, ut accepto ueneno humano animo permanente asinus fieret, aut indicauit aut finxit. Haec vel falsa sunt vel tam inusitata, ut merito non credantur.
> (*De Civ. D.* 18.18)
> . . . as was the case real or imagined of Apuleius, who in *The Golden Ass* tells how he drank a potion and was turned into an ass, preserving throughout this experience his rational powers. Now, such phenomena are either too unfounded in fact or too far beyond general experience to deserve belief.[18]

Augustine's testimony is quite remarkable for several reasons.[19] First, it is a rare reference to the novel as such; a firm proof of the fact that it was still known in his day, and it may even be taken to suggest certain renown. Moreover, it raises a still burning question for specialists: what was the exact

[17] Cf. S. J. Harrison, 'Apuleius' Metamorphoses', in G. Schmeling (ed.), *The Novel in the Ancient World* (Leiden 1996) 491-516.

[18] G. G. Walsh *et al.* (trr.), *Saint Augustine: The City of God* (New York 1954) 106f.

[19] The Augustine passage is also discussed by N. Moine, 'Augustin et Apulée sur la magie des femmes d'auberge', *Latomus* 34 (1975) 350-61.

title of the novel? Was it *Metamorphoses*, as is now commonly assumed on the basis of the manuscripts, or was it the rather more appealing *Asinus Aureus* ('Golden Ass'), for which Augustine is the main witness? Since Augustine is such an important author, his authority is by no means to be despised, and time and again scholars attempt to reopen the discussion in favour of *Asinus Aureus*.[20] It is a nice title indeed, and various arguments have been brought forward in support of it, notably some alleged allusions to Egyptian religion.[21] However, the fact remains that Apuleius' story nowhere mentions a 'golden ass' (or any other golden animal),[22] and that the ass can hardly be called 'golden', given his miserable fate and bad habits throughout in the novel.

Nonetheless, Augustine's remark remains also highly interesting because he does not hesitate to interpret the novel as a piece of autobiography. In his view, Apuleius tells how he changed into an ass while retaining his human intelligence. Only at the end of the quotation does the church father express some doubt: Apuleius either states or fakes this transformation. So while it may well be a lie, a fiction, the possibility remains that it is real after all. This also shows in Augustine's final sentence: such stories are simply not true, or else they are so uncommon that they should not be believed. But in the second case, the argument seems rather curious, for whatever is highly uncommon, may still be completely true and should not be ruled out in advance. In what follows the quotation given above, Augustine develops the theory that such metamorphoses are physically impossible but may involve cases of extreme illusion or hallucination, possibly under the influence of poison or the activity of demons.

So the traditional notion, cherished by so many generations of readers and scholars, that the protagonist in Apuleius' novel is none but Apuleius himself, seems to date back at least to Augustine. Of course, literary studies in the twentieth century have shown the great importance of making a distinction between the 'I' in any literary text and the person of its author (even where the author is manifestly writing about 'himself'), and this has by now become a basic rule in interpreting literature.

In the case of the *Metamorphoses*, it is, in fact, surprising how this lack of distinction between the 'I' and Apuleius could come about in the first place,

[20] For the discussion see notably J. J. Winkler, *Auctor and Actor, a Narratological Reading of Apuleius's 'The Golden Ass'*, (Berkeley 1991) 291-98. Winkler strongly supports *Asinus Aureus* as part of Apuleius' title.

[21] See Winkler [20] 298-321.

