**Reason’s Revelation and Revelation’s Reason**

Reading Apuleius’ *De Deo Socratis* and Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei* through the Lens of Novak’s *Athens and Jerusalem*

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Novak’s *Athens and Jerusalem* derives its title and point of departure from Tertullian’s infamous challenge:

What then belongs to Athens and Jerusalem? What belongs to the academy and the church? What belongs to heretics and Christians? Our teaching comes from the Porch of Solomon, who himself taught that the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart. Let those who produce a Stoic or Platonic or dialectical Christianity look after themselves! We have no need of curiosity after Jesus Christ, nor of inquiry after the Gospel. When we believe, we desire to believe nothing further, for we believe this first – that we need to believe nothing further.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The *Tertullian Dichotomy*,[[2]](#footnote-2) as I will refer to it, separates the grounds and forms of intellectual inquiry in two: Athens and the academy stand in for the classical philosophers’ project of rational inquiry, and Jerusalem and the church for the theological elaboration of revealed truth found in the writings of the Evangelists and early Church Fathers.[[3]](#footnote-3) Clearly, Tertullian intends for the response to his dichotomy to be *nihil* – that there is nothingshared between Athens and Jerusalem. This *nothing* should not be taken, however, to indicate mere disinterest or disengagement between the two divisions, such that philosophy has its proper domain of inquiry, and revelation its own, and never the twain shall meet. Rather, as Novak understands the challenge, Tertullian’s dichotomy describes an existential, zero-sum confrontation between philosophy and theology.[[4]](#footnote-4) In this way, there is nothing shared between Athens and Jerusalem, not in the sense that the overlapping set between their two domains of inquiry is empty, but rather that the two sides lay claim to the exact same domain, while also being unwilling to cede any element of this domain to the opposing party. Ironically, Athens and Jerusalem have nothing in common because they have *everything* in common – both lay claim to the truth in its entirety, and the mutually-exclusive nature of their claims means that nothing Athens holds as a true element of its domain can also be an element of Jerusalem’s domain.[[5]](#footnote-5)

This paper begins by retracing Novak’s radical response to Tertullian’s Dichotomy: the relationship between Athens and Jerusalem is not to be understood as a conflict between reason and revelation, but rather between two (sometimes competing) revelations about which philosophy and theology reason.[[6]](#footnote-6) In the first section (I), I attempt to justify Novak’s reading of the Dichotomy as existential and mutually-exclusive. Next, I discuss why Novak thinks that his understanding of philosophy and theology as reasoning about distinct revelations better characterizes the relationship between Athens and Jerusalem than the Tertullian Dichotomy, showing how philosophy depends on ‘theological’ revelation (II) and theology makes use of ‘philosophical’ reason (III). I then discuss Novak’s Completion Thesis (IV) – that Athens is unable to complete the intellectual projects it sets itself by means of its own resources, and thus always stands in need of Jerusalem’s revelation.

In the second half of the paper, I argue that the blueprint Novak gives us for Athens and Jerusalem’s relationship can be fruitfully applied to the study of the Christian reception of Greco-Roman philosophy in antiquity. Novak’s own work in *Athens and Jerusalem* focuses exclusively on Jewish engagement with philosophy throughout history since, as Novak affirms, Judaism “is the only place in the world from which I can see other places in the world with my own eyes” (*A&J* I.44). I demonstrate the importance of Novak’s theory for better understanding Christian authors by way of a case study of Augustine’s reception of Apuleius’ *De Deo Socratis* in his *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*. I begin by summarizing Apuleius’ text, showing how Novak’s understanding of philosophy’s relationship to revelation accurately tracks Apuleius’ interaction with Plato and contemporaneous religious belief (V). Then, I show how Augustine’s engagement with Apuleius has been misunderstood by modern commentators, and how Novak’s work allows us to clarify these misunderstandings (VI and VII). In *De Civitate Dei* VIII and IX, Augustine embraces the Completion Thesis, arguing that Apuleius’ philosophical project can only be successfully fulfilled through Christian revelation. Understood in this way, we can see Augustine relating to Apuleius not (or not only) as the hostile subject of a polemical refutation, but also as a fellow sojourner in need of the correction and completion made possible by Christianity. Novak’s theory thus allows us to better make sense of Augustine’s aims and strategies when engaging with Apuleius, in turn suggesting that the blueprint drafted in *Athens and Jerusalem* might be successfully applied to other Christian engagements with philosophy throughout Western intellectual history.

***I. A Tale of Two Revelations: The Tertullian Dichotomy***

The reading of the Tertullian Dichotomy outlined in the opening paragraph immediately raises two questions: why does the confrontation between Athens and Jerusalem carry *existential* weight, and why should we think of the conflict as a *mutually-exclusive* dichotomy? In other words, why could we not view this conflict in a deflationary light, as a mere question of scholarly interest, or as a conflict wherein a compromise (some sort of sharing of the intellectual playing-field, perhaps) might be possible?

First, the conflict must have existential import because both philosophy and theology are life-ordering commitments – to engage in one or the other is not merely to, for instance, assent to one set of propositions in contrast to another (regardless of how (in)compatible these two sets of beliefs may be), but to *commit* oneself to reason or revelation. This commitment is to a distinct method of inquiry, to the propositional truths that issue from this method, and above all to a *modus vivendi* derived from this method and these truths.[[7]](#footnote-7) To accept the central truth-claims of philosophy or theology without changing one’s life to conform to those truths would be either hypocritical or incoherent.

As to the mutually-exclusive nature of the dichotomy, Novak might argue as follows. Philosophy takes universally-accessible facts as the ‘raw material’ of its inquiry, and has as its aim universal truth – that is, truth with a public “criterion of verifiability” which is, at least in principle, universally accessible to human beings (*A&J* I.11) – that can undergo rational interrogation and offer arguments in favour of their endorsement. Scientific truth represents the paradigm of this sort of truth: at the heart of the scientific method is the need for experimental results to be (in principle) repeatable by and therefore accessible to any observer, and the conclusions drawn from these results must be defended through rational argumentation. Conversely, theology proceeds on the basis of unique and singular events that are, by their very nature, not universally accessible.[[8]](#footnote-8) Furthermore, because of the overwhelming nature of theophany, any attempt to reason about or express this revelation will inevitably fall short – revelation can never be shared in such a way that the truth contained in the initial moment of revelation would become fully accessible to an audience.

Finally, theological truth cannot submit to rational critique without losing its authority, because engaging in the process of rational interrogation and justification threatens to reduce revelation to the predictable and repeatable domain of empirico-scientific experience (*A&J* I.34, 36). Miracles, for instance, can be reduced to remarkable-but-not-impossible exceptions to scientific laws of nature, which themselves (in a Humean light) only express regularities in the natural world without ever claiming to be exceptionless. However, understanding a miracle as *merely* an exception to characterizations of natural regularities causes us to, so to speak, miss the point of the revelation – we fail to understand the miracle as happening at a particular time and place, and to a particular community, as part of God’s providential plan for God’s creation (*A&J* II.27). The reason for the *who* and *when* and *where* of revelation cannot be arrived at or defended using the same criteria of publicity as philosophical truth. Rational inquiry allows us to understand a miracle as an exception to a regular pattern that admits of exceptions, but cannot lead us to the *why* that explains this exception.

One might object, however, that this argument fails to rule out the possibility of compromise. The initial, miraculous *datum* of revelation might be inaccessible to philosophical inquiry – but what about other domains of knowledge, like natural science or ethics? Surely, we might think, *these* fields of inquiry fall under the purview of philosophy and are beholden to philosophy’s standard of universal accessibility. If this is the case, shouldn’t Athens and Jerusalem be sharing the domain of truth, cultivating their distinct fields of inquiry side by side?

Here, Tertullian’s arguments help fill in Novak’s line of thought. Recall Tertullian’s initial challenge to the possibility of a synthesis of Athens and Jerusalem, quoted above. There, he claimed that Christians have no need for curiosity (*curiositas*) or inquiry (*inquisitio*) after the revelation of the Gospels, and stronger still, that the first article of belief for Christians is that there is nothing we must believe beyond this revelation (*DPH* VII.12-13). For Tertullian, this revelation finds its full expression in the Rule of Faith (*regula fidei*), whose articulation in the *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* is very similar to the later Apostle’s Creed (XIII). Once one has discovered and embraced this *regula*, there is nothing more that one *needs* to know. Although Tertullian sometimes writes as if there is nothing else to inquire about or believe beyond the *regula* (IX.4), his actual position seems to be that there is nothing else *of existential value* to inquire about or believe. Once one has arrived at the revealed truths of the Christian faith, one can engage in philosophical inquiry to one’s heart’s content, but only as a sort of idle preoccupation. Athens can continue to toil quietly in its own corner, so long as it does not disturb one’s certainty in Jerusalem’s revealed truths – and if ever Athens’ toil should threaten this certainty, the work of philosophy must be abandoned without hesitation. Better to remain ignorant, Tertullian tells us, than to lose one’s faith (XIV.1-2).

So, Tertullian and Novak might reply to the suggestion of compromise that there is indeed a domain of philosophical truth, and the theologian can philosophize in her spare time – but to engage in philosophical inquiry *as a philosopher* would require an existential commitment to philosophy. One would have to believe that there are things one *must* know beyond revelation, things without the knowledge of which life would be incomplete (*DPH* XI.2). Proper philosophical inquiry requires commitment to a truth beyond revealed truth, or a truth that *completes* revealed truth, and thus requires one to admit the *inadequacy* of revealed truth. Sure, there might be domains of truth beyond the domain of revealed truth, but these are not the domain over which Athens and Jerusalem are ultimately contending.

The Tertullian Dichotomy thus posits a mutually-exclusive decision of existential importance: *either* one accepts the method and truth criteria of philosophic rationality, *or* one embraces a way of life grounded in an a- (though, the theologian would claim, not ir-)rational, particular moment of epiphany. The two cities are, on this line of thought, irreconcilable. To embrace the theological way of life of Jerusalem is, necessarily, to reject philosophical Athens – without any opportunity for compromise or truth shared between the two sides.

Novak’s radical solution to the foregoing problem – and the orienting project of *Athens and Jerusalem* – is to reject Tertullian’s Dichotomy as an inadequate characterization of the confrontation of theology and philosophy. For Novak, the tension between Athens and Jerusalem is not a conflict between unrevealed reason and arational revelation, but between two distinct revelations about which philosophical and theological communities individually reason.[[9]](#footnote-9) Taking his inspiration from Socrates’ reliance on revelation in the form of both his *daimonion* and the Delphic oracle, Novak argues:

Both philosophy and theology involve a total existential response to a revelation a philosopher or a theologian has received, either directly (via prophecy) or indirectly (via tradition). Such a receptive response is an act of faith, which is required of both theologians and philosophers. Both philosophy and theology engage content by means of the method each brings to what it has received unambiguously and unconditionally, i.e., what it has received faithfully (*A&J* I.14).

If this is correct, we can resolve the dichotomy by affirming that Athens and Jerusalem “still occupy the same discursive world” (I.44); that is to say, they are both engaged in the search for the same truth by way of the same method. Philosophy and theology will differ with respect to *which* revelation they explore through rational inquiry, but their methods and the end of their inquiry will be shared – creating the possibility of a shared domain of truth between the two cities.

In order to evaluate whether Novak’s account better characterizes the relationship between Athens and Jerusalem than the traditional interpretation of Tertullian’s Dichotomy, we will need to first understand philosophy’s faith and theology’s response, and then investigate whether this account accurately tracks how theologians and philosophers have thought of their own projects and their interactions with each other. To this end, in the following two sections I will sketch how Novak thinks of the various forms of reason’s revelation and revelation’s reason before turning to consider how Novak’s account might be applied to the engagement of Christian philosophers with their pagan antecedents.

***II. Reason’s Revelation***

What is the “Hellenic revelation” (*A&J* III.28) of the philosophers? In *Athens and Jerusalem*, Novak focuses on two distinct theoretical commitments that constitute (at least in part) reason’s revelation within the context of classical Greek philosophy: 1) to the philosopher’s god, both as i) the origin of philosophical activity and ii) the teleological end of the philosopher’s system; and 2) to nature as a *datum*, that is to say, to i) there being a world ‘out there’ that can be experienced and known, and to ii) our intellect being adequate to the task of knowing this world. As we shall see, it will also be helpful to add to this list Strauss’ idea of the philosopher’s aphilosophic commitment 3) to methodological principles that cannot undergo the rational interrogation these principles require. Let us consider each of these commitments in turn.

