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### Résumé de l'article

Chez saint Augustin le *numerus* sert de principe ontologique de la beauté finie en révélant l'ascension métaphysique du sensible vers l'intelligible. De plus, se divisant en sphères objective et subjective, le *numerus* s'avère être une totalité, « l'idée ». Toutefois, comme une forme de la culture antique, ce concept n'est pas connu comme une contradiction *réelle*, et ainsi les *numeri* éternels ne sont pas postulés comme un processus où la subjectivité finie, le *moi*, deviendrait nécessaire pour la substance infinie. Donc, dans la doctrine de saint Augustin, l'essence de la science de la musique n'a pas la valeur de l'activité humaine consciente de soi.

# NUMERUS AS THE METAPHYSICAL PRINCIPLE IN ST. AUGUSTINE'S DOCTRINE OF RHYTHM\*

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*RÉSUMÉ* : Chez saint Augustin le numerus sert de principe ontologique de la beauté finie en révélant l'ascension métaphysique du sensible vers l'intelligible. De plus, se divisant en sphères objective et subjective, le numerus s'avère être une totalité, « l'idée ». Toutefois, comme une forme de la culture antique, ce concept n'est pas connu comme une contradiction réelle, et ainsi les numeri éternels ne sont pas postulés comme un processus où la subjectivité finie, le moi, deviendrait nécessaire pour la substance infinie. Donc, dans la doctrine de saint Augustin, l'essence de la science de la musique n'a pas la valeur de l'activité humaine consciente de soi.

*ABSTRACT* : In St. Augustine's doctrine of rhythm numerus manifests the metaphysical ascent from sensuousness to rationality and is the ontological root of finite beauty. Moreover, numerus is differentiated into the objective and subjective spheres, proving to be a totality, the "idea." Meanwhile, as a formation of antique culture, this concept is not known as a real contradiction, and thereby eternal numeri are not posited as a process in which finite subjectivity, I would be a necessity for the infinite substance. So, in St. Augustine's doctrine the essence of the science of music has not the value of man's self-conscious activity.

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## I. ANTIQUE METAPHYSICS AS THE BACKGROUND OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S THOUGHT

The main significance of antiquity consisted in giving birth to such a form of spiritual being as metaphysics, which is culture in its proper sense.<sup>1</sup> The point is that education starts off with negating the surface level of the mind, its mere natural particularity being immersed into or, which is the same thing, elevated to its spiritual substantiality. Hegel, for instance, believes that the specificity of antique culture should be viewed in that the ancients tried themselves at every particularity, philoso-

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1. With the same intention in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant calls metaphysics "the completion of all the culture of human reason" (*die Vollendung aller Cultur der menschlichen Vernunft*) (I. KANT, *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd 1, Leipzig, Felix Meiner, 1919, p. 699).

phizing about their existence, and impregnated it with universality.<sup>2</sup> If one tries to explain what is meant by metaphysics, taking the correlation of the forms of consciousness, the result thereof will be the transformation of the sphere of sensuous experience into the realm of *a priori* thought.<sup>3</sup> So, the concern of ancient philosophy is that of metaphysics whose principle, which is ideality in every reality, was realized by virtue of the mind's elevation from the real world to the ideal one, to the world of thought.

It is beyond any doubt that Augustine's standpoint proves to be an eloquent manifestation of this mentality generated by antique culture. In opposition to the apparent and transient world of sensible existence he affirmed as true the one that is permanent and intelligible. In his *Confessions* he states that true being may be exclusively that which remains unchangeable (*id enim vere est, quod incommutabiliter manet*).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, according to Augustine, truth itself has the form of thought since it is contemplated by the intellect (*per veritatem quae intellecta conspicitur*).<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is not unexpected that in spite of the commitment of his mind to Christianity he candidly acknowledged that the metaphysical trend of his world outlook had been developed under the influence of antique philosophy.<sup>6</sup> It is likewise necessary to add that intellectualism as the cultural ideal of antiquity remained for Augustine the center of mental attraction both in the period of his philosophical formation and during the epoch of his complete development. This conviction is shared by such fundamental researchers as H.-I. Marrou and É. Gilson. The first believes that for Augustine in the period of the *Cassiciacum* dialogues as well as in the time of his latest treatise *On the Trinity* the highest spiritual faculty is reason grasping the divine truth<sup>7</sup>; the other shows that for Augustine as a Christian writer and the author of the *Expositions of the Psalms* the domain of thought did not only remain the highest part of the rational soul but was the one by means of which it adhered to the intelligible and to God.<sup>8</sup>

The connection between Augustine and antique metaphysics becomes even more conspicuous if one considers the way the metaphysical goal can and must be achieved. It cannot be attained but mediately. As Augustine states, in order to enable

2. G.W.F. HEGEL, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1975, p. 30.

3. J.G. Fichte similarly determines metaphysics as "the supersensuous" and "all Apriori" (J.G. FICHTE, *Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, Leipzig, Felix Meiner, 1908, p. 251).