[22] The most natural assumption here is that an ancient title would either have to occur somewhere in the text as a phrase, or be a traditionally formed name (*Aeneis*) or a neutral indication (*Annales*). Literary titles that carry jokes, hidden meanings and ironical turns are a typical feature only in modern literature.

and how it could persist. The protagonist in the text calls himself 'Lucius' and states on the first page that his roots were in Attica, Corinth and the Peloponnese, from where he went to Rome and learned Latin. The rest of the story is located in Thessaly. So what reason is there to equate the African Apuleius from Madauros with this Lucius from Attica?[23] It is strange indeed that this elementary point was not noticed by an intelligent philosopher such as Augustine. For if he had made the point, he could easily have reinforced his point about the non-reality of metamorphoses: look, this is not about Apuleius, but about some fictional character. One cannot help wondering whether the prologue of the novel as we have it, was indeed the first page in Augustine's copy too.[24]

In this connection one may refer to a curious remark of Peter Brown. Speaking about the 'gifted African' who 'delighted in the sheer play of words, in puns, rhymes and riddles', briefly, in the 'African fire', he notes that these writers also composed novels. He then mentions 'the only two books from Latin literature that a modern man can place with ease beside the fiction of today', the *Asinus Aureus* by Apuleius, and the *Confessiones* by Augustine.[25] Brown's judgement on Apuleius' book will be shared by many modern readers; most would even agree that it is very good fiction. But as far as the *Confessiones* are concerned, we are in for a surprise. Here we find Augustine's book drawn into the sphere of fiction, whereas it generally counts as a famous example of autobiography. Fact or fiction: the question remains complex.[26]

[23] It is only at the end of the novel that there is some cause for concern. In a famous passage (*Met.* 11.27) Lucius refers to himself as *Madaurensem, sed admodum pauperem* ('a man from Madauros, but a very poor one'). In that case, the author Apuleius of Madauros deliberately confuses his own identity with that of his protagonist and narrator Lucius of Corinth. On the passage, see notably R. T. van der Paardt, 'The Unmasked "I": Apuleius, *Met.* 11.27', in S. J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in the Roman Novel* (Oxford 1999) 96-106 (= *Mnemosyne* 34 [1981] 96-106).

[24] The prologue of Apuleius' novel (a mere 119 Latin words) is notorious for the many problems it involves. Cf. A. Kahane and A. Laird (edd.), *A Companion to the Prologue of Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (Oxford 2001). The twenty-four discussions in the volume (over 300 pages) all tacitly assume that the prologue is the opening of the novel as Apuleius wrote it (and a majority of contributors support the view that it is Lucius who is speaking there). Surely, in the context of an extensive inquiry to the prologue, the academic question whether it really *is* the prologue, should at least have been put. Another recent contribution on the prologue is A. P. Bitel, '*Quis Ille Asinus Aureus?* The Metamorphoses of Apuleius' Title,' *Ancient Narrative* 1 (2000-2001) 208-244.

[25] P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London 1967) 22-23.

[26] Several other attempts have been made to associate the *Confessiones* and *Metamorphoses*. Cf. M. Tasinato, *Sulla curiosità: Apuleio e Agostino* (Parma 1994), an essay on the motif of

Demons

Apart from the *Apology* and the *Metamorphoses*, several other works of Apuleius have been preserved,[27] but about these Augustine is mostly brief or remains silent. He briefly refers (*De Civ. D.* 4.2) to the *De Mundo*, Apuleius' Latin translation of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Peri Kosmou* but he does not mention either the *Florida*, a collection of fragments from speeches, or the *De Platone*, a minor, rather conventional treatise on the teachings of Plato.[28]

Much attention, by contrast, is given to a small, philosophical speech by Apuleius that does not find many readers today but which for centuries was Apuleius' most popular and most influential text, the *De Deo Socratis*. The small book, with its curious (only partly appropriate) name, deals with middle Platonic demonology.[29] The text was probably delivered as a popular philosophical lecture before a huge audience gathered in a theatre. This rather short text (what is left of it amounts to no more than twenty pages)[30] is the target of a heated discussion by Augustine in books 8 and 9 of *De Civitate Dei*. This may seem surprising. What prompted Augustine to devote so much space and effort in attacking this innocent little speech?

