

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL FACULTY

Department of Systematic Theology and Philosophy

Mgr. Hana Benešová

**Through the Profane Desire
to the Desire for Eternity**

Rigorózní práce

Director: doc. David Vopřada, Dr.

Praha 2021

Statutory Declaration

1. I declare that I have prepared the submitted work independently and used the indicated sources and literature.
2. I declare that the work has not been used to obtain another title.
3. I agree that the work will be made available for study and research purposes.

4. 12. 2020 Hana Benešová

Bibliographic References

BENEŠOVÁ, Hana. *Through the Profane Desire to the Desire for Eternity: rigorózní práce*. Director: doc. David Vopřada. Prague, 2020. 63 p.

Abstract

The desire for God is not a frequent topic for reflection in a secular society. However, longing for God leads to human fulfilment and integrity. This work examines yearning for God through the transformation of profane desires and perception of their insufficiency and gives them the right place in Augustine's concept of the Order of Love. Augustine's reflections on the loss of his beloved relatives and friends through the prism of eternity and cognition that nobody is lost in God give an example of this process. The phenomenological method is used to specify and understand the course of the transformation. Movement and detachment, as a vital part of the perceptual journey, will be described in detail. The theme of women's spirituality related to the topic of desire is also explored. Therefore, the study focuses on woman's endeavour to break an attachment to everything transient to be able to love unconditionally. Discovering a craving for God through the realisation of passing desires and their insufficiency for heart fulfilment can be an essential task for further research in spiritual theology.

Keywords:

desire, Augustine, restlessness, loss, motion, detachment, lack, insufficiency

The number of characters: 145 422

Acknowledgements

My special thanks to David Vopřada whose incredible enthusiasm and support has led me through my work. I would gratefully acknowledge my gratitude to him for his diligent supervision. I would like to thank Lenka Karfíková for her recommendations and generosity. I wish to thank to Jiří Dosoudil for his incisive comments and reading. I am extremely grateful to Magdaléna Řezáčová for diligent proofreading.

Introduction	6
1 The reflected lack and insufficiency as the means to the Order of Love.....	8
2 Augustine’s own experience with the loss of his closest family and friends.....	16
2.1 The loss of a friend	17
2.2 Dismissal of his concubine. Comparison of the decision for chastity made by Augustine and that made by the woman.	19
2.3 The death of Augustine’s mother Monica	21
2.4 Adeodatus	23
2.5 Nebridius.....	23
2.6 Verecundus	24
3 Augustine’s perceptual journey	27
4 The transformation of desire in Saint Augustine’s <i>Confessions</i> and the <i>Sermones ad Populum</i> as a paradigm for our pilgrimage.....	33
4.1 Desire in Augustine’s selected sermons	39
5 Consequences of the relationship between desire and distance for female spirituality	46
5.1 Impulse to search	47
5.2 Do not touch me.....	51
5.3 Life under grace	53
5.4 Possible appeasements of desire	55
6 Conclusion	57
Bibliography.....	60

Introduction

Desire gives meaning to peoples' lives and helps them actualise their possibilities and find out their identity. If there is no longing, there is no movement, and the sense of life is endangered. Therefore, different disciplines endeavour and define the role of desire in human life. For this reason, longing is also an essential topic in spiritual theology. Since the subject matter of spiritual theology is to reflect an encounter with God's revelation, there is a close relationship between desire and divine intervention. This work wants to show how profane desires lead a human being from their known paths to transcendence. The reason why the topic of longing for God is so essential for the research is apparent. It is written in the human heart. Thus, the question is whether this desire can be revealed by perceiving and reflecting profane desires.

It is well known that the desire for God is not a frequent topic in secular society even though the journey leading to God promises fulfilment and integrity. One of ways how to raise awareness of the message of Gospel can be a help to distinguish God's revelation in one's life through the reflection of desires.

This work also aims to explore the transformation of longings by reflecting on their insufficiencies. Thus, we assume that to recognise such deficits can awaken a desire for God. By discovering the deficiency of transient desires, a person can experience the opportune moment and set off beyond the known path of his or her milieu, thinking structures and experience. The phenomenological method is used to find the right premises. This method helps to describe the meaning of the particular steps of the perceptual journey. Augustine of Hippo, a man of restless heart, will be our guide in the discussion on the perceptual journey through profane longings to the desire for eternity.