First, the philosophers of classical Athens – and those of most other periods of Western philosophy – are committed to the existence of a divine figure or set of figures,[[10]](#footnote-10) and this commitment plays an essential structuring role for their philosophical activity. Plato’s depiction of Socrates, for instance,[[11]](#footnote-11) consistently emphasizes his reliance on revelation to justify and direct his engagement with philosophy. This is most clearly the case, of course, in the famous story of the oracle from Delphi that prompts Socrates – or so he tells us[[12]](#footnote-12) – to first engage in the elenchtic interrogation of his fellow citizens. Novak repeatedly points to Socrates’ divine justification for *elenchus* as his foundational evidence of philosophy’s revelation,[[13]](#footnote-13) but it is far from the only example in the Platonic corpus of Socrates justifying his activity and way of life by appeal to divine revelation.

Let us briefly consider a few other examples of divine revelation guiding Socrates’ actions in the Platonic corpus. First, in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates’ divine sign (his *daimonion*) prevents him from leaving the spot where he has been conversing with Phaedrus until he remedies the offense he has caused to Eros in his first speech, leading him to deliver his Palinode (242b8-243d7). Second, when asked at the beginning of the *Phaedo* why he has spent his last days in prison composing music and poetry, Socrates tells his friends that he has been repeatedly visited by a dream saying: “Socrates, make and practise *mousikē*” (60e6-7).[[14]](#footnote-14) Socrates had hitherto understood the dream as commanding him to practise philosophy, since he regarded philosophy as the highest form of *mousikē*,[[15]](#footnote-15) but decided to practise a more conventional form of *mousikē* so that he might, to borrow a colloquial expression, ‘cover all his bases’ before his death. Third, at the start of the *Crito*, Socrates relates how he was visited by a dream-figure, beautiful and robed in white, who told him: “Socrates, may you come to fertile Phthia on the third day” (44a10-b3). Socrates interprets the dream to be telling him that he will die on the third day (counting inclusively) from his dream, and that, presumably, his soul will move on to a fertile dwelling like the Isles of the Blessed.[[16]](#footnote-16) Finally, midway through the *Phaedo*, Socrates explains his readiness to continue his philosophical investigation concerning the immortality of the soul despite the fact that he will soon be forced to commit suicide (and should his belief in the soul’s immortality be disproven, would presumably go to his death hopelessly distraught,) by way of a prophetic art (*mantikē*) he shares with swans, who are Apollo’s servants. Swans, Socrates claims, sing most beautifully just before their death, because they have been given insight into the joy that awaits them after death – and Socrates, sharing this revealed insight, can confidently continue to discuss the immortality of the soul in the face of his impending death (84d8-85b9).

In the above examples, the divine plays a number of important roles for Socrates: it prompts Socrates to philosophize *ab initio*, provides normative guidance as to what Socrates should and shouldn’t do when philosophizing, confirms his decisions by providing assurance that they will turn out for the best, and so forth. To these functional roles of the philosopher’s god, Novak also emphasizes the divine’s role as *telos*. God is, in Novak’s reading of Plato and Aristotle, the structuring end or *Summum Bonum* of the natural world, towards which the entirety of nature is ordered in an interdependent teleological hierarchy (*A&J* II.12-14). God is also the completion or perfection of morality – interhuman justice is, at best, an approximation of or analogy for the perfect justice of the divinity, a perfection that the philosopher strives to identify herself with as much as possible by way of her philosophical activity (III.10; IV.12). God is therefore the *telos* of philosophy as a whole, both as the ultimate object of knowledge for philosophical inquiry and the highest good that the philosopher aims to attain (I.48).

So, god serves as the beginning and the end of the Greek philosophical project, providing both the normative injunction that motivates philosophical activity[[17]](#footnote-17) and the *telos* of natural and moral philosophy as a whole, while also playing an essential role in guiding and sustaining the philosopher in the midst of her inquiry. One might object, however, that philosophers in the ancient world sometimes denied either the existence of god or the fact that the divine has any direct causal involvement with the world – a denial that has become all the more common among contemporary philosophers. This suggests that the philosopher’s commitment to god is, at best, a contingent form of philosophic revelation, rather than a necessary *conditio sine qua non* of philosophy. Philosophers who make use of a divine figure in their inquiry may be committed to a form of philosophical revelation, but this is not enough to show that philosophy is *necessarily* committed to such a revelation.

Still in search of such a necessary commitment, let us consider Novak’s second suggestion, namely, that philosophy is committed to nature as a *datum*. This commitment takes two forms: the philosopher is committed to the existence of a mind-independent external world that is ‘given’ insofar as it is experienced, and to the rational comprehensibility of this world given to her in experience. Novak speaks of this commitment as a form of philosophical *faith*. Faith, as Novak understands it, is an unreasoned commitment that both precedes and is presupposed by whatever beliefs we may form – and just as the theologian’s faith in God’s existence and loving nature comes before any rational arguments about God, any belief we form about the world always presupposes a commitment to that world’s existence and intelligibility (I.17-19, 31-32). This faith commitment is expressed in the Scholastic definition of truth as *adaequatio intellectus ad rem* (which Novak translates as “truth is the intellect adjusting itself to its greater object,”) as the very notion of truth already presupposes a commitment to an object (*rem*)given to it as an object of intellectual inquiry (I.12).

But even here, one can adduce numerous instances of philosophers who reject the world as a *datum*, or at least reject the possibility of *knowing* this *datum*. Various strands of ancient skepticism seem to lack this commitment, for instance, and Descartes’ methodological skepticism has at its heart a refusal to take the external world as an unargued-for or arational faith commitment. Novak thus seems to have again pointed to a contingent form of philosophic revelation – a commitment that most philosophers share most of the time, but not a commitment that is essential to the practise of philosophy *tout court*.

At this point, we seem to have arrived at something of an impasse. Novak’s claim is not merely that philosophy is committed *for the most part* to its own revelation, but rather that such a commitment is the essential and unavoidable ground of philosophy. So far we have yet to find any such universal commitment – but here, I think, Strauss is able to lend his student a helping hand.

Strauss argues that as soon as philosophy acknowledges the *possibility* of a way of life the commitment to which is derived from revelation, the philosopher’s decision to commit herself to philosophy must inevitably rest on an “unevident decision,” that is to say, on an “act of will” that cannot itself be rationally justified.[[18]](#footnote-18) Theology and philosophy, as we have already seen, both ask for commitment to (at least apparently) irreconcilable ways of life. When presented with this mutually-exclusive decision, how can I know that philosophy presents the correct way of life, and therefore that revelation does not? In order to *know* that revelation is not the correct commitment, Strauss argues, I would need to know that the ground which justifies revelation’s way of life – miracles, and in particular, the miracle of theophany – is impossible. And how could I know that miracles are impossible? I would either need to know i) that God does not exist, or ii) that the possibility of miracles would be incompatible with God’s existence. In order to know either (i) or (ii), however, I would need to possess what Strauss calls a ‘completed metaphysic,’ that is, an understanding of the natural world that leaves no gaps in which God or the possibility of miracles might hide. [[19]](#footnote-19) Given that such a completed metaphysic isn’t available to finite human beings (or, at the very least, has never yet been achieved by anyone facing the decision between Athens and Jerusalem,) those who choose the philosophical way of life must commit to philosophy without *knowing* that this commitment is correct. The choice of philosophy, ironically, ends up being an act of faith rather than an act on the basis of knowledge that has withstood philosophical interrogation. Every philosopher philosophizes on the basis of a faith commitment that cannot itself be entirely rationally justified – and thus is, for Strauss, a sort of revelation.

In response, one might object that Strauss has failed to correctly characterize the sort of methodological commitment Athens demands of its citizens: a philosophical way of life, we might think, does not require that we *only* act on the basis of knowledge, but that we act on the basis of knowledge whenever possible, and on the basis of our most trustworthy beliefs when such knowledge is unavailable. Even if Strauss were to grant this qualification, however, he can still reply that the philosophical commitment to act on the basis of whichever beliefs have proven most robust under rational interrogation – whether those beliefs qualify as knowledge or merely as reliable beliefs – still constitutes a commitment that cannot itself be reasoned about. Again, our objector might argue that this commitment can be reasoned about, and point us to a wealth of contemporary literature on the question of why we should be rational. And Strauss, again, can reply that the need to ask why we should be rational, and the (eminently rational) methods we bring to bear in trying to answer this question, must go unquestioned. Ultimately, Strauss would contend, we must reach a point in our investigation where our spade is turned and we can dig no further.[[20]](#footnote-20) Philosophy’s inquiry proceeds from a set of questions or methodological assumptions whose foundation and structuring role in the activity of philosophy goes unquestioned.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Philosophy therefore inevitably begins with a leap of faith, in Strauss’ analysis, insofar as it begins with a commitment to thoroughgoing rational interrogation that cannot withstand the very sort of rational interrogation it is committed to.Strauss’ arguments thus add to Novak’s original list a basic *datum* of reason to which every philosopher must be committed, and this *datum*, ironically enough, is the basic commitment that originally gave rise to Athens’ side of Tertullian’s Dichotomy through the life of Socrates. Even if we try to weaken the force of this initial commitment so as not to give rise to the apparent paradox Strauss points us towards, it seems we will always arrive at a set of bedrock assumptions that must be taken as a philosophical given for our inquiry.

***III. Revelations’ Reason***

In the preceding section, we discussed three different forms of reason’s revelation: the philosopher’s god, the *datum* of an experienceable and intelligible world, and the commitment to philosophical inquiry itself, or at least some part of the grounds therefor. Now, I want to consider the other side of the dichotomy – what roles does reason play in theology’s response to revelation? Novak suggests three interrelated ways in which theology makes use of reason in its response to revelation: 1) through exegesis and hermeneutics, when theology seeks to interpret the *datum* of revelation; 2) by clearing away impediments to the reception of revelation; and 3) by enabling humans to worship the subject of revelation, God, through rational contemplation.

To begin with, reason allows theologians to ‘make sense’ of the content of revelation, serving as a sort of bridge between an individual’s initial and miraculous encounter with the divine and the entire community of human beings with whom God enters into relationship through revelation. For Novak, this sort of hermeneutical mediation has two forms. First, reason provides theologians with *conditiones sine quibus non* for the interpretation of revelation, setting out minimal criteria for possible theological interpretations. Reason’s limiting function is demonstrated, for instance, by the Talmudic principle that nothing forbidden to human beings in general can be permitted for Jews in particular.[[22]](#footnote-22) Novak has argued that this principle requires that any revealed moral principle is beholden to the limitations imposed by natural law.[[23]](#footnote-23) Moral principles arrived at by philosophical inquiry in no way exhaust the demands (understood by way of revelation) that God makes of humanity, but such rationally-justified principles cannot be *superseded* by revealed commandments: as Novak emphasizes, “there is much more to revelation than morality, but not anything less.”[[24]](#footnote-24) Second, reason provides linguistic and conceptual resources by which those who have encountered the divine and their religious descendants can attempt to give finite propositional content to the infinite and non-propositional *datum* of the moment of revelation. Theologians must *make sense* of revelation, and this interpretive process is inherently rational in nature.