Let us first have a look at Augustine's text. In books 6 to 10 of *De Civitate Dei* Augustine discusses various questions concerning pagan polytheism. The earlier books had shown that the pagan cult of gods was by no means a guarantee of success and prosperity on earth, the sad fate of the Roman Empire being a case in point. This in turn now prompts the further question,

curiositas in both works; curiosity is indeed central to Apuleius' novel, but in the case of Augustine the importance ascribed to this motif may seem exaggerated. On the other hand, N. Shumate, *Crisis and Conversion in Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (Ann Arbor 1996) argues that both works belong to the tradition of 'conversion narratives' (e.g., pp. 214f., 236-39), though few would deny that the *Confessiones* belong there; the case of the *Metamorphoses* is certainly not by any means certain. One may seriously doubt, for instance, whether Lucius is a god-seeker at all.

[27] For a full survey of the extant works, fragments, and lost works, see Harrison [11] 1-38.

[28] On these various works see Harrison [11] 89-135 (*Flor.*), 174-209 (*Mund.*; *De Plat.*).

[29] For a convenient survey of ancient pagan demonology, see J. Beaujeu (ed. and tr.), *Apulée, Opuscules philosophiques (Du Dieu de Socrate, Platon et sa doctrine, Du monde) et fragments* (Paris 1973) 183-201.

[30] Most scholars assume that the text is not complete, but there is considerable debate on the question of what and how much has been lost. For a discussion see Harrison [13] 141-44; for the view that the first part of the performance may have been in Greek, cf. B. L. Hijmans jr, 'Apuleius Orator: "Pro se de Magia" and "Florida"', *ANRW* 2.34.2 (1994) 1708-84, esp. 1781f.

whether such pagan cult may be important for life after death. Hardly surprisingly, here too Augustine strongly opposes pagan religion.

In the eighth book of *De Civitate Dei* he enters into discussion with the Platonists. In Augustine's view they have some ideas that are correct, such as Plato's concept of a single god, but inevitably they also cherish many ideas that he feels obliged to object to. Among the latter there is the notion, common among middle Platonists, of a partition of the world into three spheres: heaven and earth are inhabited by, respectively, gods and men, whereas the air is the special reserve of *daemones* (demons), beings between gods and men, who share the immortality of the gods and the passions of men, notably that for the theatre. It is these demons that are the main target of Augustine's discussion, and it is in this context that the name of Apuleius is immediately mentioned (esp. 8.14-22). Augustine explicitly mentions Apuleius' work about Socrates:

> Apuleius tamen Platonicus Madaurensis de hac re sola unum scripsit librum, cuius esse titulum voluit 'de deo Socratis', ubi disserit et exponit, ex quo genere numinum Socrates habebat adiunctum et amicitia quadam conciliatum a quo perhibetur solitus admoneri ut desisteret ab agendo, quando id quod agere volebat non prospere fuerat eventurum
>
> (*De Civ. D.* 8.14)
>
> The Platonist Apuleius of Madaura wrote a single book about this subject alone, choosing to call it *On the God of Socrates*. In it he discusses and explains to which category of divinities belonged the familiar spirit that Socrates had attached and bound to himself by a kind of friendship, and which, as is generally believed, was accustomed to warn him against a meditated action, when such an action would not have had a happy conclusion. [31]

But critical remarks follow right away. Had not Plato rightly banished poets from his ideal state? And was this not done to rob the demons of their pleasures of the theatre? So, Augustine argues, either Apuleius is simply wrong, or Plato gives contradictory advice concerning demons (both allegedly honouring them as well as fighting their pleasures), or, worse still, Socrates' friendship with a demon is bad (8.14).[32] In that context, Augustine somewhat maliciously suggests that Apuleius himself felt shame to use *de daemone* in his title and deliberately chose the (incorrect) *de deo*. Then follows a passage (8.14) which sums up Augustine's view of *De Deo Socratis*. Not even Apuleius, so he suggests, could find anything to praise in these demons, except for the combination of fine structure and firmness in their bodies and the loftier region

[31] Tr. Wiesen [15] 65.