In the first part, we explore the close relationship between desire and movement. The movement is crucial as far as the transformation of desire is concerned. This motion leads from acknowledging the insufficiency of profane desires to desires leading beyond known paths. Thus, it is essential not to cease going forward even though the experience of the lack in a transient desire is severe and paralysing. During these moments, a person can acquire the order of love, which means that everybody and everything is given the right place in the order of creation. It is crucial to emphasise that this effort is the desired

transformation. In the second part, we will discuss the perceptual journey with Augustine of Hippo. Exploring his experience of the loss of his closest family and friends gives us the knowledge that the loss which is reflected in the light of *beata vita* is a vital part of the transformation of desire. The order of love is explained in detail in this part. We will reflect Augustine's decision for continence and for leaving his career as a means to desire *beata vita* more than his 'old loves'.

Detachment, a link between desire and distance, is explained in the context of the order of love. The third chapter takes us through Augustine's transformation of desire. The usage of the words *cupiditas* and *desiderium* in the *Confessions* is analysed. We will focus on the critical moment in which a person is invited to realise and reflect his or her desire and make a decisive step towards integrity. Augustine completely surrenders himself to God after experiencing insufficiency in his attachment to everything that is not eternal. The focus will be given on how the preacher of Hippo integrates his profound experience in sermons and helps his audience to undergo the challenging journey of the transformation of desires, revealing and reflecting the divine revelation in their lives. The selected sermons are analysed here.

It is vital to view women's spirituality in the context of cultural changes in society and consequently in the Church. Therefore, in the fourth chapter, particular attention will be paid to desire from the perspective of female spirituality. The question from the Wife of Bath in the *Canterbury Tales* – What do women desire most? – will be considered in the context of the curse of the woman from the book of Genesis. We will offer a perceptual journey from reflecting on the desire for possessing to the desire for God actualised in devotion to Him. Therese of Lisieux will be a model for this transformation. An analysis of Jesus's sentence 'Do not touch me' said to Mary Magdalene will be discussed in the context of Augustine's thinking. The chapter will end with the introduction of possibilities of how woman can appease the desires for God in the mystical body without boundaries.

1 The reflected lack and insufficiency as the means to the Order of Love

Desire makes men and women go forward, and to move means to be on the way. The issue we want to focus on is to describe the process in which a person identifies the profane desires in his or her life so that the desire for God can be revealed. We call this process a perceptual journey¹ because we perceive the world around us through our senses, helping us ‘describe our subjective experience’.² That is the ground for finding the way beyond our knowledge. As Barbaras states, ‘It comes down to admitting that the only possible access to being is our experience itself, that it is exclusively in what we live that we can discover its transcendence.’³ From this sentence it can be understood that perceiving and reflecting the milieu we live in helps us move forward to transcendence, toward longing for God, which is beyond all perception.

A question which arises is why it is essential to perceive longing for God. The answer is obvious; the desire for God is written in human hearts, and bluntly said, we cannot help it. There is nothing that can permanently fulfil the human heart except God. On the other hand, this experience of insufficiency makes us restless. Moreover, the lack makes a human being to move and look for possible satisfaction. Because, even if the desired object is grasped, the human heart is not fulfilled since the longing for the Creator is ‘written in the human heart because man is created by God and for God’.⁴ For this reason, we can be permanently fulfilled by nothing less than God. Thus, a person is set in motion either by insufficiency or by a loss to perceive the original desire.

At this point it is important to introduce the Augustinian concept of *uti et frui*. As far as the transformation of desire is concerned, it has to be taken into account that all things carry a different message to a human being.

¹ BARBARAS, Renaud. *Desire and Distance: Introduction to a Phenomenology of Perception*. 1st edition. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 108 *It has been shown that the perceptual act, which is not the constitution but the co-condition of appearance, must be conceived of as a motor act; it, therefore, refers to the specificity of living movement.*

² ROGERS, Brian. *Perception: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 27.

³ BARBARAS, Renaud. *Desire and Distance*, p. 2.

⁴ CCC 27.

‘There are some things which are to be enjoyed, some which are to be used, and some whose function is both to enjoy and use. Those which are to be enjoyed make us happy, those which are to be used assist us and give us a boost, so to speak, as we press on towards our happiness, so that we may reach and hold fast to the thing which make us happy. And we, placed as we are among things of both kinds, both enjoy and use them, but if we choose to enjoy things that are to be used, our advance is impeded and sometimes even diverted and we are held back, or even put off, from attaining things which are to be enjoyed, because we are hamstrung by our love of lower things.’⁵

Wisdom then is to distinguish the information of a thing and consider if it is there for usage or enjoyment. The method is essential. Otherwise, we can lose the direction to the desired happiness if we look for happiness in those things which are, by definition, medium to peace. ‘The things which are to be enjoyed, then, are the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity comprised by them, which is a kind of single, supreme thing, shared by all who enjoy it – if indeed it is a thing and not the cause of all things, and if indeed it is a cause.’⁶ From this definition it is clear that profane desires are desires which long for something else or lower than God. These objects of our longing are the vehicles to *beata vita*.