However, we must be careful not to understand this interpretive process as a response to an already-complete *datum*, seeing revelation as a *fait accompli* and theology’s exegesis a mere parergon of revelation. To do so would be fall into what Heschel called the trap of theological dogmatism or objectivism, reducing the dynamic richness of revelation to a static and unchanging (and hence ‘objective’) *datum*.[[25]](#footnote-25) Instead, Novak argues with Heschel, we must recognize the role of prophets – and theologians more generally – in *constituting* revelation: “revelation goes *through* the prophet and is actively mediated *by* him… in other words, the prophet structures the content of revelation so that it can be transmitted to the world.”[[26]](#footnote-26) Properly understood, the *datum* of revelation is always something *datum* ***nobis***. The fact that the *datum* is communicated to us in a publicly-accessible manner, using language and concepts shared in common by the theologian’s audience, shows that revelation has already entered into the domain of philosophy.[[27]](#footnote-27) It is for this reason, ultimately, that Novak (inspired by Maimonides) argues that “all philosophers are not prophets, but all prophets are first philosophers.”[[28]](#footnote-28) To interpret revelation – and every communication of revelation is always already an interpretation of revelation – is unavoidably to *philosophize* about revelation.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Second, Jerusalem makes use of reason to clear away obstacles to the reception of revelation, a role that Novak associates with the Heideggerian concept of ‘letting be’ (*seinlassen*) and terms reason’s “critical function” (*A&J* I.33).[[30]](#footnote-30) We might think of this clearing away of obstacles in several ways. Reason can expose the conceptual inconsistencies of other theological systems, a process which Novak associates with the negation of idolatry in the *Tanach*, and in which we will see Augustine readily engaged in the following sections. The *conditiones sine quibus non* of morality, which we already saw constraining the theologian’s interpretive possibilities, also serve to clear away the obstacles of superstition and fanaticism. The interpretive constraints imposed by philosophically-justified moral precepts should prevent theology’s descent into the blind and unreflective endorsement of false interpretations of revelation – or, at the very least, interpretations that must be false on moral grounds.[[31]](#footnote-31) Finally, reason is needed in order to properly appreciate the *miraculous* character of revelation. Neither philosophy nor theology alone can properly situate a miracle against the backdrop of the natural world. As we saw earlier, only theology is able to explain why a miraculous exception to the laws of nature takes place in a particular context for a particular people as foretold by a particular prophetic figure (*A&J* II.24-7). At the same time, however, only philosophy can arrive at the understanding of laws of nature that is needed to recognize an exception to natural regularities *as an exception* – thus making possible our engagement with revelation as miraculous in the first place.

Third, reasoning about the natural world allows us to enter into relationship with the God who created it – reason can thus also function as a form of worship of the revealed God, worship that is only possible once the subject of revelation is revealed to us. Once we have come to recognize that the regularities of the laws of nature were created by a loving God for our sake,[[32]](#footnote-32) the rational contemplation of this natural order through scientific inquiry takes on a reverential character. To learn about the natural world now is to learn about God’s love for us as expressed through God’s creation, and learning about God’s love inevitably requires our thankful acknowledgement (*hoda’ah* in Hebrew) for this love (*A&J* III.19).

***IV. Theology and Philosophy: The Completion Thesis***

Having now established that philosophy is committed to various forms of revelation and that theology is necessarily in need of reason, we might appear to have come to something of a deadlock in the conflict between Athens and Jerusalem. We have seen how both cities have their own revelation about which they reason, but we seem no closer to resolving the mutually-exclusive nature of the Tertullian Dichotomy. The standard interpretation of the Dichotomy mischaracterized the struggle by claiming that the conflict was between philosophy’s reason on one side and theology’s revelation on the other, but one might object that we have not made much progress if we have only succeeded in arriving at an equally-insuperable divide between philosophy’s rationally-unfolded revelation on one side and theology’s rationally-unfolded revelation on the other.

However, such a deflationary reading of the foregoing arguments misses the radical opportunity offered by coming to think of philosophy and theology as both reasoning about their own revelations. Athens and Jerusalem are now speaking the same language within the same conceptual domain. Philosophy and theology can no longer be seen as laying claim to the same domain of truth by way of incommensurable forms of evidence and standards of justification, but as laying claim to the same domain by way of the same evidence and standards.

Novak’s line of thought, therefore, has laid the groundwork necessary to now argue that theology *completes* the project of philosophy – that theology, by adding its own insights to the conceptual resources provided by philosophy, is better able to accomplish philosophy’s own project than philosophy itself. This *Completion Thesis* has both a descriptive and normative dimension. Descriptively, it holds that theologians throughout Western intellectual history have conceived of their own work as completing the projects begun by their philosophical antecedents. Normatively, it contends that philosophy could not effect this completion by itself: philosophy is in need of theology to accomplish the goals it has set itself, and is (whether individual philosophers recognize it or not) teleologically oriented to the same ends as theology.[[33]](#footnote-33)

In *Athens and Jerusalem*, we find Novak arguing for this Completion Thesisin two ways. The latter half of the book serves as an inductive argument for the descriptive dimension of the thesis, showing how various Jewish theologians (in particular, Philo, Maimonides, Hermann Cohen, and Novak himself) have used the philosophical resources of their predecessors to develop theological systems that they see as, at least in part, the natural perfection of the projects those predecessors began. Second, Novak suggests several arguments that might be used to establish the normative dimension of the thesis*.*[[34]](#footnote-34)For instance, one can reason as follows: if the God of Judeo-Christian revelation is indeed the Creator of the world, and if the world cannot be fully understood without understanding its relation to its Creator, and if this Creator cannot be understood except by way of theology’s revelation, then it will be impossible for philosophy to understand the world independent of theology. Strauss also gestures towards an argument for the Completion Thesis in his interpretation of Maimonides, grounded in a distinction between the way things are known through revelation and the way they are known through rational inquiry. Because the prophet knows things *immediately* through revelation, Strauss reads Maimonides as arguing, whereas the philosopher only knows things by way of conclusions arrived at diachronically through the conjunction of premises, the prophet can know things that the philosopher cannot.[[35]](#footnote-35)

In what follows, however, I want to put aside the normative dimension of the Completion Thesis. Whether or not we accept the Thesis as a necessaryfeature of the relationship between philosophy and theology, I think it is a profoundly useful hermeneutic lens through which to read the interaction between philosophers and theologians throughout history. Above, I have attempted to lay out Novak’s blueprint for the meeting of Athens and Jerusalem: independently, philosophy and theology receive their own revelations (understood both as commitments to a methodology and way of life and as commitments to certain propositional truths) about which they reason; then, once theology and philosophy engage with each other, theology alone is able to complete the projects that philosophy began because of the superiority of theology’s revelation. In *Athens and Jerusalem*, Novak shows how productive this blueprint can be for reading the history of Jewish philosophy, demonstrating that figures like Philo respond to the challenge of philosophy by arguing that philosophy i) is engaged in the same projects as theology and ii) is in need of theology in order to successfully fulfill those projects. Now, I hope to show that Novak’s framework can prove equally fruitful when applied to Christian philosophers.

I will do so, following Novak’s own way of proceeding, by focusing on a particular case study from the history of philosophy: Augustine’s engagement with Apuleius’ *De Deo Socratis* (*DDS*)in Books VIII and IX of his *De Civitate Dei* (*DCD*). Given limitations of time and space, I must put aside the broader issue of Augustine’s relationship to Platonism in general, and the still-broader question of how Christian thinkers in antiquity appropriated and responded to their pagan philosophical heritage. Nevertheless, as we shall see, a careful reading of Augustine’s engagement with Apuleius shows him relating to his philosophical antecedent just as Novak sketches, recognizing philosophy’s own revelation while also demonstrating that only theology’s revelation can adequately reveal the way the world truly is. In this way, our case study suggests that the structure of the relationship between Athens and Jerusalem that Novak points us towards can be applied to patristic thinkers (and, I would suggest, to Christian intellectuals throughout history) just as productively as to their fellow Jewish citizens of Jerusalem.

The rest of this paper thus proceeds in two parts. I begin by briefly summarizing Apuleius’ work, paying particular attention to how Apuleius’ arguments adhere to the blueprint laid out in the foregoing sections in their own right. Then, I argue that Augustine deliberately and explicitlyengages with the *DDS* as setting out a sort of revelation – albeit an *inadequate* revelation – about which Apuleius is subsequently reasoning and which aims at the same end as Judeo-Christian revelation. I advance this claim by focusing on four key themes in *DCD* VIII and IX : i) Augustine’s insistence that the Platonists are his philosophical brethren; ii) his demonstration of the inadequacy of philosophical revelation by way of philosophy’s own intellectual resources; iii) the way in which the Platonists’ non-Christian, incomplete revelation leads them astray; and iii) the way Christian revelation completes the metaphysical structure of mediation that Augustine finds in Apuleius’ work.

***V. The Problem of Mediation: Apuleius’* De Deo Socratis**

As indicated by its title, Apuleius’ *De Deo Socratis* presents itself as a discussion of Socrates’ divine sign or *daimonion*.[[36]](#footnote-36) This divine force (or *potestas*, as Apuleius describes it)[[37]](#footnote-37) intervenes in Socrates’ life at various points throughout the Platonic dialogues, as was already discussed above, in order to prevent Socrates from doing things that would be harmful to him. The *daimonion* was already cause for confusion and interpretive disagreement among Plato’s philosophical progeny in antiquity. We repeatedly find Platonists asking i) what *is* this *daimonion*, ii) what *place* do such forces have in the natural world in general, and iii) what *role* does it play in Socrates’ life in particular?[[38]](#footnote-38) Of course, these questions remain relevant for modern commentators on Plato – in antiquity, however, attempts to respond to these questions led to the articulation of a philosophical *demonology* or *Geisterlehre*, of which Apuleius’ *DDS* is a key surviving example.[[39]](#footnote-39) So, although the *DDS* is explicitly about Socrates’ *daimonion*, much of the work is devoted to the development of a general system of demonology, which Apuleius then employs to explain the particular divine force operative in Socrates’ life.

The *DDS* can be divided into four general sections,[[40]](#footnote-40) roughly corresponding to the questions posed in the preceding paragraph. First (answering question (ii) above), Apuleius outlines the elements of the general structure of the universe relevant to his investigation; namely, the nature of the gods and human beings, and the need for a mediating force between the divine and mortals (*DDS* 114-132). Second (question (i)), he discusses the precise nature of the class of divine forces known as *daemones*,[[41]](#footnote-41) of which Socrates’ *daimonion* is a member (132-56). Third (iii), Apuleius gives an interpretation of the role of Socrates’ divine sign on the basis of a careful exegesis of Plato’s text (157-67). Finally, as a sort of *coda* to the work, Apuleius uses the *exemplum* of Socrates’ divinely-inspired life as a springboard for a general protreptic exhortation to the philosophical way of life (167-78).[[42]](#footnote-42)

In the first section of the *DDS*, Apuleius lays out a number of properties of living beings in the cosmos that will be necessary for the forthcoming discussion. Living beings, Apuleius tells us Plato believed, are divided into three parts: the immortal gods are the ‘highest’ part, perishable beings like humans the ‘lowest,’ and *daemones* constitute an intermediary division between the two. Some of the gods are known to humans by sight (that is, the sun/moon/stars), and others by means of rational reflection (like the traditional gods of the Greco-Roman pantheon). Apuleius offers some brief insight into the character of these gods – they are, he tells us, souls unsullied by bodies or any other attachment to the material world, eternal, dependent on nothing outside of themselves to attain their ends, and so forth – before claiming that the nature of the highest of these gods is ultimately inexpressible. He thus turns to discuss the lowest rung of his *scala naturae*, human beings and other animals. Humans are embodied souls that, though rational, have become depraved (*depravaverint*) and bestial (*efferarint*), which threatens to create an insuperable gap between immortals and mortals (*DDS* 125). This is because celestial gods could not interact with humans beings without being polluted by them, or, at the very least, without diminishing the heights of their divine happiness. Nevertheless, Apuleius claims, humans require access to the divine in order to live the sort of life appropriate to them as human beings. [[43]](#footnote-43)

The need to bridge this divide between gods and mortals leads Apuleius to shift his focus to “certain intermediate divine powers(*quaedam divinae mediae potestates*)” (*DDS* 132), that is, *daemones*. *Daemones* are defined as “living beings in kind, rational creatures in mind, susceptible to emotion in spirit, in body composed of air (*aer*), everlasting in time.”[[44]](#footnote-44) These beings serve as intermediaries, carrying prayers upwards from humans to the gods, and aid downwards from the gods to humans, with this aid taking the form of dreams, (in)auspicious omens, and other similar events with which it would not be fitting for the gods themselves to be involved. They also reside within the air,[[45]](#footnote-45) the element lying between the aether(the domain of the celestial gods) and the earth, where mortal beings live. Why the air? Apuleius gives two reasons: first, airconstitutes an intermediate physical location among the elements, which matches the intermediary nature of the *daemones*; second, given a Platonic principle of plenitude (even more than nature, the Platonists of antiquity abhor an ontological vacuum), airrequires its own natural inhabitants in keeping with the other elements, and the *daemones* fill what would otherwise constitute a sort of ontological void.