4. *Confessiones*, 7, 11, 17 // *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*, Paris, Migne, t. 32, 1877, col. 742 (= PL 32, 742).

5. *De Trinitate*, 15, 3, 5 // *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*, Paris, Migne, t. 42, 1841, col. 1060 (= PL 42, 1060). The saint father's intellectualism shows itself as well in his argument that there is one and the same form of rational knowledge which is indifferent as to whether its contents are geometrical objects or God (*differentium rerum scientia indifferens*), and all the difference that can be observed there is dissimilarity of things and not of the intellect (*rerum tamen non intellectus dissimilitudine*) (*Soliloquia*, I, 4, 10; I, 5, 11 // PL 32, 874-875).

6. He mentions that his search for the *metaphysical* truth (for the *incorporeal* truth, to be literal) (*quaerere incorpoream veritatem*) was stimulated by his acquaintance with the works of the Platonists (*Confessiones*, 7, 20, 26 // PL 32, 746).

7. H.-I. MARROU, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, Paris, De Boccard, 1983, p. 364.

8. É. GILSON, *Introduction à l'étude de Saint Augustin*, Paris, Vrin, 1987, p. 56.

the mind to behold the ineffable, it is necessary to purge and exercise it.<sup>9</sup> This educational program of reaching and leading step by step to the incorporeal through the corporeal (*per corporalia ad incorporalia quibusdam quasi passibus certis vel pervenire vel ducere*)<sup>10</sup> was to be fulfilled with the help of studying *artes liberales*, which prepared the mind for philosophical comprehension of the eternal truth. Augustine's conception of such a propaedeutic is genetically antique and goes back at least to Plato who affirmed the necessity of the soul's gradual ascent from the barbarous slough to the first principle by means of those arts, or disciplines.

## II. BEAUTY AS THE MIDDLE TERM OF THE METAPHYSICAL ASCENT

But what is the middle term in the determinacy of which there started the spiritual ascent from particular sensuous things to the sphere of substantial universality and without which these extremes could never be brought together? That medium is beauty, and it is beauty that was the stage of antique consciousness.<sup>11</sup> Such is the mode to the level of which the spirit of the ancient world had progressed before it began to know itself in the form of thought. Owing to beauty, the substantial manifests itself and becomes its own object, and so begins its conscious work on itself. That is why it is no wonder that antique culture instructed the saint father in the conviction that the soul's ascent to the empyrean starts from the beauty of the terrestrial for the latter proves to be the departing point of the turn, extremely important for Augustine, by virtue of which the metaphysical flight to the intellectual fatherland is accomplished.

It is very significant that in one of his Easter sermons he recognizes that "the pagan wise men called philosophers scrutinized nature and cognized the Creator from His works" (*sapientes Gentium, quos philosophos dicunt, ... scrutatos fuisse naturam, et de operibus artificem cognovisse*).<sup>12</sup> Augustine's ties with antiquity become even closer when, obviously following the Platonic tradition, he passes from sensible to intelligible beauty and then to that of science in particular. Who strives for knowledge (*studiosus*) studies science as long as he/she mentally contemplates and loves its beauty (*pulchritudo doctrinae, species doctrinae*).<sup>13</sup> But as far as for antiquity there is nothing more beautiful than wisdom, which itself is true beauty (*Quid*

9. *De Trinitate*, 1, 1, 3 // PL 42, 821 ; *De quantitate animae*, 15, 25 // PL 32, 1049.

10. *Retractiones*, 1, 6 // PL 32, 591.

11. G.W.F. HEGEL, *Werke*, in 20 Bänden mit Registerband, Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp, 1986, Bd 18, p. 176. To be exact, it is necessary to point out that Hegel calls the stage of beauty to be that of Greek consciousness ("Die Stufe des griechischen Bewußtseins ist die Stufe der Schönheit"). But it is allowable to extend the determinacy of Greek into the antique one as a whole because Roman culture both in the form of art and in that of philosophy depended on the Hellenic world. Hegel eventually admits that Hellenism embraces as well the Roman world (*ibid.*, p. 123).

12. *Sermones*, 241, 1 // *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*, Paris, Migne, t. 38, 1863, col. 1133 (= PL 38, 1133).