‘So in this mortal life we are like travellers away from our Lord:⁷ if we wish to return to the homeland where we can be happy we must use this world,⁸ not enjoy it, in order to discern ‘the invisible attributes of God, which are understood through what has been made’⁹ or, in other words, to ascertain what is eternal and spiritual from corporeal and temporal things’.¹⁰

⁵ AUGUSTINUS. *De doctrina christiana* I, 3,3 (CCL 32, 8): ‘*Res ergo aliae sunt quibus fruendum est, aliae quibus utendum, aliae quae fruuntur et utuntur. Illae quibus fruendum est nos beatos faciunt; istis quibus utendum est tendentes ad beatitudinem adiuvamur et quasi adminiculamur, ut ad illas quae nos beatos faciunt pervenire atque his inhaerere possimus. Nos vero, qui fruimur et utimur inter utrasque constituti, si eis quibus utendum est frui voluerimus, impeditur cursus noster et aliquando etiam deflectitur, ut ab his rebus quibus fruendum est obtinendis vel retardemur vel etiam revocemur inferiorum amore praepediti.* transl. AUGUSTINUS, Aurelius a William M GREEN. *De doctrina Christiana libri quattuor*. Vindobonae: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1963, p. 14.

⁶ AUGUSTINUS. *De doctrina christiana* I, 5,5 (CCL 32, 9): ‘*Res igitur quibus fruendum est, pater et filius et spiritus sanctus, eademque trinitas, una quaedam summa res communisque omnibus fruentibus ea, si tamen res et non rerum omnium causa, si tamen et causa.* transl. W. M. Green, p. 16.

⁷ 2 Cor. 5:6.

⁸ Cf. 1 Cor. 7:31.

⁹ Rom. 1:20.

¹⁰ AUGUSTINUS. *De doctrina christiana* 1, 4, 4 (CSEL 32, 8): ‘*sic in huius mortalitatis vita peregrinantes a Domino, si redire in patriam volumus, ubi beati esse possimus, utendum est hoc mundo, non fruendum,*

There are, of course, some objections to using a neighbour as a mean to God, as several scholars pointed.¹¹ However, Augustine had painful experience with losing the people he loved with great passion and perhaps for this reason, to avoid this suffering again, he comes up with the teaching of the order of love, where a neighbour is loved in God in whom nobody is lost.¹² The comparison of the profane desire to *res ad utendum* and the desire for God to *res ad fruendum* can lead to clarification that talking about the transformation of desire does not mean to eliminate profane desires but to use them as a mean to discover the desire for God. And it means to give them the right place in the order of love.

The perceptual journey can have a form of the hermeneutic circle, which means oscillating from losses to gains and the other way round. Through the reflected profane desire with its insufficiency, the movement happens to discover the original desire. The loss is used in this context as losing someone or something. The gain means to get something positive and useful from the loss. The movement between loss and gain makes sense when the changes are perceived and reflected. Therefore, we will talk about the perceptual journey in the sense of becoming aware of a temporal desire in our personal lives and going forward until the desire for God is uncovered and found in our heart. In this context, we can talk about the similarity between perceiving the desire for God in our personal stories and seeking the kingdom of God¹³ among us. Both are there but have to

ut invisibilia Dei, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciantur, hoc est, ut de corporalibus temporalibusque rebus aeterna et spiritalia capiamus.’. transl. W. M. Green, p. 16.

¹¹ O’DONOVAN, OLIVER. Usus and fruitio in augustine, de doctrina christiana I. Journal of Theological Studies. XXXIII. 361-397, 1982, 361–397. In this article, Donovan lists scholar who objects Augustine’s method of using a neighbour as a means. He starts with Kant’s assertion, ‘that one should ‘treat humanity in every case as an end, never as a means.’ Then he cites Anders Nygren. ‘When [Augustine] says that we are to use the world in order to attain the enjoyment of God, he has the same idea as Plato had in urging us not to be captivated by the beautiful things in this world, but to use them as a ladder on which to ascend to the higher world.’ Other scholars such as Joseph Mausbach gave the stress on the importance of an objective order of things. Then he cites Swedish scholar Ragnar Holte who argued that, things-for-use and things-for-enjoyment were matched. ‘To love things-for-use “for the sake of” things-for-enjoyment was simply to preserve the correct ordering among the parts of the soul, defending the harmonious subordination of the practical to the theoretical.’