The functional and material intermediary status of the *daemones* also manifests itself in other characteristics. Most importantly, they are immortal like the gods, but susceptible to emotions like human beings. The gods are unable to feel emotions, as this would be a mark of imperfection – mutability (emotional or otherwise) always being a change from a less perfect state to a more perfect state.[[46]](#footnote-46) Emotional susceptibility is thus necessary for *daemones* to fulfill their intermediary role, as it makes them capable of responding to the prayers of mortals. The gods, in contrast, are entirely unmoved by our prayers, as being moved would require them to be capable of feeling emotions. Apuleius also uses this susceptibility to explain the diversity of religious practises in the world. Because of their mutability, different *daemones* can respond to differing rites in different ways, with each spirit favouring distinct ceremonies.

Over the course of the second section of the *DDS*, Apuleius introduces a number of more specific distinctions within the class *daemones*. First, *daemones* are divided between those that have never been embodied and those that have taken on human form. Unembodied *daemones* are further subdivided into forces with designated spheres of authority (like the *daemon* responsible for erotic love and the one responsible for sleep) and those that act as guardians for human beings. Embodied *daemones* (that is, humans souls) form a lower class than those spirits that have never been embodied. When still embodied, a member of the lower sub-division of *daemones* is identified as a *genius*, a concept Apuleius borrows from popular Roman religion, and with a *lemur* after death.[[47]](#footnote-47) Furthermore, after death, these once-embodied *lemures* are separated into four further sub-divisions: *larvae*, *daemones* who punish the morally wicked while they live; *manes*, neutral figures about which Apuleius has little to say; the *lares familiares*, the souls of good humans who become household ‘gods’ and the guardians of their families; and theheroes, good souls who are worshipped as divinities after their death.[[48]](#footnote-48)

Once Apuleius has established the relevant metaphysical structure of the world (showing the general need for mediation) and the basic properties/roles of *daemones* (showing the general nature of the mediators), he is ready to discuss Socrates’ *daimonion* in particular. Socrates’ divine sign, as already discussed above, intervened throughout his life to protect him from performing harmful actions, and a number of these divine interventions are recorded by Plato.[[49]](#footnote-49) Apuleius identifies the *daimonion* with a member of the class of non-embodied guardian *daemones* he described in the second section of the *DDS*. Importantly, the force is said to intervene “*whenever the functions of wisdom were cut off* and [Socrates] stood in need not of advice but of foresight, so that whenever he faltered with uncertainty, at that moment he might stand firm with divine insight.”[[50]](#footnote-50) This interpretation is grounded in a careful exegesis of Plato’s report of Socrates’ words, in a manner remarkably similar to the sort of close reading common to Judeo-Christian Biblical exegesis. Apuleius is careful to point out that Socrates says he heard not ‘*a* voice’ but ‘*a certain* voice,’ which he takes as evidence that Socrates’ experiences cannot be reduced (in a skeptical or deflationary spirit) to mere kledomancy or excessive superstition on Socrates’ part. Apuleius applies this same model of the relationship between wisdom and prophecy to various examples from Homer: whereas ‘wise’ men are called for to adjudicate disputes or to sneak into an enemy camp, when the Greek army confronts a situation like that at Aulis where they are in need of “advice alien to the resources of wisdom (*aliena sapientiae officiis consultation*)” (*DDS* 162), as Socrates was in the moments when his *daimonion* would intervene, they must turn to a prophet. Finally, in the closing section of the DDS, this exegesis of Platonic revelation has a practical protreptic upshot. Carefully attending to Socrates’ life should compel us to devote ourselves to the same way of life, that is, the care of our soul and the cultivation of the virtues through the practise of philosophy.

Before turning to Augustine’s response, it should already be apparent that Apuleius’ speech, read in its own right, exemplifies many of the key claims we saw Novak making earlier about the ways in which philosophy is grounded in its own distinct revelation. Most obviously, Apuleius is philosophizing about the divine, seeing no clear boundary between the domain of philosophical inquiry and that of religion.[[51]](#footnote-51) But Apuleius’ conformance to Novak’s theory runs much deeper than this. First, as the closing section of the *DDS* shows, Apuleius thinks of philosophy not only as the search for true propositional knowledge about the world, but as a *way of life*. Merely gaining a correct theoretical understanding of the nature of *daemones*, and of Socrates’ *daimonion* in particular,does not mark the end of his philosophical inquiry – this theoretical knowledge must lead his audience to change their lives. At the same time, Apuleius arrives at this correct theoretical understanding through the interpretation of various forms of revealed *data*:

1. Socrates’ direct experience of the divine (recall, in particular, the way his demonology is grounded in the precise wording of Socrates’ description of his experience of the divine);
2. Plato’s own inspired writings (indeed, Apuleius presents himself as a sort of interpreter or *mediator* between his audience and Plato, who himself has an almost divine status);[[52]](#footnote-52)
3. The popular beliefs and concepts of those in the same religious tradition as Apuleius and his audience (as seen, for instance, in his reinterpretation of traditional Roman spirits as representing various classes of *daemones*); as well as
4. The religious experiences of other communities (such as the distinct rites and mythology found among the Egyptians).

Apuleius seeks to fit diverse ‘pieces’ of revelation together (from Plato and Socrates to the Roman religious tradition to Egyptian mythology to Homer and Virgil), which may initially seem to conflict with each other, into a cohesive and universalizing narrative about the structure of the world. This is, of course, just the sort of interpretive work Novak has led us to expect to see philosophy performing vis-à-vis revelation.

Finally, Apuleius’ discussion of the *daimonion* seems to articulate a form of the Completion Thesis in response to Socratic revelation, since philosophers like Socrates find themselves in need of revelation once they have exhausted the resources provided by philosophical wisdom. This is not, we must remember, *precisely* Novak’s version of the thesis. After all, Apuleius never claims that revelation completes philosophy’s *own* projects in a way that philosophy cannot, but only that revelation enables the completion of projects that fall outside the bounds of wisdom. However, these projects (like the cultivation of virtue) are intimately connected with – perhaps even identical to – the project of philosophy as Apuleius conceives of it. Thus, although Apuleius never explicitly says that philosophy stands in need of the revelation provided by *daemones* in order to complete its own projects, he seems remarkably close to making this claim.

***VI) Angels and Demons: Augustine’s* De Civitate Dei VIII/IX**

Above, I have tried to show how Novak allows us to read Apuleius’ discourse as fitting into a general *schema* of philosophical discourse repeated throughout the history of Western philosophy. I now want to suggest that Augustine’s engagement with Apuleius’ demonology in books VIII and IX of his *De Civitate Dei* also conforms to Novak’s blueprint, and that this blueprint can helps us better appreciate Augustine’s general aims when responding to Apuleius. Indeed, when we read Augustine through the lens Novak has provided us with, we can see how *DCD* VIII and IX are intended to show that philosophy is dependent on revelation, that the Platonico-Socratic revelation Apuleius relies on is inadequate for the task Apuleius sets himself, and that Apuleius’ project, though originating out of philosophical revelation, can only be fully completed by Christian revelation.[[53]](#footnote-53)

Reading Augustine by way of Novak thus allows us to avoid misunderstanding what Augustine is up to in this part of the *DCD*, as – or so I intend to argue – many commentators have in the past. Contemporary commentators on *DCD VIII* and *IX* tend to focus on the *polemical* nature of Augustine’s engagement with Apuleius, often reading Augustine as engaged in “une argumentation tendancieuse et disqualifiante qui déstructure le discours d’Apulée et en dénature la doctrine."[[54]](#footnote-54) The goal of this hostile rebuttal of Augustine’s position, in the eyes of readers like Saudelli and Fick, is to destabilize the pagan worldview of Apuleius’ followers by creating a sort of "choc psychologique" once they recognize the absurd conclusions that follow from their commitment to the existence of *daemones* of the sort described in the *DDS*.[[55]](#footnote-55) Augustine’s critique of Apuleius, then, reduces to a sort of propaedeutic path-clearing, eliminating the false pagan system in order to replace it wholesale with a Christian alternative – as Fick writes, "pour instaurer la nouvelle spiritualité, il faut anéantir l’ancienne."[[56]](#footnote-56)

Conversely, Moreschini contends that Augustine’s arguments cannot be aimed at converting Platonists or pagans in general to Christianity, as these arguments are only successful if one is already committed to many of the main premises of Christianity.[[57]](#footnote-57) Fick, in a similar vein, also claims that Augustine’s polemic is riddled with sophisms and bad arguments, which she suggests Augustine employs deliberately in order to create the desired psychological shock by way of a presentation “de manière plus ou moins caricaturale” of Apuleius’ position, followed by a series of rhetorically persuasive but ultimately fallacious arguments.[[58]](#footnote-58)

None of these readings, however, allow us to make sense of the ensemble of Augustine’s response to Apuleius. It seems clear that Augustine intends the work as a serious refutation of the errors in Apuleius’ reasoning on Apuleius’ own terms – and, *pace* Fick, if we are able to provide an interpretation of this part of the *DCD* that allows us to avoid attributing a series of deliberately false (or at least grossly misleading) arguments to him, we should. Moreover, any purely polemical reading of Augustine’s response will fail to account for just how much of Apuleius’ demonology Augustine appropriates during the course of the two books under discussion. Pépin, for instance, rightly draws our attention to several ways in which Augustine’s angelology and demonology borrow from Apuleius, seeing this appropriation as the other side of Augustine’s negative polemic.[[59]](#footnote-59) It would be exceedingly odd for Augustine to deliberately borrow a number of important concepts and arguments from a philosophical system that he is trying to discredit and upend.

Much like Pépin, Moreschini has suggested that Augustine’s engagement with Apuleius is an example "di quel rapporto contrastante di ostilità e di recezione, che è stato tipico del cristianesimo nei confronti della cultura pagana.”[[60]](#footnote-60) Reading Augustine’s response to the *DDS* as oscillating between hostility and appropriation leads both Moreschini and Karfiková to argue that his incorporation of Apuleius’ ideas within his own account of *daemones* and angels is neither accidental nor arbitrary, but rather a deliberate attempt to show how his Christianity is an heir to the Platonic tradition, better preserving Plato’s own insights than later Platonic demonology.[[61]](#footnote-61)

We thus see two key lines of interpretation developing in the contemporary scholarship. First, there are those who read Augustine’s response as purely polemical, but they fail to account for his appropriation and redeployment of many of the key elements of Apuleius’ demonology. Others read Augustine as engaged in a dynamic relationship that moves repeatedly between polemical hostility and appropriation for Augustine’s own theological purposes, with some commentators also seeing this dynamic relationship as indicative of Augustine’s desire to present himself as a better Platonist than the Platonists – that is to say, as a philosopher more faithful to Plato’s original insight than his philosophical successors.

This dynamic interpretation still fails, however, to properly account for the positive stance Augustine adopts towards his Platonic brethren, and mischaracterizes Augustine’s relationship to Plato and his school. As we shall see in what follows, Augustine ultimately relates to Platonists like Apuleius as fellow sojourners, rather than as competitors, but also as travellers who are incapable of completing the journey they have embarked on by way of their own resources. Augustine’s response to Apuleius, then, is not a question of being more faithful to Plato, but rather of fulfilling the project that both Plato (and his followers) and Christian theologians have already engaged it. Augustine has no interest in being a good Platonist – but he is concerned with successfully completing the project Plato, *inter alios*, was engaged in, and in ensuring his audience understands that Plato could not have completed that project himself. Understood correctly, Augustine’s stance towards Apuleius is thus not one of hostility so much as *correction*, and not of appropriation so much as *completion*.

I imagine the focus of contemporary commentators on the polemical and hostile character of Augustine’s response, which often prevents them from seeing the underlying connections that unify Apuleius and Augustine’s projects together, results from the same imagined incompatibility of Athens and Jerusalem that motivated Tertullian’s Dichotomy in Section II – and I think we can arrive at a correct understanding of Augustine’s project by reading *DCD* VIII and IX in the light of Novak’s arguments against the traditional interpretation of Tertullian’s Dichotomy and for the Completion Thesis we discussed in Sections I through IV. In particular, I want to draw attention to four key elements in Augustine’s discourse: first, the way in which Augustine relates to Platonists as his brethren because of their shared access, at least in part, to the same revelation; second, how Augustine uses the conceptual resources of philosophy to show Apuleius and his audience that they have arrived at the wrong conclusions by their own lights; third, the role of false moments of revelation in leading the Platonists to incorrect conclusions; and finally, the way Augustine argues that Christian revelation alone is capable of completing the Platonists’ project. These elements mirror key elements of Novak’s theory – we see Augustine arguing that the philosophers have their own revelation about which they have (incorrectly) reasoned, and that only the revelation of the theologians is capable of adequately responding to the projects philosophy has set itself. Let us briefly consider them in order.

