

AUGUSTINE AND THE DIALOGUE

Augustine and the Dialogue argues that, contrary to the scholarly consensus, Augustine's dialogues, with their inconclusive debates and dramatic shifts in focus, betray a sophisticated pedagogical method that combines strategies for "un-learning" and self-reflection with a willingness to proceed via provisional answers. By shifting the focus from doctrinal content to questions of method, Erik Kenyon seeks to reframe scholarly discussions of Augustine's earliest surviving body of works. This approach shows the young Augustine not refuting so much as appropriating Academic skeptical practices. It also shows that the dialogues' few scriptural references, e.g. Wisdom 11:20's "measure, number, weight," come at key structural points. This helps articulate the dialogues' larger project of cultivating virtue and their approach to philosophy as a form of purification. Augustine is shown to be at home with pluralistic approaches, and Kenyon holds up the dialogues' methodology as an attractive model for thinking through problems of the liberal academy today.

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*For my parents
and grandparents*

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	x
Introduction: Back to the Drawing Board	I
1 The Pursuit of Wisdom: <i>Contra Academicos</i>	24
2 From Plato to Augustine	57
3 The Measure of Happiness: <i>De beata vita</i>	82
4 God's Classroom: <i>De ordine</i> and <i>De Musica</i>	101
5 An Advanced Course: <i>Soliloquia</i> + <i>De immortalitate animae</i>	141
6 Philosophy and Kathartic Virtue: <i>De quantitate animae</i>	160
7 Piety, Pride and the Problem of Evil: <i>De libero arbitrio</i>	169
Conclusion: Augustine and the Academy Today	230
<i>Bibliography</i>	237
<i>Index</i>	248

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ix

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The original impetus for this study stretches back to an Augustine *lectio*, which I participated in from 2003 to 2010. This reading group brought together philosophers, classicists and their graduate students, moving annually between Cornell University, the University of Vermont and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Under the kind eye of the late Gary Matthews, we spent a day each year working through a single book, a few pages at a time, before descending on a Chinese restaurant for dinner. The *lectio*'s winding discussions and dozens upon dozens of handouts taught me what it means to love a text. At the end of the day, though, I felt myself lacking a sense of what all the details added up to. This book raises and attempts to answer the basic question: What is Augustine's project in the dialogues? With Augustine studies growing rapidly in several fields, my greatest hope is that the present work will be useful for framing questions and setting details in context. As the readers from Cambridge have demonstrated, portions of my argument will strike some as controversial. I look forward to continuing the discussion.

Abbreviations

Aristotle	
<i>EN</i>	<i>Ethica Nicomachea</i>
Augustine	
<i>C. Acad.</i>	<i>Contra Academicos</i>
<i>Conf.</i>	<i>Confessiones</i>
<i>De beata v.</i>	<i>De beata vita</i>
<i>De imm. an.</i>	<i>De immortalitate animae</i>
<i>De lib. arbit.</i>	<i>De libero arbitrio</i>
<i>De Mag.</i>	<i>De Magistro</i>
<i>De Mus.</i>	<i>De Musica</i>
<i>De ord.</i>	<i>De ordine</i>
<i>De quant. an.</i>	<i>De quantitate animae</i>
<i>De Trin.</i>	<i>De Trinitate</i>
<i>Retract.</i>	<i>Retractationes</i>
<i>Sol.</i>	<i>Soliloquia</i>
Cicero	
<i>Acad.</i>	<i>Academica</i>
<i>N.D.</i>	<i>De natura deorum</i>
<i>Hort.</i>	<i>Hortensius</i>
<i>Tusc.</i>	<i>Tusculanae Disputationes</i>
Plato	
<i>Ap.</i>	<i>Apologia</i>
<i>Grg.</i>	<i>Gorgias</i>
<i>Men.</i>	<i>Meno</i>
<i>Phd.</i>	<i>Phaedo</i>

Abbreviations

xi

<i>Phdr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>R.</i>	<i>Respublica</i>
<i>Smp.</i>	<i>Symposium</i>
<i>Ti.</i>	<i>Timaeus</i>

Plotinus	
<i>Enn.</i>	<i>Enneades</i>