¹² Cf. Conf. IV 18 (CCL 27, 49).

¹³ In this respect, the eschatological category of the Kingdom of God, as found in the synoptic Gospels, suggests its discovery. Although it is not yet there, the Kingdom of God is inevitably approaching. Furthermore, as such, it is already available for our seeking. ‘Entering the Kingdom of God is, therefore, individual. However, the Kingdom of God as such is collectivist: joint efforts cannot build it, but Jesus encourages a common ‘search’ and prayer for its coming.’ DOSOUDIL, Jiří. *Boží království a jeho teologické konotace se zaměřením na Ježíšovo hlásání*: bakalářská práce. Vedoucí práce: Mireia Ryšková. Brno, 2014, p. 56.

be carefully sought.¹⁴ Both also lead to fulfilment and gratification, but the requirement is to go forward and not to stop on the way despite the obstacles and ceaselessly continue to seek, which means ‘a constant preoccupation, not a specific aim for the future.’¹⁵ In other words, to be ceaselessly concerned about where the desire leads and that there is nothing that can satisfy the longing except God.

The reflection of these two movements is the condition for discovering what shapes a heart and helps it go beyond known paths. The glimpses of the imperfection of the profane desires help us go forward to God in whom all desires are realised, surmounted and brought to perfection. The effort to leave the known patterns can remind us of Augustin’s restlessness. As Lacoste states, ‘restlessness is that mark of the humanity of man which removes man from every satisfaction to which world and earth hold the key, and grants to man the eschatological satisfaction that by definition, the Absolute alone promises.’¹⁶ By losing – by emptying mostly in agony, one can discover longings that are beyond his or her previous experience.

Thus, it becomes apparent that the restlessness is a significant characteristic of those who without ceasing and regardless of their failures persistently go on. Restlessness makes a person move. It is also a fundamental component of the process of finding the fulfilment we long for. Thus, there is a significant difference between fulfilment and temporary peace. As Benner asserts, ‘within each of us there is an unquenchable fire that renders us incapable of ever coming to full peace in this life’.¹⁷ From this sentence, we can understand that there is always something which makes it impossible to enjoy lasting happiness from transitory objects. ‘Something’ then can be identified as a deep desire for persisting fulfilment. Despite failures and disenchantments, the desire for God, written in our hearts, is driving us to continual motion to stability. The critical question is how to recognise the opportune moment¹⁸ from which a person is capable of seeing behind his

¹⁴ Matt. 6: 33.

¹⁵ FRANCE, R. T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. CAMBRIDGE: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007, p. 271.

¹⁶ Schrijvers, Joeri. (2005). Jean-Yves Lacoste: A Phenomenology of Liturgy. *The Heythrop Journal*. 46. pp. 314-333.

¹⁷ BENNER, David G. *Soulful Spirituality: Becoming Fully Alive and Deeply Human*. Brazos Press, 2011, p.16.

¹⁸ *An opportune moment – is an opportune time for something to occur, that there are special times determined by God, shown by God, and filled with God*. SULLIVAN, D.L., *Kairos and the rhetoric of belief*. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 78(3), pp. 317-332.

or her time-limited longings the reality of God's desire for us. The desire for God is subtle and is revealed in the most unusual ways; by distance and by a loss.

The transformation of desire is compared here to the perceptual journey because motion is one of the vital features to describe a person. The Nobel prize winner Olga Tokarczuk writes, 'If we wish to catalogue humankind in a convincing way, we can do so only by placing people in some sort of motion, moving from one place towards another'¹⁹. Since a person can be defined as a being that moves and by this, he or she can reach his or her destination. Thus, as Tokarczuk emphasises, 'desire lends movement and direction to a human being'.²⁰ If the desire for God is engraved in the human heart, then it helps to find direction to Him.