Augustine repeatedly tells us in the opening chapters of *DCD* VIII that he “prefers (*anteponimus*)” the Platonists to the other philosophical schools (*DCD* VIII.7.322.3, 9.334.17-18, 10.335.31), and that he acknowledges them as his philosophical “neighbours (*nobis propinquiores*)” (VIII.9.334.18).[[62]](#footnote-62) This is because none of the other philosophical schools, in Augustine’s eyes, have come as close as the Platonists to the truths of Christianity (VIII.5).[[63]](#footnote-63) The Platonists accept a number of true propositions concerning the divine – they recognize the existence of a transcendent creator God (VIII.1) who is “the cause of being, the order (*ratio*) of thinking, the guide (*ordo*) of living” (VIII.4.326.19-20).[[64]](#footnote-64) God is thus understood by the Platonists, I take it, as the efficient and final cause of the natural world, intimately implicated in our rational activity, and the ethical standard against which we measure ourselves. Of course, I do not have the space here to properly investigate what Augustine means when he claims, for instance, that both Platonists and Christians find in God the “*ratio intellegendi*.” What is important for the questions at hand is that Augustine identifies several critical areas of overlap between Platonists and Christians, and this overlap leads him to accept the Platonists as partners in his inquiry. But whence, one might ask, does this overlapping consensus originate? That is to ask: how is it the case that the Platonists have arrived at so many correct beliefs about the nature of the divine?

Augustine’s response is that God must have revealed these truths to the Platonists through Plato, like God revealed them to the Jews through the prophets (VIII.6).[[65]](#footnote-65) But one might still wonder how this could be the case. Plato offers us, after all, no record of an epiphany of the sort that an Old Testament prophet would receive. One possibility Augustine considers is that Plato might have become acquainted with Judeo-Christian revelation by way of the prophets, either directly[[66]](#footnote-66) or indirectly (VIII.11).[[67]](#footnote-67) The other possibility is that God revealed these truths directly to Plato, just as revelation was given to the prophets (VIII.12).[[68]](#footnote-68) In either case, Augustine clearly believes that the Platonic philosophers are reasoning about revelation – indeed, the *same* revelation (at least in part) as Christian theologians – just as Novak has led us to expect.

**VII) Christus Mediator Bonus*: Completing the Platonic Project***

Ultimately, for Augustine, the philosophy of the Platonists is itself grounded in revelation, a revelation that is from *the same God* and reveals *the same truths* as Christian revelation. The Platonists have been led astray, however, by i) reasoning incorrectly about the revelation they have been given, and ii) assenting to false revelations, that is, accepting things as revelation that do not come from God.[[69]](#footnote-69) Augustine elaborates each of these failings with different lines of argument.

First, Augustine uses the resources of philosophy to show that philosophy is wrong by its own standards, because the philosophers have reasoned wrongly about their revelation. To do so, Augustine employs all of the philosophical resources Apuleius himself employs in *DDS*. Consider, to be begin with, Augustine and Apuleius’ use of rhetoric. Apuleius’ treatise is a striking demonstration of his oratorical and philosophical abilities – envisioned as a public speech, Apuleius deploys an array of literary devices and rhetorical tropes in the service of convincing his audience of his philosophical position. Augustine does the same in *DCD* VIII and IX.[[70]](#footnote-70) For instance, we find the elaborate employment of wordplay throughout text,[[71]](#footnote-71) as well as the repeated use of literary devices like anaphora.[[72]](#footnote-72) Of course, Augustine’s rhetorical training and literary skill meant that he used such tools in all of his writings, but as Hagendahl notes in his discussion of VIII.20.355.26-351.10,[[73]](#footnote-73) we find in the two books of the *DCD* passages “distinguished by a profusion of scornful irony and rhetorical devices that surpasses everything to be found even in his writings.”[[74]](#footnote-74) In the very *form* of Augustine’s writing, then, we already see him demonstrating how he, although a theologian, is nonetheless capable of surpassing the philosopher in the practise of philosophy, which includes the use of rhetorical forms of persuasion.

Next, we see Augustine engaged in careful exegesis, paying as close attention to the *precise* wording of Apuleius’ text as Apuleius paid to Socrates’ words at the *DDS* 165. For example, Augustine argues that Apuleius titled his work *De* ***Deo*** *Socratis* rather than *De* ***Daemone*** *Socratis* because he himself was ashamed of Socrates associating with a *daemon*, given the malignant nature of these spirits, and so tried to hide Socrates’ association with a *daemon* from his audience at the outset of his work (VIII.14).[[75]](#footnote-75) Importantly, Augustine is at pains to emphasize the careful attention that is evident in Apuleius’ work[[76]](#footnote-76) and that Apuleius requires of his readers.[[77]](#footnote-77) Here, again, we see Augustine demonstrating his ability to philosophize even better than the philosophers – in the very same chapter that he praises Apuleius’ careful attention in differentiating between gods and *daemones*, most markedly, Augustine demonstrates his own ability to proceed *diligenti disputatione* in critiquing Apuleius’ choice of title.

Finally, Augustine engages in the same logical development of and extrapolation from various elements of the Platonic revelation as Apuleius. He derives contradictions (or, at least, unacceptable conclusions) from several of the properties Apuleius and Plato ascribe to the *daemones*, as well as from several other of Plato’s philosophical commitments, just as Apuleius motivates the *DDS* from the very first lines by presenting his project as expanding upon insights established by Plato. For instance, Augustine poses a trilemma based on Plato’s own banishment of theatre (and therefore the *daemones* associated with tragedy) from his *Republic*: either Apuleius was wrong and Socrates’ spirit was not a *daemon*; or, Plato contradicted himself by first honouring the *daemones* in the form of Socrates’ *daimonion* and then, later, removing their festivals from his ideal state; or, Socrates is not to be congratulated on the friendship of a *daemon* (VIII.14). Note the way in which Augustine’s argument proceeds. Beginning from Apuleius’ *data* (among which number Plato’s teachings, including the critique of theatre in the *Republic*, as well as popular religious beliefs, including the belief that divinities are directly implicated in theatre productions), he reasons to an exhaustive trichotomy, none of whose branches is a palatable conclusion for Apuleius.[[78]](#footnote-78) This form of argument appears over and over again in *DCD* VIII and IX. To consider another key example, we find Augustine arguing that if mediation is needed in order to preserve the *goodness* of the gods, then the fact that the *daemones* are susceptible to the emotions (and so, to one extent or another, morally imperfect, because sometimes carried away by movements of the soul other than those of reason) should cause interaction with them to sully the perfect goodness of the gods just as much as interaction with humans (VIII.20). Again, Augustine begins from Apuleius’ own initial premises (the goodness of the gods being a central belief for the Platonists (VIII.13)), and reasons in the same logical manner as Apuleius, but in order to reach conclusions that would be entirely unacceptable to him.

This argument in particular inevitably calls into question the central claim of the *DDS*: why should we think that the *daemones* aresuperior to humans, and occupy an intermediary position relative to the gods, if they appear to be at least as imperfect as we are? Indeed, Augustine challenges, if the *daemones* are changeable (which, as we saw above, is necessary for them to be intermediaries), then surely they experience negative emotions – but then, will they not be worse off than morally outstanding human beings (IX.3)? Augustine seems to be led to this conclusion in the following manner. He first establishes that passions are “a change in the soul contrary to reason (*motus animi contra rationem*)” (VIII.17.346.22) and furthermore, that the gods are happy because free from the perturbations of the passions. If the *daemones* experience these perturbations, he then argues, they must also experience unhappiness. To reach this conclusion, I think Augustine reasons as follows: perfect happiness is when the soul is either unchanging (like the gods) or changes entirely in accordance with reason (like perfect human beings); hence, any change counter to reason will cause unhappiness; the *daemones* experience psychic changes counter to reason; so, the *daemones* experience unhappiness. Furthermore, Apuleius has to accept that the daemones feel these passions – he is “compelled to admit” (VIII.17.347.9) these facts because they follow from his definition of *daemones*, which is itself merely the philosophical elaboration of a set of revealed Platonic *data*.*[[79]](#footnote-79)* From this, Augustine concludes that the *daemones* cannot be superior to humans (as they must be if intermediate between humans and the divine) because of their happiness, since their essential liability to the passions leaves them worse off than the perfectly happy life that the saints can hope for (VIII.15, VIII.16, IX.3).[[80]](#footnote-80)

If this is right, then the *daemones* also cannot be superior to human beings by virtue of their eternality, because, as Augustine asserts, the eternal existence of *daemones* merely condemns them to “either an unhappy eternity or eternal unhappiness (*vel misera aeternitas vel aeterna miseria*)” (IX.13.385.2-3), whereas humans can at least hope to achieve eternal happiness through the cultivation of virtue and the practise of philosophy.[[81]](#footnote-81) Finally, we might think that the *daemones* are superior to humans because of the superiority of the elemental material from which they are composed. However, Augustine argues, this material difference shouldn’t be sufficient for the *daemones* to be essentially superior, because we spurn other humans who are, for instance, physically fit but morally base (VIII.15). Note how, like a dialectician in a philosophical debate (or Socrates engaged in *elenchus*) Augustine traps Apuleius. Although we *shouldn’t* think that a material difference is sufficient to make *daemones* better than humans, it is the only property available to Apuleius on the basis of his definition, such that Apuleius must admit, or so Augustine claims, that the *daemones* “are hung up and tied together (*ligati atque suspensi*) with the happy gods by their body, that of a slave, and with miserable human beings by their soul, that of a master” (IX.9.381.11-13).

We thus see Augustine employing various philosophical tools to demonstrate that the conclusions Apuleius reaches in *DDS* are unacceptable to the philosopher. This must be at least in part because Apuleius and his imagined audience have imperfectly practiced philosophy – Augustine thus asserts his philosophical superiority to the philosophers by leading them to recognize their errors by means of their own tools. At the same time, Augustine asserts that the Platonists have reached these false conclusions about the nature of *daemones* because they have been led astray by false revelation. Many people, Augustine tells us, have been tricked by the *daemones* through various manifestations of their power into thinking that they are gods. Others, again by way of various deceptions wrought by the *daemones*, have come to think they have a privileged role as intermediaries between humans and the divine. Finally, others have come to believe that telling the general populace about the true nature of these figures would scandalize the masses (VIII.22). The *daemones*, which Augustine, in the light of what he understands to be true Christian revelation, identifies with the demons mentioned in the Bible, also have a direct interest in deceiving humans in order to divert them from the truth (IX.18). Hermes Trismegistus is employed as a helpful case study for how false revelation leads the Platonists astray, despite having access to some elements of true revelation received (in)directly from God. Hermes says true things about God, inspired by true revelation, but false revelation from the *daemones* leads him to defend these evil spirits in his writing (VIII.23-4).

The fact that Apuleius arrives at false conclusions about the *daemones* while having access to true revealed *data* by way of Plato can thus be attributed both to errors in reasoning and to an intermixing of false or improperly understood revelation with the true revelation the Platonists share with the Christians. We thus see Augustine, over the course of *DCD* VIII and IX, seeking to *correct and complete* Apuleius’ interpretation of Platonic revelation. This completion is made possible, as will soon be apparent, because Augustine has access to the truth of Christian revelation *as a whole*, whereas philosophers like Apuleius – and even Plato – can only ever have access to some *part* of this truth.

Apuleius was correct in asserting that we need *some sort of mediator* – this insight, drawn from the perfect goodness and remove of the divine, forms part of the shared revelation that both Christians and Platonists have received. Apuleius has even come so far as to correctly identify intermediate non-human elements of the universe. After all, the *daemones* that Apuleius points to, and which Augustine further subdivides into demons and angels, are indeed intermediate between God and humans in terms of their metaphysical properties, having neither the perfection of God nor the precise form of imperfection that humans possess, being mortal and unhappy, but capable of perfect eternal happiness (IX.15). However, although Apuleius has correctly identified the metaphysical structure of the universe which makes mediation between man and God necessary, he has failed to recognize the particular(s) that complete this structure – he has seen the need for a mediator, and pointed to certain intermediate figures, but has failed to identify just who this *good* mediator is.[[82]](#footnote-82) To do so correctly, Christian revelation is needed.