[32] Fick [5] 198 not unjustly ranges this argument among the 'sophisms' of Augustine preparing for his disqualification of Apuleius' work.

they inhabit; The demons are bad in many respects, and it is no wonder that they wanted to include shameful stage displays among their sacred rites, and wished to pass themselves off as gods.

In what follows, Augustine resumes the various points raised here. He argues at considerable length that Apuleius' demons really do not have anything that is good. Neither their superior bodies, nor their high position puts them above man, for else we would also be surpassed by birds and other creatures (8.15). And as to their character, Apuleius' text says that they are liable to the same emotions as men, such as confusion or anger.[33] The whole sphere of magic and prophecy belongs to the demons too, something which in Augustine's eyes can hardly count as a recommendation. So why should we honour these demons? Because they are eternal, perhaps? The answer is typical for Augustine: . . . *quod tempore aeterna, quid boni est, si non beata?* ('. . . that they are eternal in time, what does that profit them, if they are not blessed?' *De Civ. D.* 8.16[34]). Christian bliss is unknown to the demons, so their eternity is worth nothing. If Apuleius had at least ascribed some *virtus* to them, they would have been worth something, although veneration would have to be directed towards God only (8.16).

Apuleius' demons are thus clearly considered from a Christian view and strongly rejected. Augustine's position here must be related to the development of the word 'daemon', which in the course of centuries before him had acquired an increasingly negative sense: it had almost exclusively come to refer to evil spirits and frightful creatures.

For many chapters the church father keeps on attacking the demons with all the arguments his great intelligence and considerable rhetorical talents can furnish: the demons are eternally unhappy, forever prey to emotions, entirely unworthy of our veneration. Again and again Augustine returns to what seems his main concerns: the theatrical love of the demons and the forms of magic with which they were intimately connected. Talking about magic, he subtly adds that it was not only rejected by the Christians, for the earliest of Roman laws already condemned it. And was not Apuleius himself arraigned on account of the very accusation of magic (8.19)?[35]

[33] The point is indeed made in *De Deo Soc.* 13 (147). All the references in brackets to *De Deo Socratis* in this article are from the edition by F. Oudendorp, *Apuleii Opera Omnia* 3 (1823).

[34] Tr. Wiesen [15] 77.

[35] In this context, Augustine mentions Apuleius' *Apology*. Cf. the quotation from *De Civ. D.* 8.19 in Wiesen [15] 89.

A new point of criticism is the notion that demons would stand, as it were, between gods and men. In the Platonic theory, there is no direct communication between gods and human beings, but here the help of intermediate beings is needed. A god who communicates with evil demons rather than with men? This is of course completely unacceptable to Augustine, and he launches a vehement, rhetorically colourful attack against the idea (8.20f.).

A fine example is his concluding argument in 8.21. The question is raised of what the demons have told the gods about Plato's abhorrence of poetical fictions about the gods. Did they tell them, but remain silent about their own preference for such tales (1)? Or (2) did they keep secret both facts, or (3) tell about both? Finally, (4) they may have remained silent about Plato but expressed their own liking.

This argument with two variables neatly produces four possibilities, which are then subsequently presented as unacceptable: for if (1), the gods would not communicate with the good Plato while keeping in touch with evil demons. If (2), what would be the point of having intermediaries at all, if they suppress the truth? Possibility (3) would even be insulting to the gods and (4) would be the worst option, for it would leave the gods with the bad news only.

The conclusion, then, is clear: Apuleius' theory is untrue, his demons are bad and should be rejected. They are malicious spirits keen on injustice and evil, holding human beings of light belief spell-bound (8.22).

Christian View

This discussion, extending for well over a page, may seem a school exercise in rhetoric rather than a theological discussion, and an inexperienced reader may have some difficulty following it. Apuleius, a great lover of such arguments, might well have been amused by Augustine's reasoning.