We have said that the desire for God is awakened by lack and reflects the insufficiency of profane desire. Thus, this awareness requires an effort because a person leaves comfort by getting out of the rut. The effort lies in facing discomfort and setting off. This exertion distinguishes us from animals, as Augustine explains to Evadius.²¹ The effort requires strength to go on and, in this movement, a person recognises desires, determining his or her behaviour and direction. Barbaras states that 'one has no choice but to concede that bodies that perceive are living bodies and that they are distinguished from other corporeal beings (...) by their capacity for movement'.²² Thus, a human being must not give up and continue on the way forward. A reflected loss can have the potential to see further beyond profane desires and start perceiving the desire for God. The desire which appeases anxiety and comforts gives strength to continue. Knowing that the goal of human life lies in God is the basic information that helps a person to appease anxiety and understand the meaning of his or her existence.

The transformation of desire is performed through the perceptual journey and this begins by the awareness of profane desires and reflection on where they can lead.

¹⁹ TOKARCZUK, Olga. *Flights*. Penguin, 2018, p. 115.

²⁰ Ibidem. p. 117.

²¹ AUGUSTINUS. De libero arbitrio libri tres I 8,18 (CCL 29, 223): *Genus tamen ipsum rerum est nobis certe commune cum belluis: iam vero appetere voluptates corporis, et vitare molestias, ferinae vitae omnis actio est*. AUGUSTINUS, Aurelius a William M GREEN. *De doctrina Christiana libri quattuor*. Vindobonae: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1963, p. 5.

²² BARBARAS, Renaud. *Desire and Distance*, p. 86.

As Barbaras writes, ‘It is in the “immanence” of what we “live” that we find a path toward transcendence’.²³ Even though it is demanding to reflect the environment surrounding us, this is the prerequisite to revealing transcendence. So, it is clear that understanding the world we can see, touch and perceive is significant. As Merleau-Ponty points out, ‘the things of the world are not simply neutral objects which stand before us for our contemplation. Each one of them symbolises or recalls a particular way of behaving, provoking in us reactions which are either favourable or unfavourable’²⁴. This means that everything that touches our senses has some impact on us, and we build relationships with it. It follows from those arguments that if the ability to reflect our experience in harmony with the immanent reality is distorted, the whole path to uncovering our longing for God is threatened.

The previous paragraph leads to the Husserlian slogan of phenomenology – return to things themselves. This motto, *epoché* has to be exercised. However, for our purpose, we will not analyse Husserl’s definition of it but the definition specified by Barbaras. By *epoché* Barbaras understands a method that affords access to the sense of being of the world; it is the destruction of the obstacles that compromise the apprehension of this existence as such, according to its true sense’.²⁵ The description of *epoché* can be interpreted in a spiritual sense as a detachment. It invites us to examine obstacles which have to be transformed because they chain us to the things, and by it, the ability to move is threatened. This kind of attachment can obscure the longing for God. Therefore, it is a paradox that only after reflecting and transforming the obstacles, the view of a person becomes transparent and allows him or her to see beyond everyday reality.

When we are talking about the transformation of profane desires, it means to give them the right place in the order of love. When we are talking about the concept ‘the order of love’ (*ordo amoris*) we have in mind Augustine’s thought on loving.

‘I roared from the groaning of my heart, and my desire was before you, and the light of my eyes was not with me’.²⁶ That was inward, while I was still in externals. It was not in

²³ Ibidem. p. 3.

²⁴ MERLEAU-PONTY, Maurice. *The World of Perception*. 1st edition. Routledge, 2004, p. 63.

²⁵ BARBARAS, Renaud. *Desire and Distance*, p. 62.

²⁶ Ps. 37: 9-11.

a place; but I was fixing my attention on things contained in space, and there I found no place to rest in, nor did those external things receive me so that I could say ‘It is enough and it is well’. Nor did they allow me to return where it was enough and well for me. I was superior to these external objects but inferior to you, and you are my true joy if I submit to you, and you have made subject to me what you created to be lower than me. This was the correct mean, the middle ground in which I would find health, that I should remain ‘in your image’, and in serving you be master of my body’.²⁷

However, giving external object the right place can be experienced as loss bearing suffering and confusion. One has to make an effort to do that. With its insufficiency, a profane desire creates space for openness to the desire for God. By giving the obstacles the right place in the order of love means to set foot into the unknown area where the experience of vulnerability and despair but also the great will to live and survive can be found. Therefore, presumably perceiving lack and vulnerability caused by the experience of loss is a chance for revealing God’s presence in a personal story. The loss gives the knowledge of transience and mortality. The decision to distinguish and transform what is an obstacle on the way is possible when there is recognition of something more filling and satisfying. It demands the perception of ‘beauty seen not by the eye of the flesh, but only by inward discernment.’²⁸ When we think about desire, we think about future, but to live presence is no less important and equally challenging. Longing gives energy to move toward a goal and the reflection of presence opens the possibility to see everything as such.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus teaches that: ‘for whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it’.²⁹ According to T. R. France in modern biblical scholarship, this verse is explained in these words: ‘Such a demand