Suddenly, in Augustine’s account, Christ – the true mediator – appears.[[83]](#footnote-83) The very form of Augustine’s presentation of the incarnation of the Word appears in the text as a sort of *revelation* – after not mentioning Jesus by name for a book and a half, Christ is named and discussed in IX.15. I take this to be a deliberate construction on Augustine’s part, allowing the form of his discussion (Christ appearing as the true mediator in a sort of epiphany after not being named throughout the preceding arguments, but being repeatedly pointed to by the lines of reasoning Augustine advances) to mirror its content. We must turn to Christian revelation, the central premise of which being the Incarnation, in order to properly complete the structure of mediation both Augustine and Apuleius have sketched. Indeed, Augustine argues that this Christian mediator is better able to satisfy the requirements Apuleius places on his mediating figures than the *daemones* Apuleius himself turns to, because the unique nature of Christ (being both fully human and fully divine) allows Him to share perfectly in both divine happiness and human misery. In contrast, the *daemones* are only able to have a partial share in the forms of both human and divine life – their essential susceptibility to the passions leaves them unable to fully participate in God’s perfect happiness, as we have already seen, while their eternality and material form nevertheless renders them in some ways more than human.[[84]](#footnote-84)

Christian revelation, giving complete access to the way the universe truly is, thus allows us to envision a more perfect mediator than the incomplete revelation of the Platonists enabled them to imagine. Christ, fully human and fully divine, intervenes not merely to bring prayers from humans to the gods and aid from the gods to humans, like the *daemones*, but helps lead humans “from mortal misery to blessed immortality” (IX.15.387.10-11). Furthermore, given that the end of human beings is unity with the divine, the *singularity* of Christ relative to the multiplicity of *daemones* also makes Him a more perfect mediator – the singularity of the Christian mediator mirrors the singular goal towards which this mediator guides us, a sort of symmetry that seems foreclosed to Apuleius and his fellow Platonists because of their need to account for the polytheistic nature of their revelation and popular religious beliefs.[[85]](#footnote-85) Christian revelation therefore perfects and completes the Platonic project, showing how the structure of human-divine mediation elaborated by Athens is best filled by a figure we can come to know only through the revelation of Jerusalem.

***VIII. Conclusion***

In Augustine’s response to Apuleius, we find Novak’s general blueprint for Jerusalem’s relationship with Athens reproduced once again. Augustine recognizes that the Platonists have their own revelation about which they have reasoned – part of this revelation is shared with Christian revelation, which makes possible the sort of fraternal or neighbourly dialogue Augustine is engaged in, while part of it constitutes their own, distinct, and ultimately false revelation. Augustine also engages with Apuleius in just the way the Completion Thesis has led us to expect. At every turn, he seeks to demonstrate his own (and, by extrapolation, the theologian in general’s) ability to reason better than the philosophers – because, as Novak has shown us, the tools of reason fall just as much under the purview of Athens as Jerusalem – as well as to show the philosophers’ need for Christian revelation in order to complete the project they have undertaken. Apuleius, left to his own revelation, has arrived at an incorrect understanding of the nature of divine mediation in the universe. To arrive at a correct understanding, he is in need of Christian revelation, as the structure of divine mediation he discusses can only be perfectly fulfilled by Christ.

Novak has thus allowed us to see the centrality of revelation to both Apuleius and Augustine’s projects, and to properly understand Augustine’s relationship to his Platonic antecedent, seeing him not (or at least, not only) as the target of polemical refutation, but also as a fellow sojourner, led astray by false revelation and standing in need of correction. This suggests, in conjunction with Novak’s own reading of Jewish thinkers, that Novak’s theory can be applied with equally fruitful results to other examples of Judeo-Christian theologians engaging with non-Judeo-Christian philosophy throughout history. In turn, I think that Novak’s theory can help religious philosophers like myself better make sense of the “live options” (*A&J*  I.10) of philosophy and theology and the apparently-dichotomous choice we are incessantly asked to make between them – and this should come as no surprise. Novak is, after all, as a much a rabbi as a philosopher, and his reflections – no matter how theoretical – are always grounded in practical, frequently pastoral, concerns.

Having spent much time interpreting texts, both those of Novak and of classical philosophy, I want to close by briefly recalling a reflection of one of Novak’s own most important teachers on the role of teachers and texts in the lives of their students. Abraham Joshua Heschel once wrote: “It is the personality of the teacher which is the text that the pupils read; the text that they will never forget.”[[86]](#footnote-86) Novak’s careful reading of texts, his unwillingness to allow Athens and Jerusalem to be quarantined one from the other, the central importance he places on the history of philosophy for helping us to wrestle with the problems confronting contemporary philosophers and theologians, his daring attempts to marshal the entirety of the Western tradition behind his project, and the creativity and insight of the conclusions he brings his readers to, all while remaining grounded in and ever mindful of the unique perspective of his own faith – all of these are elements of Novak’s personality by which I have been inspired, from which I have learned much, and which have created a text I trust I will never forget. I can only hope that some small part of this intellectual personality, which Novak has always shared so generously with me, might also be found in my own work.

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1. *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, ed. François Refoulé O.P., Sources Chrétiennes 46 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1957), VII.9-13. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Recent scholarship has problematized the reading of the dichotomy developed below (see, for instance, Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 27–47, who argues that Tertullian is in fact only advancing a “pretended ban on philosophy” (39)), but for the purposes of this paper I will proceed, like Novak, on the traditional understanding of Tertullian’s argument. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. To which Novak, in his own work, attachez the Jewish rabbinical tradition. Novak also views the conflict between Athens and Jerusalem as continuing throughout the history of philosophy (*Athens and Jerusalem* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Forthcoming), chap. II, p. 1.) Though I will use ‘Athens’ and ‘Jerusalem’ interchangeably with ‘philosophy’ and ‘theology,’ in this paper I will be focusing on the conflict’s development within the context of classical Greco-Roman philosophy and Christian responses thereto. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Here, as elsewhere, Novak’s reading is inspired by Strauss’ work (see especially Leo Strauss, “Jerusalem and Athens: Some Preliminary Reflections,” in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 149; Leo Strauss, “The Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy,” *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 3 (1979): 114.) – the central importance of which for Novak’s overall project should become clear in what follows. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Tertullian’s anticipated response to his *quid ergo?*, then, is not *nihil simpliciter*, but rather *omnia, et igitur nihil.* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Novak’s recent Gifford lectures, soon to be published as *Athens and Jerusalem*, are his most thoroughgoing articulation of this response, but we find it first discussed in his reflections on the philosophy of one of his own teachers, Leo Strauss, decades earlier (“Philosophy and the Possibility of Revelation: A Theological Response to the Challenge of Leo Strauss,” in *Leo Strauss and Judaism: Jerusalem and Athens Revisited*, ed. David Novak (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996).) Novak’s philosophy of revelation, it is important to note from the outset, has evolved over the course of decades, is located in several different works, and is in constant dialogue with a many of different sources. My task in the first part of this paper is to unify and develop Novak’s reflections, and then to defend the theory that emerges against a number of possible objections, in the process making use of a number of conceptual resources provided by sources like Strauss, Maimonides, and Tertullian. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. It is important, however, to speak of a singular *commitment* – as the method, way of life, and propositional truths we call ‘philosophy’ or ‘theology’ are all intricately bound up in each other. For a magisterial discussion of how the methods and truth-claims of philosophy are interwoven as a way of life within the context of classical philosophy, cf. Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life : Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (Oxford ; Blackwell, 1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. What Fackenheim calls “root experiences” (*God’s Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections* (New York: HarperCollins, 1970), 8–14. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *A&J* I.29, 42 and *passim*. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Unfortunately, I do not have the space here to enter into a detailed discussion of the singular or plural nature of the divine in Aristotle and Plato, nor of the relationship between the various objects of their philosophical discussions and the traditional pantheon of their cultural context. I will often use singular terms to refer to the divine figures in Plato and Aristotle (but, should the reader prefer, the singular can be read as a plural without any significant change in my discussion), and will return to the question of the nature of the divine in Plato in Section V. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Which I take to be the deliberate construction, by Plato, of a paradigm for philosophical activity. The task of creating an archetype for philosophy out of the life of Socrates was also pursued in the contemporaneous works of other members of the so-called ‘Socratic Circle,’ and taken up in later Stoic discussions of the life of the sage or s*ophos*. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. We must wonder, however, what prompted Chaerephon to first ask the oracle whether anyone was wiser than Socrates, if not because Socrates had already gained a reputation for wisdom by philosophizing – and how Socrates’ account of the origins of his philosophical activity interacts with his earlier engagement with natural philosophy as he describes in his own ‘intellectual autobiography’ in the *Phaedo* (95e7-99d2). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. cf. Novak, *A&J*, I.14 and IV.10. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. It is important to remember that the Greeks often conceived of dreams not as visions or other facsimiles of conscious experience, but as distinct *figures* who appear and communicate messages to the dreamer (see, for instance, *Iliad* II.6-35, where Zeus sends a dream to Agammenon, telling the dream what to say, and the dream is said to stand at the head of the hero’s bed). When Socrates tells his companions what the dream said, then, we should have in mind such a direct message from a divine dream-figure. On this and other aspects of divinely-inspired dreams in the Greek imaginary, see E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Sather Classical Lectures 25 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), chap. IV. Here, I leave *mousikē* untranslated, as no English term can properly capture the range of meanings contained in the Greek term, which covers everything from instrumental music to lyric poetry to theatrical performances. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. “ὡς φιλοσοφίας μὲν οὔσης μεγίστης μουσικῆς” (*Phaedo* 61a3-4). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. I trust that the invocation of ‘fertile’ (ἐρίβωλον) Phthia would immediately have reminded Plato’s readers of the Isles. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Among the Greek philosophers Novak considers, this divine origin is only made explicit in the case of Socrates, but I suspect Novak thinks that, as with Judeo-Christian revelation, we should regard the original normative injunction to philosophize that was revealed to Socrates as transmitted to those who follow after him in the philosophical tradition, just as the Law continues to have normative force for those who follow after Moses. Plato’s magnetic chain of inspiration in the *Ion* (533c9-535a2) gives us a model for this sort of transmission of revelation: insofar as subsequent philosophers take their philosophical inspiration from Socrates, the beginning of their philosophical activity is still divine. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. *Spinoza’s Critique of Religion*, ed. E.M. Sinclair (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. “The Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy,” 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte, 4th ed. (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), §217. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Our earlier discussion of god as the origin of philosophy in the case of Plato’s Socrates helps make this unquestioned basis explicit. Socrates justifies his philosophical activity by way of the Delphic oracle and various other divine messages, but the normative force of these messages is not interrogated. Although Socrates investigates the oracle related by Chaerephon in order to understand what it means, he never questions the fact that he should act in accordance with it – once he understands it. One of the great puzzles for contemporary commentators has thus been why Socrates, for whom the unexamined life is not worth living, fails to examine the divine motivation for his way of life (see, for instance, Mark McPherran, *The Religion of Socrates* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996); Gregory Vlastos, “Socratic Piety,” in *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1991), 157–78; Nicholas D. Smith and Paul B. Woodruff, *Reason and Religion in Socratic Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).) Within the framework I have been sketching, however, Socrates’ failure to interrogate the divine ground of his philosophical vocation is merely an exceptionally clear instance of the justificatory structure shared by all philosophical activity. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. B.Sanhedrin 59a. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism: The Idea of Noahide Law*, 2nd ed. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. “Philosophy and the Possibility of Revelation: A Theological Response to the Challenge of Leo Strauss,” 18. See also “Theology and Philosophy: An Exchange with Robert Jenson,” in *Talking with Christians: Musings of a Jewish Theologian* (Gran Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 245–46. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Die Prophetie*, Mémoires de La Commission Orientaliste 22 (Krakow: Polska Akademja Umiejetnosci, 1936), 2–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. David Novak, “Heschel’s Phenomenology of Revelation,” in *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Philosophy, Theology, and Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. S. Krajewski and A. Lipszyc (Wiesbaden: Harrassowtiz Verlag, 2009), 41.. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Recall how, in Section II, the domain of philosophy was identified with universally-accessible facts. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. “Possibility of Revelation” 18. cf. Novak *A&J* I.30; Strauss *Philosophy and Law* III.104-6; Maimonides *Mishna Torah – Book of Foundations* 7.1, 7.5; *Guide for the Perplexed* II.36. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. It is important to note that we already saw this reasoning out of the meaning of revelation also taking place in the context of philosophical revelation – Socrates must make sense of the Delphic oracle, or Asclepius’ injunction at the beginning of the *Phaedo* to engage in *mousikē*. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. We might also connect this critical function with Heidegger’s notion of clearing (*Lichtung*) – in Heideggerian terminology, reason’s critical function would create a clearing-space within which we let the beings of revelation be. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Novak, “Theology and Philosophy” 245-6; “Possibility of Revelation” 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. This recognition being encapsulated for Novak (*A&J* III.14) in the Rabbinic dictum: “every human ought to say: for my sake is the world created” (M. Sanhedrin 4.5). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. As Novak puts it: “theology presupposes philosophy, and philosophy intends theology” (“Possibility of Revelation” 19). cf. *A&J* IV.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. It is important to note that many of these arguments are aimed at establishing theology’s *superior*, rather than *exclusive*, ability to accomplish the ends of philosophy – for instance, Philo’s arguments that theology is better able to integrate the practical and theoretical ends of human life than philosophy (*A&J* IV.3-5), because the object of theology’s study (God) perfectly unifies the practical (insofar as God is the Creator of the universe) and the theoretical (insofar as God knows this created universe perfectly). Ultimately, however, Novak also wants to assert theology’s *exclusive* ability to complete philosophy’s projects. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. *Philosophy and Law* 106. Strauss, as far as I can tell, does not develop this thought any further, and it is unclear what sorts of things he thinks can *only* be known immediately. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. For an excellent introduction to and translation of the work, see Stephen Harrison, *Apuleius: A Latin Sophist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 137–73; “De Deo Socratis,” in *Apuleius: Rhetorical Works*, ed. Stephen Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 185–216. Christopher P. Jones, *Apuleius: Apologia, Florida, De Deo Socratis*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017) offers the most recent English translation. Claudio Moreschini, ed., *Apulei Platonici Madaurensis Opera Quae Supersunt*, vol. 3, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Leipzig: Teubner, 1991) is the most commonly consulted modern critical edition of the text. For detailed readings of Apuleius’ arguments in their own rights, see M. Baltes et al., eds., *Apuleius: De Deo Socratis. Über Den Gott Des Sokrates. Eingeleitet, Übersetzt Und Mit Interpretierenden Essays Versehen.*, SAPERE: Scripta Antiquitatis Posterioris Ad Ethicam Religionemque Pertinentia 7 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004); Jean Beaujeu, *Apulée: Opuscules Philosophiques (Du Dieu de Socrate, Platon et Sa Doctrine, Du Monde) et Fragments* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1973), 183–247; Claudio Moreschini, *Apuleius and the Metamorphoses of Platonism*, Nutrix. Studies in Late Antique, Medieval and Renaissance Thought 10 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 117–45; Claudio Moreschini, “La Polemica Di Agostino Contro La Demonologia Di Apuleio,” *Annali Della Scuola Normale Superiore Di Pisa. Classe Di Lettere e Filosofia*, III, 2, no. 2 (1972): 583–96. Importantly, what is transmitted to us as the *DDS* may not be a complete text – for a discussion of the connection of the ‘false premise’ to the rest of the speech, and the question of whether an introductory and/or concluding section has been lost in transmission, see Harrison *Sophist* 141-144. For the purpose of this paper, I will treat the text as it is transmitted to us (and, so far as I can tell, as it was transmitted to Augustine) as complete. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. *DDS* 132. Page numbers for the *DDS* follow von Oudendorp’s 1823 edition. Here and throughout, I do not differentiate between ‘Apuleius’ and the speaker of the *DDS*, nor does Augustine at any point in the *DCD*. If anyone wants to insist that such a distinction must be maintained, and that the views expressed by the speaker of the *DDS* cannot be identified with Apuleius, then the arguments below should be applied *mutatis mutandis* to the philosophical perspective the speaker articulates. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Apuleius is not the first to raise these questions – we find prior discussion in several of Plutarch’s works (chiefly his *De Genio Socratis*), and a contemporaneous treatment in Maximus of Tyre’s eight and ninth *Orations*. The influence of Plutarch and Maximus on Apuleius is another question we must put aside (though see Andrei Timotin, *La Démonologie Platonicienne: Histoire de La Notion de Daimôn de Platon Aux Derniers Néoplatoniciens* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 202 n.125 and Harrison *Sophist* 138 for discussions on the topic). For an overview of the history of Platonic demonology and our extant sources, however, see Timotin. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. For contemporary contributions to the discussion of Socrates’ divine sign, see the articles in Smith and Woodruff, *Reason and Religion in Socratic Philosophy*; Pierre Destrée and Nicholas D. Smith, eds., *Divine Sign: Religion, Practice, and Value in Socratic Philosophy*, vol. 38.2, APEIRON: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science, 2005; McPherran, *The Religion of Socrates*. The focus of modern and classical discussions of the *daimonion* are, however, importantly different: whereas the ancients were concerned first and foremost with the identity and nature of the divine sign itself, contemporary commentators are more interested in understanding the relationship between the *daimonion* and other Socratico-Platonic claims (for instance, howSocrates can unreflectively endorse the dictates of his divine sign while also endorsing other positions – like the seemingly-universal need for the elenchtic interrogation of our beliefs – that seem to contradict the way he relates to his *daimonion*). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. cf. Harrison *Sophist* 144; “De Deo Socratis” 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. I generally favour translating the Greek *daimōn* as ‘angel’ rather than ‘demon,’ because I think the modern, popular conception of angels better tracks the role of these ancient divine figures (think, for instance, of how closely Socrates’ *daimonion* acts like a ‘guardian angel’). However, given the importance of Augustine’s distinction between angels and demons in his response to Apuleius, and in order to avoid prejudicing the reader in her interpretation of Apuleius’ text, I will leave the word untranslated throughout. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Understood in this way, the structure of the *DDS* should not make us think that Apuleius’ discussion of Socrates’ *daimonion* is something of an afterthought, or merely a rhetorical excuse for Apuleius to discuss what his really interested in, that is, the nature of demons in general. Instead, the interpretation of Socrates’ *daimonion* can be seen as the natural end-point of the work, with the preceding discussion laying the necessary general groundwork for Apuleius to present his interpretation of Socrates’ particular example. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Apuleius’ reasoning here (*DDS* 127-32) raises a number of problems. As I see it, the two most pressing are:

    1) Why would *any* interaction with humans whatsoever sully the divine? In response, I suggest that Apuleius might be reasoning as follows: the gods must be as perfect/happy/independent as possible; if interactions with human beings rendered the gods more perfect/happy, then the gods would need to interact with humans to be as P/H as possible; this would, however, make the gods less independent or autonomous than they could otherwise be; otherwise, if interacting with humans has no impact on the perfection or happiness of the gods, then they have no reason to interact with humans; therefore, the gods do interact with mortals. This response, however, is purely speculative.

    2) Apuleius’ speaker argues that humans need to interact with the divine is in order to be able to swear oaths by the gods. But why is this such a pressing concern – indeed, the only concern Apuleius raises? Again, in response, I suggest that the swearing of oaths is intended to serve as a sort of rhetorical metaphor for the human need for the divine in order to live together socially and act correctly as moral beings. The swearing of oaths would thus serve as an analogue for promise-keeping more generally, and promise-keeping in turn as essentially connected to correct moral action in general. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Quippe, ut fine comprehendam, daemones sunt genere animalia, ingenio rationabilia, animo passiva, corpore aeria, tempore aeterna (*DDS* 148). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. A claim already advanced in the pseudo-Platonic *Epinomis* (981c-985b), and picked up, *inter alios*, by Philo (*De Gigantibus* 7-9) in his description of angels. Apuleius’ demonology, it is important to remember, is not developed solely out of an initial Socratico-Platonic revelation, but forms part of an ongoing tradition of interpretation (for a detailed analysis of how the *DDS* fits into the historical development of Platonic demonology, see Peter Habermehl, “Quaedam Divinae Mediae Potestates: Demonology in Apuleius’ De Deo Socratis,” in *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel VII*, ed. Heinz Hofmann and Maaike Zimmerman (Groningen: Egbert Foster, 1996), 117–42.) [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Again, Apuleius’ claim seems problematic: why think that *every* change must be from better to worse or the inverse, excluding the possibility of ‘neutral’ changes? One might think, for instance, that changing from enjoying listening to Beethoven’s 14th string quartet to enjoying listening to his 15th is not a change from better to worse or the opposite, but a shift between indiscernible goods. Even if we admitted the possible of such neutral changes, however, Apuleius might still respond as follows: if every intentional action is essentially teleological, and if the gods (being perfectly unconstrained in deciding upon and attaining their ends) always act intentionally, then to change from feeling one emotion to another (that is, to stop performing one action and begin another) would require a change of ends, which would require the gods to have a *reason* to change their end. Were this the case, then either the two ends would be indiscernible (which would fail to give the gods a reason to change their end), or their present end would be worse than some other possible end (which would be absurd since, the gods being perfectly unconstrained, we could not explain why they had not set the better end for themselves *ab initio*), or their present end would be better (in which case, again, they would have no reason to change). As in note 43, however, this response is entirely speculative, and raises a number of further questions itself that I cannot pursue here. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. For a detailed reading of how Apuleius uses and transforms Roman religious concepts in the *DDS*, see Habermehl 129-134. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Commentators have frequently noted the difficulties created by these sub-divisions (B.L. Hijmans, “Apuleius: Philosophus Platonicus,” *Ausftieg Und Niedergang Der Römischen Welt II* 36, no. 1 (1987): 443; Habermehl 127). For instance, it might seem as if the only distinction between the *lares* and the higher guardian *daemones* is the fact that the *lares* were once embodied – but if this is the only distinction, why are the guardian *daemones* still described as higher beings even *after* the *lares* are no longer embodied? More generally, the distinction between *genius*/*lemur* and human beings is complicated: why is it that a human soul *qua genius* is considered a member of the class of *daemones*, but a human being *tout court* is not? For the purposes of this paper, however, I can only note such puzzles before putting them aside. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. The reliability of Plato’s reports of Socrates’ life, and the possibility of retrieving the ‘historical’ Socrates from beneath his Platonic guise point, of course, towards a host of hoary interpretive questions. What is important for us here, however, is that both Apuleius and Augustine understand Plato as accurately reporting actual historical occurrences in Socrates’ life. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Sicubi tamen interceptis sapientiae officiis non consilio sed praesagio indigebat, ut ubi dubitatione clauderet, ibi divinatione consisteret (*DDS* 157-8), emphasis mine, reading *interceptis* with Harrison (“De Deo Socratis” 209 n.53) in place of the transmitted *interfectis*. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. cf. Habermehl 134n.69: “For Apuleius, philosophy and religion were twin efforts toward the same goal.” Strikingly, in his *Apologia* (41.3), Apuleius will go so far as to describe the philosopher as a “priest of all the gods” (*omnium deum sacerdotem*). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. See, for instance, *DDS* 155: “you all, who are hearing this divine idea of Plato with myself as interpreter (*me interprete*).” Richard Fletcher, *Apuleius’ Platonism: The Impersonation of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 157–59 makes much of this interpretive dynamic, suggesting that Apuleius seeks to blend his role as *interpreter* of Plato (which functionally mirrors the mediatory nature of the *daemones* under discussion) with an *identification* of his voice with Plato’s and, in turn, of Plato with the highest god of Apuleius’ *scala naturae*. Plato is thus a unique revelation at least on par with – if not transcending – the original Socratic revelation he also reports. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Inevitably, we must confront the question of *why* Augustine chose to engage with Apuleius’ *DDS* in particular, given the abundance of other instances of Platonic demonology he would have been exposed to. There are at least six possible responses to this question, all but the first of which, I think, had some role to play in Augustine’s choice of text:

    1) L. Hermann, “Le Procès d’Apuléé Fut-Il Un Procès de Christianisme?,” *Revue de l’Université Libre de Bruxelles* 4, no. 2 (1951): 339–50; “Le Dieu-Roi d’Apulée,” *Latomus* 18 (1959): 110–16 suggested that Apuleius was a Christian, and that his prosecution on the charge of practicing magic was in fact an oblique way of prosecuting him for his Christianity – if Augustine knew this, then he might have chosen the *DDS* because of its Apuleius’ connection to the Christian community. Such a claim, however, is wildly speculative. Hermann has (it seems to me) only the most tenuous of evidence for such a sweeping claim.