13. *De Trinitate*, 10, 1, 2 // PL 42, 973 ; 974.

*ergo sapientia ? nonne ipsa vera est pulchritudo*),<sup>14</sup> it is necessary to turn from φιλοκαλία (as low love of sensuous beauty) to φιλοσοφία as the knowledge that is “not from this world,”<sup>15</sup> which is genuine worship of God (*Dei cultus*)<sup>16</sup> and is reckoned to be superior to any other science.<sup>17</sup>

### III. NUMERUS : FROM THE SENSUOUSNESS OF RHYTHM TO THE RATIONALITY OF NUMBER

So that beauty be realized as a necessary condition of spirit’s metaphysical ascent and that it be not merely a concept but also a reality jointing the extremes of being, it must be posited as a form whose opposed moments would manifest themselves as a concrete unity and, which is more important, as a process of elevation. Augustine as well as all antiquity had quite a number of categories to express the idea of internal cohesion. To this number belong, for instance, such predicates of his aesthetics as order (*ordo*), congruence (*congruentia*), unanimity (*concordia*), consent (*consensio*), consonance (*consonantia*), measure (*modus*), harmony (*concinntas*), and many of the sort. However, we are convinced that in the sphere of the beautiful the most significant is the category of rhythm (*numerus*). The point is that by means of one of its coupled meanings *numerus* exposes rhythm as a merely sensuous, though orderly, structure containing as its *ratio essendi* a supersensuous secret core, whereas by means of the other — namely by the fact that it is a number — this concept consolidates rhythm in the intelligible world of undying entities.

This dual nature of *numeri* has always given room to interpretations and is an intellectual challenge for everyone trying to give an exposition of Augustine’s conception in a modern language.<sup>18</sup> Starting his *Traité* on music in connection with Augustine, H.-I. Marrou (who published it under the pseudonym H. Davenson) states that he prefers to translate the Latin word *numeri* by the term “music” along the whole length of Book 6 of Augustine’s treatise. The French researcher explains that in reality the case in question is that of rhythms, which Augustine in conformity with his Pythagorean aesthetics reduces to durations, and durations — to numbers measuring them.<sup>19</sup> V.V. Bychkov, in his turn, characterizes Augustine’s books on music as “a work on rhythm in the broadest sense of the word or, more specifically, on mathematical laws of art” and accentuates this dual nature of the aesthetic subject-matter of Augustine’s work calling it “number-rhythm.”<sup>20</sup> The mentioned semantic duality is not the limit, though. F.-J. Thonnard in his commentary to the French translation of *De musica* singles out, for instance, four meanings, emphasizing the semantic com-

14. *Contra academicos*, 2, 3, 7 // PL 32, 922.

15. *De ordine*, 1, 11, 32 // PL 32, 993.

16. *De Trinitate*, 14, 1, 1 // PL 42, 1056.

17. *Contra academicos*, 3, 1, 1 // PL 32, 934.

18. That is why in the text of this paper the terms *numeri* and its duplex counterpart *rhythms/numbers* will interchange.

19. H. DAVENSON, *Traité de la musique selon l'esprit de saint Augustin*, Neuchâtel, Baconnière, 1942, p. 9.

20. V.V. BYCHKOV, *Estetika Avreliia Avgustina*, Moskva, Iskusstvo, 1984, p. 85.

plexity of the word.<sup>21</sup> But however many meanings *numerus* may have, their progression, as Thonnard views it, remains “an application of St. Augustine’s method gradually leading us from corporeal beauty to spiritual and divine realities.”<sup>22</sup> As a result of this ascent, we achieve pure, “distilled” being that acquires the determinacy of numbers and their relations.