²⁷ Conf. VII 7, 11 (CCL 27, 100): *Totum tamen ibat in auditum tuum, quod rugiebam a gemitu cordis mei, et ante te erat desiderium meum et lumen oculorum meorum non erat mecum. Intus enim erat, ego autem foris, nec in loco illud. At ego intendebam in ea, quae locis continentur, et non ibi inveniebam locum ad requiescendum, nec recipiebant me ista, ut dicerem: “Sat est”, et: “Bene est”, nec dimittebant redire, ubi mihi satis esset bene. Superior enim eram istis, te vero inferior, et tu gaudium verum mihi subdito tibi et tu mihi subieceras quae infra me creasti. Et hoc erat rectum temperamentum et media regio salutis meae, ut manerem ad imaginem tuam et tibi serviens dominarer corpori.*’ AUGUSTINE, and CHADWICK, Henry. *Confessions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 120.

²⁸ Conf. VI 16, 26 (CCL 27, 90-9; tr. Chadwick, p. 110): *Quod ita demersus et caecus cogitare non possem lumen honestatis et gratis amplectendae pulchritudinis, quam non videt oculus carnis, et videtur ex intimo.*

²⁹ Matt. 16:25.

makes sense only in the context of a firm expectation of life beyond death'.³⁰ Therefore a decision to transform a profane desire which is a hinder on our journey can be done only with the knowledge of 'life beyond death'. The knowledge of something having a great value is vital for a person who is leaving something behind.

The transformation of desire means to distinguish and modify profane longings which should be reflected. The reflection means to recognise that everything created by God bears deficiency which paradoxically opens perception for transcendence. However, a tricky question arises: who wants to become voluntarily detached from what he or she is attached to? The next chapter will guide us through Augustine's own experience of interconnection between losses and gains.

³⁰ FRANCE, R. T. *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 584.

2 Augustine's own experience with the loss of his closest family and friends

We will follow the perceptual movement in Augustine's own experience with how he perceived the loss of his closest family and friends. 'In the space of four years, Augustine had lost his concubine, his mother, his son, and two of his closest friends, Nebridius and Verecundus.'³¹ It has been said and defined that desire is the fundamental component of a perceptual journey. Another vital element is restlessness, necessary for going forward. The main focus of this chapter is to answer the question of how Augustine perceived the loss, and if the reflection helped him transform his desires into longing for God, for *beata vita*.

Augustine is a man of constant search. As Vopřada states, 'His whole oeuvre can be read as a dialogical search for "God and the soul, nothing more," as he defines it in his *Soliloquies*[*Sol.* 1.2.7.].'³² The experience of the loss of dearest ones, as will be shown further, leads him to distinguish cravings that help him experience, in their insufficiency, the longing for God. As his famous quotation proves, peace can be found in God, 'Our heart is restless until it rests in you'.³³ Therefore, it is crucial to perceive the restlessness of the heart and recognize the merest indication of desire. However, as Augustine puts it aptly, 'it is easier to count his hairs than the passions and emotions of his heart.'³⁴ The importance of *epoché* lies in comprehending events and experience from a distance, helping to describe the real situation in which a person lives. This reflection shows the most profound yearning of his or her heart in the light of God's omnipotence.

This chapter focuses on Augustine's transformation of desire when he is confronted with the loss of his closest people. The renouncement of his career and decision to live in continence will also be described. We will explore how the loss and detachment from people, career, plans and 'pleasure' is a chance for him to perceive a desire for stability and eternity, which means a desire for God. At first, his emotional reaction to the loss of

³¹ POWER, Kim. Concubine/Concubinage, In FITZGERALD, Allan D (ed.). *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999, pp. 222-223.

³² Cf. VOPŘADA, David. Augustine's Eternal Search for the True Face of God. In: *Seeking God's Face*, Mireia Ryšková (ed.). Praha: Karolinum Press, 2018, pp. 137-158.

³³ Conf. I. 1,1 (CCL 27, 1; tr. Chadwick, p. 3). *Inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te*.