    2) Augustine writes that Apuleius was said to have performed miracles equal to or even greater than those of Christ (cf. *Epistulae* 136; 138; 137) – refuting Apuleius’ theory thus also allowed Augustine to deflate the image of a pagan miracle-worker (Moreschini, *Metamorphoses* 351–52; Lucia Saudelli, “« Dieu » Ou « démon » de Socrate? Augustin Contre Apulée,” *Revue d’études Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 60 (2014): 88.)

    3) Apuleius was from north Africa, like Augustine, and so his work was particularly prominent in the intellectual circles within which Augustine participated at the time (cf. Vincent Hunink, “Apuleius, Qui Nobis Afris Afer Est Notior: Augustine’s Polemic Against Apuleius in De Civitate Dei,” *Scholia: Studies in Classical Antiquity* 12 (2003): 82–88.)

    4) Apuleius’ focus on the need for *mediation* between the gods and human beings presented Augustine with an ideal counterpoint concerning a topic he already intended to discuss at this point in his *DCD*, while also providing him with an opportunity to demonstrate (as I will argue in what follows) the close affinities between Apuleius’ Platonism and Augustine’s Christianity.

    5) Apuleius’ text might have been viewed as the most developed example of Platonic demonology accessible in Latin (or, perhaps, *simpliciter*) in Augustine’s time, so that when deciding how to best present the complex relationship between pagan and Christian accounts of divine mediation, Augustine merely chose the best account available to him (cf. Saudelli 72: Apuleius’ work “peut être considérée comme le traité démonologique le plus approfondi, le plus systématique, et le plus élégant de l’Antiquité.”)

    6) The *DDS*, while being an important example of Platonic demonology, was also reflective of popular Roman religious beliefs and practices at the time, allowing Augustine to respond to both intellectual and ‘folk’ conceptions of *daemones* at the same time (cf. Moreschini, “Polemica” 587–88 on Apuleius’ intention to address a general Roman audience with his work). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Saudelli 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Nicole Fick, “Saint Augustin Pourfendeur Des Démons Païens, Ou La Critique de La Démonologie d’Apulée, De Civit. Dei, VIII, 14-22,” in *Discours Religieux Dans l’Antiquité: Actes Du Colloque de Besançon, 27-28 Janvier 1995* (Besançon: Université de Franche-Comté, 1995), 197–98. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. *ibid.* 192-3. So also Wolfgang Bernard, “Zur Dämonologie Des Apuleius von Madura,” *Rheinisches Museum Für Philologie* 3/4 (1994): 373: “Diese durchdachte Dämonologie hat Augustinus offenbar als für das Christentum gefährlich angesehen und sie darum unter Einsatz aller (auch der polemischen) Mittel der Rhetorik zu widerlegen gesucht.” [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Moreschini “Polemica” 589; 596. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Fick 198-201. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Jean Pépin, “La Doctrine Platonicienne Des Anges et Des Démons,” in *Ex Platonicorum Persona: Études Sur Les Lectures Philosophiques de Saint Augustin* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1977), 27–37. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Moreschini “Polemica” 583. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Lenka Karfiková, “Augustins Polemik Gegen Apuleius,” in *Apuleius: De Deo Socratis. Über Den Gott Des Sokrates. Eingeleitet, Übersetzt Und Mit Interpretierenden Essays Versehen.*, 189; Moreschini *Metamorphoses* 354, 362. Fick also, at times, endorses this interpretation (“Augustin se présente, lui, comme le champion de l’orthodoxie platonicienne,” 195 ), though I find it difficult to understand how, in her view, Augustine aims both to present himself as a champion of Platonic orthodoxy *and* to destroy the very roots of the pagan worldview. Finally, Saudelli (88) also claims that Augustine seeks to show that Apuleius has betrayed his Platonic roots by failing to preserve Socrates’ monotheistic theology. The attribution of a pre-Christian monotheism to Socrates is, of course, a highly contentious claim. However, what is important here is that Saudelli sees Augustine’s response to Apuleius as (at least in part) presenting himself as a better Platonist than the Platonists. Her interpretation thus faces the same challenge as Fick’s – how can Augustine be both a champion of Platonism *and* a destroyer of the pagan worldview, of which Platonism must be seen as an integral part? [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. All references to the *DCD* are to the 1877 edition of Dombart’s Teubnertext. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. See also *De Vera Religione* VII. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. cf. VIII.5.328.6-8 (*Platonicis philosophis… qui verum Deum et rerum auctorem et veritatis inlustratorem et beatitudinis largitorem esse dixerunt*) and VIII.10.335.27-31 (*nobis consentiunt de uno Deo huius universitatis auctore, qui non solum super omnia corpora est incorporeus, verum etiam super omnes animas incorruptibilis, principium nostrum, lumen nostrum, bonum nostrum*). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. On the extent to which Augustine conceives of the Platonists as having access to Christian revelation, see also Goulven Madec, “«Si Plato Viveret…» (Augustin, De Vera Religione, 3.3),” in *Néoplatonisme: Mélanges Offerts à Jean Trouillard*, Cahiers de Fontenay 19-20-21–22 (Fontenay-aux-Roses: École Normale Supérieure, 1981), 231–48. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Augustine discusses a popular belief that Plato might have met the prophet Jeremiah, but dismisses the idea as historically impossible. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. That is, by way of a Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures, or some sort of Greek-speaking interpreter of the scriptures. Remarkably, Augustine also thinks it possible that some elements of Plato’s cosmology in the *Timaeus* might show signs of inspiration from the Old Testament, in particular from the creation narrative in *Genesis*. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Augustine also believes that other philosophers – such as those in Egypt or Persia – could also have access to such revelation, and he claims that he focuses on the Platonists because he is most familiar with their writings (VIII.10). [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Interestingly, Augustine grounds this reading of Platonic revelation on Christian revelation, in particular, on *Romans* I.18-23, where the author of the epistle writes that God revealed truths about the divine to those who claimed to be wise, but they nonetheless came to worship images of humans and animals rather than God (VIII.10). [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. For a discussion of the various ways in which Augustine’s discussion mimics Apuleius’ at the level of literary devices etc., see Harold Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, Studia Graeca et Latina Gotoburgensia XX (Gothenburg: Elander, 1967), 680–89. Hunink is perhaps too extreme when he writes that some of Augustine’s discussion “may seem a school exercise in rhetoric rather than a theological discussion” (92), but the emphasis he places on the *rhetorical* form of much of the two books is very much on the mark. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. e.g. the gods are ‘*eudaemones, non sunt eudaemones daemones*’ (IX.13.385.29-30) [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. cf. in particular the anaphoric opposition of *cum daemones* and *nobis* *vera religio praecipit* at VIII.17.347.7-18 (Fick 202). [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. *Praeclara sanctitatas Dei, qui*

    *non miscetur homini supplicanti,*

    *et miscetur daemoni arroganti;*

    *non miscetur homini paenitenti,*

    *et miscetur daemoni decipienti*

    *non miscetur homini confugienti ad divinitatem,*

    *et miscetur daemoni fingenti divinitatem;*

    *non miscetur homini petenti indulgentiam,*

    *et miscetur daemoni suadenti nequitiam*;

    *non miscetur homini per philosophicos libros poetas de bene instituta civitate pellenti,*

    *et miscetur daemoni a principibus et pontificibus civitatis per scaenicos ludos poetarum ludibria requirenti;*

    *non miscetur homini deorum criminal fingere prohibenti,*

    *et miscetur daemoni se falsis deorum criminibus obiectanti*. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Hagendahl 684. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. There are other reasons for thinking Apuleius’ title is as it is (see Beaujeu, 201–3), but this does not change the fact that Augustine is here employing precisely the same argumentative strategy as Apuleius. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Apuleius’ distinction between *daemones* and gods, Augustine tells us, is “most clear (*apertissime*) and most thorough (*copiosissime*)” and he “discusses Plato’s thought with attentive argument (*diligenti disputatione*)” (VIII.14.342-4-6). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. The point of his arguments only being made clear “to *discerning* readers (*significavit tamen prudentibus*)” (IX.9.379.23, emphasis mine). [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Various commentators have taken issue with this line of argument (cf., e.g., Fick 198), as it is unclear why Augustine thinks he is entitled to associate the theatre directly with *daemones*, given that Apuleius does not discuss the theatre in the *DDS*. But this criticism misses the way in which Augustine views Apuleius as beholden to his own tradition of revelation. I suspect that, in Augustine’s mind, Apuleius is required to account both for what Plato says and for the popular religious beliefs that are central to the development of his demonology – much like Augustine, *qua* theologian, is required to account for both Biblical revelation and the traditions of the Church. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. We can thus defend Augustine against the charge that, given that Apuleius claims there are *good* *daemones* who function as a sort of guardian or conscience for human beings, his arguments fail to properly account for what Apuleius actually says (Hunink 93-5). If the *daemones* are essentially affected by emotions, and emotions necessarily move us to act contrary to reason, then either: i) these *daemones* will be, at best, imperfect guardians liable to moments of emotional irrationality; or ii) these guardian *daemones* must not be capable of being moved against reason by way of their emotions… but then they will fail to satisfy the definition of *daemones* Apuleius provides (as Moreschini, despite his own concerns about the Augustine’s arguments, saw clearly (“Polemica” 592)). I trust that a similarly charitable reading of Augustine would also help defuse Fick’s list of objections and alleged sophisms (198-201), though I do not have the space to engage in a point-by-point response here. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. One might wonder whether Augustine is entitled to attribute these claims to Apuleius. Why should we think, after all, this is how Apuleius conceives of emotions, or of the emotional state of *daemones*, or of the potential happiness of human beings? However, all of these claims seem to follow quickly from Apuleius’ other commitments. The fact that emotions incline a soul to act contrary to reason is an important, if complicated, theme in Plato’s moral psychology. Furthermore, as I have tried to show above, the susceptibility of the *daemones* to emotions is required by the intermediary status Apuleius attributes to them, and the potential perfection of human beings, while never explicitly stated in the *DDS*, seems to be alluded to at several points (particularly in Apuleius’ descriptions of the virtues of Socrates and Odysseus), and was an important part of Middle Platonic and Stoic conceptions of the ideal human being or sage. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Karfiková thus misses Augustine’s point when she asks why he does not consider the possibility that the *daemones* might be sometimes happy and sometimes unhappy (178). The question here is rather, I think, what state the *best* of the *daemones* are capable of achieving, relative to the best of human beings. Humans are capable of attaining perfect happiness (that is, they are capable, with God’s grace¸ of always acting in accordance with reason, since the perturbations of the *passiones* are not *essentially* part of what it is to be human,) whereas *daemones*, because these psychic perturbations are an essential part of what it is to be a *daemon*, cannot achieve this perfect happiness, and thus are consigned to eternal unhappiness – though not necessarily eternal unhappiness without any happiness whatsoever mixed in.) [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. It might be helpful, at this point, to introduce a distinction between something being *intermediate* (that is, possessing some of the properties of two distinct classes of entities ‘between’ which, metaphysically speaking, it stands) and something being a *mediator* (that is, helping to communicate between these two classes in order to bridge the gap between them). Augustine and Apuleius both aim to identify intermediate mediators, but Apuleius only succeeds in picking out intermediate entities. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. The precise nature of human-divine mediation is, I take it, one of the central concerns motivating Augustine’s discussion of Apuleius et al. (a fact that Jean-Claude Guy (*Unité et Structure Logique de La « Cité de Dieu » de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1961), 62 and Saudelli (81-86) are both admirably aware of in their discussions). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Karfiková (186) emphasizes this perfect sharing in both the divine and the human, suggesting that this marks a *shift* in the nature of mediation from Apuleius (for whom mediation is merely to be in an intermediate physical location) to Augustine (for whom mediation requires full participation in both of the mediated parties). But this is not a shift so much as a *completion* or perfection of Apuleius’ project: Augustine’s Christ provides so much more perfect of a model of mediation than Apuleius had envisioned, constrained as he was by various false premises about the nature of *daemones* that he had to incorporate into his account. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. *DCD* IX.15. See also Karfiková 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. “The Spirit of Jewish Education,” *Jewish Education* 24, no. 2 (1953): 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)