#### IV. NUMERUS AS THE SUBSTANTIAL PRINCIPLE

In this context it is no wonder that all antiquity demonstrated utter devotion to the Pythagorean tradition within the ambit of which the number enjoys the status of an ontological principle. In this aspect the future bishop of Hippo was no exception. Needless to say that this attitude is explained by the central categorical role the number played in philosophy of his contemporaries. The fact that the number is of substantial importance to Augustine is confirmed by the text from his *On free choice of will* where he delivers an enthusiastic sermon about the way Divine Wisdom speaks to us through its “traces” (that is, by means of every finite form of sensuous existence) and urges us to penetrate it through into the essential core of these phenomena. So, we are admonished to understand that everything that attracts and pleases us in the corporeal and sensuous, is *numerosum*, which means rhythmic or determined by the number. Augustine also insists that we can judge what we grasp with corporeal senses (everything that is particular) only because there are universal laws of beauty.<sup>23</sup> Whatever particular there may be on earth or in heaven, it all has form and is therefore rhythmic and measured by numbers (*numeros habent*). If finite entities are deprived of their both rhythmic and mathematical determinacy, they will be annihilated. This means that their being comes from the number, and they partake in being as long as they are determined by the number (*in tantum illis est esse, in quantum numerosa esse*). The same concerns not only natural phenomena but also works of art including even most banal manifestations of artistic spirit. If we raise a question about what makes us enjoy, for example, dancing, we shall be given the answer that it is the number. Summing up his numerological admonition, Augustine says that every time something finite and transient is examined, it can be grasped neither by an external corporeal sense nor by internal reflection unless it is maintained by the forming activity of numbers. Hence Augustine concludes that “in order that the transient may be prolonged in being and make turns in time, as it were, with a duly arranged diversity of forms, there must be an eternal and immutable form (*aliquam formam aeternam et incommutabilem*) which would be neither contained nor dispersed in space and would not continue nor change in time but by means of which the finite could develop and could accomplish and realize in its particularity local and temporal numbers (*locorum ac temporum numeros*).”<sup>24</sup> It is obvious that this “eternal and immuta-

21. *Œuvres de saint Augustin*, VII, *Dialogues Philosophiques*, IV, *La Musique*, introduction, traduction et notes de G. Finaert et F.-J. Thonnard, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1947, p. 513-514.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 514.

23. *De libero arbitrio*, 2, 16, 41 // PL 32, 1263.

24. *De libero arbitrio*, 2, 6, 44 // PL 32, 1264-1265.

ble form” is the number. It is also important to emphasize that as far as for Augustine the cloth of existence is made of rhythms-numbers (*ex numeris*), it is exactly the rhythm-number that, going deeper into itself, reaches itself not in a particular form but in the universal one and becomes the ontological, or metaphysical, principle.

### V. NUMERUS AS THE “IDEAL” PRINCIPLE

In fact, Augustine succeeded at something more than just elevating “sublunary” corruptible rhythmicity to the level of immutable mathematical correlations. As a real Neo-Platonist and consequently one of those who completed the way of ancient thinking, he managed to concretize this realm of the internal by differentiating it into the spheres of the subjective and the objective. By means of this differentiation he posited a totality of the logical (metaphysical) and fashioned it into the form of a rather developed subjectivity.

A proof thereof is discovered, for example, in the dialogue *On order* when the philosopher passes from *authority* to the true attitude towards the subject-matter — to *reason (ratio)*. It should be noted that, speaking about reason, Augustine means not only something substantially metaphysical, which is not “for itself,” though, but such metaphysical being which is conscious. Thus, erecting a building, we as its constructors are more concrete, higher and better than our construction. However, swallows can build nests, too, and bees can build combs. So, if we believe that an activity is rational only because there are proportional dimensions in it, we shall have to admit that we are not better than the mentioned animals. Moreover, Augustine is convinced that animal activities as organized by numbers are proportional to the utmost (*imo numerosissimum est*). That is why inasmuch as it is humans that are rational, and not animals, rationality consists not in being proportioned or in producing proportional things, but in knowing and cognizing it (*non ergo numerosa faciendo, sed numeros cognoscendo*).<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, that part of the rational which is sunk in the depths of its substantiality and does not shoot towards the sun of consciousness and subjectivity still is reasonable “in itself.” So, Augustine brings to remembrance those “extremely learned men” who used to subtly subdivide the sphere of the rational in general into the subclasses of the *subjectively* rational (*rationalis*) and the *objectively* rational (*rationalabile*).<sup>26</sup> This fine distinction is of immense importance because here is found the key to the explanation of the further corresponding differentiation of *numeri* which is contained but not fully explicit in his doctrine.

Now attention must be paid to the internal difference of the Latin concept *numerus*. So far this difference has been determined as one-sidedly metaphysical, as merely that of two moments — rhythm and number, sensuousness and rationality, transience and eternity, particularity and universality. But it is important to mention that each of the moments of the opposition is a *totality* within itself and is divided into the determinacies of being and consciousness. In the sphere of sensuous *numeri*

25. *De ordine*, 2, 19, 49 // PL 32, 1018.