³⁴ Conf. IV. 14,22 (CCL 27, 51; tr. Chadwick, p. 66.) *Et tamen capilli eius magis numerabiles sunt quam affectus eius et motus cordis eius*.

his best friend will be described, then how he feels after abandoning the concubine and a mother of his son Adeodatus. After that, Subsequently, we will turn attention to Augustine's condition after his mother Monica and his son Adeodatus and his friends Nebridius and Verecundus died. Finally, we will focus on his renouncement of his career and bodily pleasure. Augustine is a man of deep emotions, who is capable of having and nourishing profound friendships. To be a friend of Augustine meant only too often becoming a part of Augustine himself.³⁵ The citation here gives clear evidence of what the relationships mean to him.

2.1 The loss of a friend

Augustine had a friend with whom, as he describes, 'shared the flowering of youth'.³⁶ He recalls the friendship as 'a very sweet experience, welded by the fervour of our identical interest'.³⁷ Nevertheless, he also confesses that he had a bad influence on his friend but then he acknowledges the wonderful ways of God by which He turned him to Himself. What were these wonderful ways? His friend who was to Augustine 'beyond all the sweetness of life that he had experienced' died.³⁸ After his friend's death, Augustine feels like an alien in his father's house and leaves his hometown for Carthage. He depicts the state of his shattered soul which nothing could appease except for weeping that becomes his companion. By writing the *Confessions* he reflects on grief and seeks God's presence in those moments. He admits that he 'had lost the source of [his] joy'.³⁹ This short but very deep relationship shows Augustine's ability to have and to experience true feelings of affection. On the other hand, if we listed all that he seeks in the loving relationship with his friend, we could be astonished at how much he expects from a person.

Later, Augustine confesses that 'misery is the state of every soul overcome by friendship with mortal things and lacerated when they are lost'.⁴⁰ He pays attention to the difference between his attachment to his grief and the sadness that comes from the death of his

³⁵ BROWN, Peter. Augustine of Hippo: a biography. Rev. ed. Faber and Faber, 2000, p. 63.

³⁶ Conf. IV. 4,7 (CCL 27, 43; tr. Chadwick, p.56): *coevum mihi et conflorentem flore adolescentiae.*

³⁷ Conf. IV. 4,7 (CCL 27, 43; tr. Chadwick, p.56): *sed tamen dulcis erat nimis, coacta fervore parilium studiorum*

³⁸ Conf. IV. 4,7 (CCL 27, 43; tr. Chadwick, p.56): *suavi mihi super omnes suavitates illius vitae meae*

³⁹ Conf. IV. 5,10 (CCL 27, 45; tr. Chadwick, p.58): *miser enim eram et amiseram gaudium meum*

⁴⁰ Conf. IV. 6,11 (CCL 27, 45; tr. Chadwick, p.59): *Miser eram, et miser est omnis animus vincetus amicitia rerum mortalium et dilaniatur, cum eas amittit, et tunc sentit miseriam, qua miser est et antequam amittat eas.*

friend. This extraordinary observation brings a surprising conclusion: ‘I was more unwilling to lose my misery than him’.⁴¹ Moreover, he feels that half of his soul died together with his friend. Augustine’s personality is laid out before our eyes and we can slowly begin to understand why his vision of belonging to God means total sacrifice. Augustine yearns for a strong bond beyond the capacity of any human being and by severe losses he learns about the transience of everything that is not God.

He acknowledges that ‘all that [we] experience through [flesh] is only partial’.⁴² It should be explained what he means by flesh in this context. It is everything that is unstable and forms obstacles to perceiving God. By contrast, God’s word promises constancy, it restores us to health and remains with us.⁴³ Seeing things as a whole requires detachment from them. Likewise, it is important to say that neither people nor objects can satisfy one’s desire for eternity. However, they have the potentiality to refer to eternity. Augustine knows from his philosophical studies that ‘what is not stable is unattainable or only sporadically attainable; may take away any satisfaction it grants’.⁴⁴ Experiencing the vulnerability of humans, he abandons his image of God who is ‘not of anything solid and firm’⁴⁵ and learns that true God is ‘[who] stands fast and abides’.⁴⁶

Augustine deeply reflects the loss of his friend and does not run from the grief. He describes his grief and recognises that only God can heal his depressed soul. He is shattered, but he knows that he can find the integrity in God for himself as well as for all those who he loves. This painful experience leads him to a simple but essential conclusion regarding the aim of our journey. If we claim credit for the good we love in others, then it is good and sweet, otherwise the journey will become bitter without finding rest and happiness which can be found only in God.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Conf. IV. 6,11 (CCL 27, 45; tr. Chadwick, p. 58): *Ita miser eram et habebam cariorem illo amico meo vitam ipsam miseram.*

⁴² Conf. IV. 11,17 (CCL 27, 49; tr. Chadwick, p. 62): *Quidquid per illam sentis, in parte est et ignoras totum, cuius hae partes sunt, et delectant te tamen.*

⁴³ Cf. Conf. IV. 11,17 (CCL 27, 49). tr. Chadwick, p. 62.