Meanwhile, he could have easily defended himself against several points raised here. For instance, nowhere in *De Deo Socratis* does he mention a specific connection between demons and the theatre,[36] and nowhere does he argue that the demons work against men or keep them away from the gods. Moreover, he might have argued that Augustine refers exclusively to the first part of his speech (1-15),[37] thereby leaving out of account all that is positive in

[36] The point is also made by Fick [5] 198. At most, there is a link in *De Deo Soc.* between demons and religious ceremonies or forms of sacred cult; see *De Deo Soc.* 14 (148-50).

[37] The point is made by Hagendahl [2] 682. Hagendahl further observes that Augustine does not refer to Apuleius' treatise in his *De Divinatione Daemonum* (written between 406 and 411),

it. Augustine tacitly assumes that the demons are always evil, a claim that seems unwarranted by Apuleius' text. On the contrary, that text even suggests that demons can exert a positive influence on the people they accompany. Thus, Socrates is explicitly said to be restrained by his demon whenever he starts doing something that is wrong or dangerous (*De Deo Soc.* 17 [157], 19 [162f.]). And this demon is nothing else but the *genius*, the inborn spirit that can be said to be identical with a person's mind (*De Deo Soc.* 15 [151]), or, in a second sense, the guardian spirit that each man receives at birth. This demon is the inseparable witness of every soul, and if it is rightly cultivated by virtuous behaviour, it will offer protection, warnings, and help. It wards off evil and supports the good. No wonder, then, Apuleius concludes, that Socrates honoured this God within him (*De Deo Soc.* 16f. [155-57]).

It is quite clear that according to Apuleius this highest species of *daemones*[38] functions as a 'conscience' and promotes the good; it must be honoured with purity and justice, after the shining example of Socrates. The notion expressed here can fairly easily be combined with any of the ancient philosophical systems (except, perhaps, Epicurean and Sceptical teachings) and does not show the slightest trace of moral decadence or extravagance.

Augustine's starting points are, obviously, not those of the source he is attacking. He rather presents the evidence from his own perspective, and then uses logical means to extrapolate matters *ad absurdum*. His starting points are firmly Christian: demons are evil and they have a strong connection with the theatre. As to the latter view, Augustine is not the first one to adopt it, for it can be found as early as Tertullian's *De Spectaculis*. Augustine himself repeatedly refers to the theatrical link with demons, for example, in the famous passage in the *Confessiones* where he tells of his own fascination for the theatre (*Conf.* 3.4f.).

Only at the beginning of book 9 of *De Civitate Dei*, when the discussion of the Apuleian demons has in fact been concluded, Augustine brings up the question of whether there exist good demons, and in that context he mentions Apuleius again (*De Civ. D.* 9.2f.). But immediately he returns to the point which is crucial for him: the demons' liability to emotions. He then even quotes from *De Deo Socratis*,[39] as if to prove that this is conceded by Apuleius

and convincingly concludes that Augustine studied *De Deo Socratis* only in the preparation of *De Civ. Civitate Dei.*

[38] In *De Deo Socratis* the existence of evil spirits is not denied, but the class of demons it is mainly concerned with obviously does not belong to that category.

[39] *De Civ. D.* 9.3; *De Deo Soc.* 12 (145f.). Except for two minor points, Augustine's quotation of some 10 lines is accurate, as far as we can see. This seems proof that he had a written edition of the text at his disposal.

himself. What he does not tell us, is that the quoted remark about the demons in *De Deo Socratis.* forms the starting point for an account of the majestic, eternal gods, who are entirely free of passion, unlike the demons, who, being intermediaries between gods and men, possess characteristics of both. In other words, what Apuleius is concerned with in the context of the lines quoted by Augustine, is not the demons, but the majestic status of the gods.