26. *De ordine*, 2, 11, 31 // PL 32, 1009.

this distinction is the one between those that are perceived (*sensibiles*) and those that perceive (*sensuales*). For example, dwelling on the idea that even when we turn to the corporeal we cannot be separated from the superior rhythms/numbers of reason, excellent in beauty, Augustine states that otherwise the advancing *numeri* would not modify the perceiving ones whose function, if there are bodily movements, is to actualize the perceived beauties of times (*progressores numeros sensuales non modificarent : qui rursus movendis corporibus agunt sensibiles temporum pulchritudines*).<sup>27</sup> No less demonstrative is the context where he says that there exists as well a kind of *numeri* perceiving what moves duly or unduly in actions why it is permitted to call them in like manner perceiving, for it is by means of perceived signs that souls exert influence upon each other (*qui sentiant quid in his actibus commode sive incommode moveatur, quos item sensuales appellare non pigeat, quia sensibilia signa sunt quibus hoc modo animae ad animas agunt*).<sup>28</sup> Despite the fact that we have not run across a passage in which the opposition of the *rationaly cognizing* (*rationale*) and the *rationaly cognized* (*rationabile*) would be evidently contrasted, its contents can be easily discovered. In his books *On music* Augustine proposes to designate as *rationabile* all that manifests a certain commensurability of numbers (*aliquam numerorum dimensionem*).<sup>29</sup> Qualified as only *rationabile*, “the reason of music” (*musicæ ratio*) is confined to merely numerical correlations of movements and sounds which are to accomplish their being determined by the number (that is, their rhythmicity) on different levels of their combinations (in feet, in rhythms in the specific sense of the word, in meters, in verses). And yet, “the reason of music” cannot be reduced to its objective determinacy in which it is not a conscious entity, nor is it a cognizing agent. It is necessary that the sphere of the rational should show itself as “being-for-itself,” as conscious, as subjectivity. So, when in the very end of the final book of his treatise Augustine brings himself to talk about spiritual and eternal *numeri* as of those that compose the realm of permanent being underlying all transient rhythmic, he mentions the heavenly *numeri* of the blessed and saintly souls that transmit the law of God down to the regulations of earthly and infernal order (*numeri beatarum animarum atque sanctorum, legem ipsam Dei... usque ad terrena et inferna jura transmittunt*). He nominates these conscious *numeri* as rationally cognizing and intellectual (*rationales et intellectuales*).<sup>30</sup>

This subjective determinacy of *numeri* achieved, Augustine’s metaphysics of rhythm displays itself as a mode of thinking whose principle is the rational totality, the “*idea*.”<sup>31</sup> But in Neo-Platonism in general as well as in its specific form of Augustine’s philosophy this reason, this “*idea*,” though developed and posited as subjectivity,<sup>32</sup> remains this subjectivity only “in itself” and not “for itself,” for it does not

27. *De musica*, 6, 11, 31 // PL 32, 1180.

28. *De musica*, 6, 13, 42 // PL 32, 1185.

29. *De musica*, 1, 11, 18 // PL 32, 1094.

30. *De musica*, 6, 17, 58 // PL 32, 1094.

31. The word “*idea*” is used here in the Hegelian sense according to which the *idea* is the stage of perfection of the logical (the metaphysical) and, being its own concept, is the unity of subject and object.

32. As is known, the Νοῦς of ancient philosophy is the concrete unity of νοητὰ and νοερά.



know itself as *real* subjectivity. The problem is that in Augustine's interpretation the metaphysical was aware of itself in such a way that it was confined to the level of its own abstraction, only *being*, to which belongs the category of number, and was not conscious of itself in the form of *concept*, for it had not yet passed through the crucible of finite self-consciousness, which was to become the standpoint of modern philosophy. In the contents of the revealed religion, in Christianity, this moment of the consciousness of the Absolute had already been realized. But the truth of the religion was still undeveloped in reality, in the world and could not be the certainty of its contemporary philosophical spirit.

## VI. THE LIMITATION OF *NUMERUS* AS THE METAPHYSICAL PRINCIPLE

The detected imperfection of subjectivity in Augustine's thought, antique in its essence, cannot pass unnoticed in his own classification of *numeri*. We have just discovered that they exhibit the holistic character of the idea, and now it is indispensable to examine the idiosyncrasy in their organism showing a visible symptom of morbid and even fatal substantialism of his doctrine. We remember that, according to this metaphysical principle, *numeri* may be either transient or eternal. But what is the criterion of their differentiation in "the region of unlikeness," for it is there where is found the *modern* principle of subjectivity. In his *Retractions* Augustine determines this sphere as that of such rhythms/numbers which are both "corporeal and spiritual but mutable" (*corporales et spirituales sed mutabiles*).<sup>33</sup> Moreover, this "mortal kind of rhythms/numbers" (*hoc numerorum genus mortale*) is arranged and hierarchized on the basis of substantiality (that is, on the basis that the making rhythms/numbers should be preferred to the made ones).<sup>34</sup> This means that though it is acknowledged that spirit is not mere being but "being for itself," consciousness as for Augustine the soul is, of course, better than the body, he does not take this thesis as a universal ground, and the determinateness of the soul, its image, which is as well a *numerus*, coming into being as a result of bodily action, proves to be worse than the sound as the effector of the action.

In a more developed form Augustine's argumentation would read as follows. Everything that is true must be preferred to what is false. Thus, for instance, the tree we see in a dream does not really exist, though its image is present in the soul. Hence this image of the soul is false. Therefore, in spite of the fact that the soul is better than the body, the true in the body is better than the false in the soul.<sup>35</sup> As a consequence,

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33. *Retractiones*, 1, 11, 1 // PL 32, 600.

34. *De musica*, 6, 4, 6 // PL 32, 1166.

35. *De musica*, 6, 4, 7 // PL 32, 1167. It is important to point out that Augustine does not even notice that such matters as truth and falsehood come into existence in the soul (that is, in subjectivity), for it is the soul that brings forth the determinateness of their very difference. A similar *démarche* of his logic can be observed when he talks about the phantasies and the phantasms (*De musica*, 6, 11, 32 // PL 32, 1180-1181). In both cases the problem is in the major premise — namely, in what is to be reckoned as true and false. For our metaphysician, as is obvious, the subjectivity of consciousness ("the soul") happens to be inferior to the substantiality of the unconscious ("the body").

Augustine even came to believing that *numeri* generated at certain intervals by the soul which moves in its own body “in silence and not remembering” (*in silentio non recordans*) (that is, unconsciously) as in pulsation or in respiration are “freer” (*liberiores*) and are ranked higher than those that are produced consciously in response to bodily effects.<sup>36</sup> If freedom is understood likewise, it turns to be an abstract formality and suffers from lack of determinateness because the determinateness of the soul starts with the “bodily passions” (*passiones corporis*). That is why the soul cannot be free when it is “not remembering,” unconscious, since such a state is absolute unfreedom, a complete non-being for self. It can only be free if it cognizes their necessity, this cognition arising from their experience. Augustine has as well another “substantial” argument in accordance with which the kind of rhythms/numbers that penetrate into the ear is appropriate in sounds but not in the soul hearing them. The soul must avoid the carnal *numeri* and be determined by the immutable ones.<sup>37</sup> So, from Augustine’s point of view the sensuous *numeri* of the soul as inappropriate to its rationality are even worse than the sounding ones. But with respect to this point it is necessary to object that although the bodies accomplish their nature by realizing their rhythmicity/numerosity while the soul as determined only by the corporeal *numeri* does not, the soul’s rhythms/numbers, whatever they may be in their specificity, are better only because they are in the element of the superior nature, which is the soul in comparison to the body.

What arrests our attention in the considered nuances of Augustine’s interpretation of *numeri* is that the aspect of subjectivity, of self-consciousness, that is found in the contents of his conception does not become a formal conscious principle. Meanwhile, substantialism, which is so critical to him, is not a well-founded, sufficiently “substantial” methodology as far as it remains a naive immediate way of mediation for it views the grounded as abstracted from its ground. Thus, the made always proves to be defective as compared to the maker as if the latter did not reflect into itself out of the former and did not have thereby its mediation and grounding. But substance is genuine if it is a totality of moments of mediation that is for itself and is therefore *subject*. In Augustine’s doctrine the human soul might have been this “substance-subject” for it plays the role of the middle term jointing the extremes of the sensuous and the rational, of the particular and the universal, of this world and the beyond. But in spite of the fact that the soul is the concreteness of each of the opposites, Augustine excludes it from the determinateness of rhythms/numbers for themselves. As a result, the *numeri* of the soul (*animales numeri*)<sup>38</sup> and even the spiritual ones (*spirituales numeri*) do not gain their subjectivity, do not deepen themselves so that they may know themselves as *I*. Although he calls upon the mind to come back into itself<sup>39</sup> by keeping from plunging into the muddy water of the finite, in this but *apparent* return it does not, in fact, round itself, does not complete itself as a whole.

36. *De musica*, 6, 6, 16 // PL 32, 1171.

37. *De musica*, 6, 4, 7 // PL 32, 1167.

38. *De musica*, 6, 10, 25 // PL 32, 1177.

39. “*in teipsum redeas...*” (!) (*De libero arbitrio*, 2, 16, 41 // PL 32, 1263).

Quite the reverse, it makes of itself a mere means for a superior end from which it is never to return into itself.