Several times, Augustine resumes the issue of the demons' passions (*De Civ. D.* 9.6, 9.7), and the alleged lack of positive qualities ascribed by Apuleius to the demons (9.8). Their place in the cosmos and their inevitable eternal unhappiness are also discussed again (9.12f.).

Finally, Augustine mentions the only real intermediator between God and man, namely Jesus Christ. In his view, demons do exist, but they are only evil spirits who keep men away from the good and lead them into temptation. God does not need any help from demons to communicate with men, whom he can address directly (9.16). Neither does man need the help of demons, but only the intercession of Christ (9.17). At this point, Apuleius' little work on demons is no longer mentioned.[40]

Other Aims

Augustine's concept of demons has clearly been formed by the Christian tradition, whereas Apuleius remained in the Platonic and middle Platonic tradition. Against the background of Augustine's general aims with *De Civitate Dei*, particularly books 6-10, it is no surprise that he strongly condemns the theories of his African predecessor. He may not even have wished to do justice to Apuleius or the finer points of his teaching, let alone to consider them in the context of middle Platonism. Augustine is not writing a philosophical textbook, but clearly takes sides in a heated debate of great, even essential relevance to himself. Whatever he discusses serves the higher aims he pursues in *De Civitate Dei.*

[40] In the scholarly literature on Augustine and Apuleius, the church father's polemics are generally justified, if they are analysed at all. Even Fick [5], after showing how Augustine uses 'sophismes' (p. 198), 'extrapolation' and 'extrême simplification' (p. 199), so as to make a caricature of Apuleius' views (p. 200), seems eager to defend Augustine's approach: 'Sous l'apparence d'une critique textuelle, la diatribe contre le *De Deo Socratis* revêt les caractéristiques d'une éloquence fidéiste qui utilise toutes les ressources de la rhétorique traditionelle pour affirmer un message exclusif' (p. 205). Fick points to Augustine's pastoral concerns: wishing to increase his flock, he does not so much want to convince but to persuade, to invite people to accept a complete, fundamental change, briefly, to be converted (p. 205f.).

Having said this, one cannot help wondering why Augustine reacts in so strong a manner, and why he simply omits the positive aspects of Apuleius' theory of demons. His attitude may partly be explained by the sheer popularity of the middle Platonic system 'men—demons—gods'. The notion was widespread, if only because it easily combined with much of ancient philosophy and mythology. Its simplicity and intrinsic clarity must have made it a serious rival to Christian theories on the organization of the world, which are rather more complicated. Faced with the attractive pagan theory, Augustine may have felt obliged to combat it at some length.[41]

The specific tone and approach may also betray an element of personal concern. To Augustine, with his strong, direct experience of God, it must have been utterly unacceptable that God could not communicate with man, or that man could not reach God, but that both would be in need of intermediate powers. Maybe his own experience was so strong that it prevented him from taking a clear and fair view of the old pagan system. He may simply have been unable to give up some of the fundamental thoughts of his belief, even for the length of the discussion.

Meanwhile, Augustine's discussion of Apuleius' *De Deo Socratis*, for all its one-sided approach, is not as exceptional as it may seem. For many centuries, rhetorical polemics had always aimed at bringing forward one's own point of view in as powerful a manner as possible, not by carefully scrutinizing the opponent's theory, but rather by identifying some points that were best suited for strong criticism. Apuleius' own works, such as the colourful and powerful *Apology*, had been full of such personal polemics, even to the point of insults and invective, depths to which Augustine certainly does not sink here. Posthumously, one could say, Apuleius received no more than his fair share, having become a target of polemic himself. Nonetheless, it remains strange to see how an acute reader such as Augustine could misrepresent his views, in spite of their common background as Africans.

[41] One may perhaps add that generally a theory tends to be opposed all the more fiercely as it comes closer to the views held by the speaker himself. This universal notion may be relevant in Augustine's case as well.