This problem disables *numerus* to be developed in the completeness of its significance, and that is why in Augustine's reasoning connected with the self-conscious forms of spiritual activity — namely, art and scientific cognition —, there is a shrill dissonance between its concept and reality. As regards the rhythms/numbers in art, he is very far from overestimating their ontological value. Moreover, for him it is reprehensible to take seriously those who produce or esteem works of art (*nec... pro magno habendi sunt qui talia opera fabricantur aut diligunt*).<sup>40</sup> The obvious disrespect towards finite art activities is easily explained in the context of antique substantialism: the human artist cannot be the true subject (that is, the agent) of art activity, for its only agent is “the highest art” (*ars summa*) of God that is also called Wisdom,<sup>41</sup> which operates human masters in such a way that they make beautiful things (*ipsa operatur etiam per artifices, ut pulchra et congruentia faciant*). This means that mortal artists cannot be creators of beautiful forms and rhythmic but discover them in their souls as implanted by the superior Wisdom that impressed them all in an incomparably more artful way in the body of the universe since the beginning of time.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, Augustine is convinced that beauty in nature is better than beauty in human art because it is by means of the rationally cognized rhythms/numbers (which, as we remember, come from “the highest art”) that the master is capable of producing “the perceiving rhythms/numbers” (*sensuales numeros*) of his skill, and then through their mediation he produces the advancing ones actuating the members of his body and in the end by their means he makes, say, of wood visual forms that are measured by space intervals. Thus, Augustine instills the idea that the nature of things, which is dependent only on the will of God, is able to produce without any mediation by subjectivity and its perceiving *numeri* from earth and other elements a plant for there is not a single one that would not strike root out of its seed and grow and then finally bear fruits in accordance with definite rhythms/numbers.<sup>43</sup> His argumentation is even reinforced as he states that the natural forms of animal bodies are more perfect than those produced as a result of imitation and work by a mortal artist. Besides, he believes that it is not real to express all the rhythmicity of the human body in a statue, and even that which can be revealed in it is transmitted there through

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40. *De diversibus quaestionibus octoginta tribus*, 78, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*, Paris, Migne, t. 40, 1887, col. 90 (= PL 40, 90).

41. It is important to note that the essence of the substantial relation does not vary according to the modification of the religious views, whether pagan or Christian ones, so that, taking into account the titles offered by another Neo-Platonic “musicologist” Aristides Quintilianus, the same divine might also be named as the god Apollo Musagetes in correspondence with the ancient tradition or — more philosophically — Demiurge, the purest Form (εἶδος εὐαγές), Logos or Unit (λόγον εἶθ' ἐνάδα), or, at last, Unitary Logos (λόγον ἐνιαῖον) (*Περὶ μουσικῆς*, 1, 3, *Aristidis Quintiliani De musica libri III*, cum brevi annotatione de diagrammatis proprie sic dictis, figuris, scholiis etc. codicum mss., éd. A. IAHNIUS, Berolini, Sumptibus S. Calvaryi et Sociorum, 1882, p. 3).

42. *De diversibus quaestionibus...*, 78 // PL 40, 89-90.

43. *De musica*, 6, 17, 57 // PL 32, 1191-1192.

the sculptor's soul by that Wisdom which fashions the very human body in accordance with nature.<sup>44</sup>

From what has been said we can easily draw the conclusion that finite self-consciousness, subjectivity, Ihood, or *artifex homo*, and not the abstract otherworldly *artifex Deus*<sup>45</sup> is excluded from what Augustine calls art, and that man is not its creator. That is why, in order to contemplate immutable rhythmic, or the numerical sphere in its purity (*ut numerum sempiternum videas*), he finds indispensable to affirm the verdict: "Transcend as well the soul of the artist" (*Transcende ergo et animum artificis*).<sup>46</sup> But one must not forget that in this transcendence the logical stress is made not as much on the fact that the transcended soul belongs to the artist as on the soul itself, on subjectivity. The point is that, in correspondence with Augustine's metaphysics, *numeri* cannot enjoy their absolute status even if they are emancipated from the form of sensuous consciousness, which features art experience, and are raised to the level of scientific cognition whose principle is the intellect. It is indisputable for him that in its intellectual form the mind does not depend on any transient determinateness of consciousness, hence there can no longer be seen any shape, color, movement or extent. This is the reason why Augustine is certain that in our nature there is nothing better than the understanding.<sup>47</sup> But inasmuch as it is a form of ours (that is, a form pertaining to the mortal human being), we in the state of this-worldly finitude inevitably prove to be banished from the heaven of the eternal truth whose contents do not manifest in Augustine's thought the meaning of ours, the meaning of our activity. He finds it erroneous to believe that for the same reason that a perceiving subject is better than a perceived object, one may conclude that any understanding subject is better than any object of the understanding. From his point of view such an assumption is fallacious for the reason that although the human being understands Wisdom, he is not better than Wisdom itself (*ne fortassis ex hoc etiam cogamur dicere, omne intellegens melius esse quam id quod ab eo intellegitur. Hoc enim falsum est; quia homo intellegit sapientiam, et non est melior quam ipsa sapientia*).<sup>48</sup> In this connection it is no wonder that Augustine has to paint in dull colors the picture of human cognition. Thus, he feels obliged to forestall that the outcome of all cognitive aspirations of the mind can only be "a transient thought of an intransient thing" (*rei non transitoriae transitoria cogitatio*).<sup>49</sup> Even if the mind gets to the intelligible incorporeal bosom of the causes of things, it is so feeble that its gaze (*obtus*) or look (*aspectus*) is to be repulsed or rejected by "the ineffable light" of the

44. *De diversibus quaestionibus...*, 78 // PL 40, 90.

45. In his treatise *On the true religion* Augustine talks about the indubitable existence of the incorruptible nature, superior to the human soul, or God whose wisdom is the eternal truth, which is justly called the law of all arts and the art of the almighty Artist (*est illa incommutabilis veritas, quae lex omnium artium recte dicitur et ars omnipotentis artificis*) (*De vera religione*, 31, 57, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*, Paris, Migne, t. 34, 1887, col. 147 [= PL 34, 147]).

46. *De libero arbitrio*, 2, 16, 42 // PL 32, 1264.

47. *De Trinitate*, 5, 1, 2 // PL 42, 912.

48. *De libero arbitrio*, 2, 5, 12 // PL 32, 1247.

49. *De Trinitate*, 12, 14, 23 // PL 42, 1010.

intelligible.<sup>50</sup> In other words, the truth for Augustine is necessarily something inaccessibly more sublime than our mind and reason (*aliquid quod sit mente nostra atque ratione sublimius*). It cannot be equated to our mind simply because otherwise it would be mutable (*Si autem esset aequalis mentibus nostris haec veritas, mutabilis etiam ipsa esset*).<sup>51</sup> By this means it becomes clear that Augustine deprives the universal, the Absolute of being a process within itself; and that is the reason why the genuine infinity is rather our subjectivity than the metaphysical abstraction which he mistakes to be truth.

As a consequence, Augustine's metaphysics is pessimistic as regards the problem of our mind's involvement in constituting the substantial. The specific region of rhythmic is an extremely illustrative example of this ontological and gnoseological pessimism. Thus, in his philosophy the science of music (which he entitles to be "the almost divine"<sup>52</sup>) as the science of numbers is rid of the value of self-conscious activity. In his work *On the Christian doctrine* Augustine declares that "it is clear to the veriest fool that the science of *numeri* was not constituted by men but was rather investigated and discovered" (*Iam vero numeri disciplina cuilibet tardissimo clarum est quod non sit ab hominibus instituta, sed potius indagata et inventa*).<sup>53</sup> Augustine explains that the reason thereof is that nobody can arbitrarily posit that three times three should not be nine, which evidences that inviolable numeric laws do not depend on man's institution.

However, it is important not to lose sight of one "inconspicuous" detail which is obvious in the necessity for the eternal and immutable *numeri* (and truth in general) to be, as he goes on further, "discerned by the insight of ingenious men."<sup>54</sup> This necessity is, in fact, predetermined by the inner tendency of the Absolute to be real and to know itself as the Absolute in its reality. Augustine's *numerus* as the metaphysical principle can and must be acknowledged as the ontological and gnoseological ground of finite rhythmic, but because of the lack of real subjectivity *numeri* remain ignorant substances that do not recognize themselves in the spiritual activity of artists and philosophers. That is why the metaphysical ascent in the sphere of *numeri* accomplished by Augustine's thought was only the first step to be made in the development of their concept. The next one was the formation of modern culture of subjectivity in the frames of which they could be understood as products of man's proper activity.

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50. *De Trinitate*, 15, 6, 10 // PL 42, 1064; *De libero arbitrio*, 2, 16, 42 // PL 32, 1264.

51. *De libero arbitrio*, 2, 13, 35; 2, 12, 34 // PL 32, 1260; 1259.

52. *De musica*, 1, 2, 3 // PL 32, 1084.

53. *De doctrina Christiana*, 2, 38, 56 // PL 34, 61.

54. *Ibid.*