⁴⁴ BOONE. Mark J., *The Conversion and Therapy of Desire: Augustine’s Theology of Desire in the Cassiciacum Dialogues*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016, p. 75.

⁴⁵ Conf. IV. 7,12 (CCL 27, 46). *quia non mihi eras aliquid solidum et firmum*

⁴⁶ Conf. IV. 11,16 (CCL 27, 49). *semper stantem ac permanentem Deum*

⁴⁷ Cf. Conf. IV 11,17 (CCL 27, 49).

2.2 Dismissal of his concubine. Comparison of the decision for chastity made by Augustine and that made by the woman.

Saint Augustine speaks to those who have restless hearts and want to find love and wisdom which persists. The experience of the temporal satisfaction and happiness from the relationships which were torn apart either by death or break-up leads him to the conclusion that ‘God’s love was the only safe love’.⁴⁸ Augustine believes that in God, he can find peace and restores his integrity. He knows well how difficult it is to overcome the disturbances and anxieties arising from the passion that makes a person chained in a prison and unable to move forward.⁴⁹ He also discerns that craving prevents him from being free, as bodily pleasure is the main impediment keeping him back from going forward. ‘To a large extent, what held me captive and tortured me was the habit of satisfying with vehement intensity an insatiable sexual desire.’⁵⁰ The quote explains how challenging this kind of renouncement in the course of his conversion was. Similarly, this quote shows his hesitation, “Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet.” I was afraid you might hear my prayer quickly and that you might too rapidly heal me of the disease of lust.’⁵¹

Knowing how difficult it is, he admires everybody who decided to vow chastity. One of them was the woman, mother of his son Adeodatus. The woman’s example influenced him, as Asiedu points in his article, to stay continent.⁵² Augustine was faithful to a Carthaginian girl of low social standing for fifteen years. Since he wanted to start his career and gain a better social standard in society, he sent her back to Carthage. Because only a woman who would support him financially could bring him success.⁵³

The quote says, ‘the woman with whom I habitually slept was torn away from my side because she was a hindrance to my marriage. My heart which was deeply attached, was

⁴⁸ POWER, Kim. Concubine/Concubinage, In FITZGERALD, Allan D (ed.). *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. 1999, p. 222-223.

⁴⁹ Cf. Conf VIII 11, 25 (CCL 27, 129).

⁵⁰ Conf. VI 12,22 (CCL 27, 88; tr. Chadwick, p. 107): *Magna autem ex parte atque vehementer consuetudo satiandae insatiabilis concupiscentiae me captum excruciat.*

⁵¹ Conf. VIII 7,17 (CCL 27, 124; tr. Chadwick, p. 111): *Da mihi castitatem et continentiam, sed noli modo’. Timebam enim, ne me cito exaudires et cito sanares a morbo concupiscentiae.*

⁵² ASIEDU, F. *Following the Example of a Woman: Augustine’s Conversion to Christianity in 386*. *Vigiliae Christianae*, 2003, 57(3), pp. 276-306.

⁵³ Cf. AUGUSTINE, and CHADWICK, Henry. *Confessions*, p. xiii.

cut and wounded and left a trail of blood. She had returned to Africa vowing that she would never go with another man.⁵⁴ However, the parting was tough not only for Augustine, but also for the woman.⁵⁵ Even though he found another woman, his ‘wound, inflicted by the earlier parting, was not healed’.⁵⁶ The decision to stay continent probably arose also from the conviction that only God can heal his wound and restore health in him.⁵⁷

Augustine decides to be continent because of his conviction that to belong to God without any disruption means to grasp unity with Him. His trust in God’s power to satisfy him is absolute. Augustine aims his longing at God. ‘My desire is for you, justice and innocence, you are lovely and splendid to honest eyes, the satiety of your love is insatiable.’⁵⁸ Augustine regards continence so highly because he was influenced by Cicero at the age of eighteen. The great Roman orator ‘taught that happiness is not found in physical pleasure of luxurious food, drink, and sex, but in the dedication of the mind to the discovery of truth’.⁵⁹ This might be a reason why at the age of 32/33, when he was prepared to receive baptism, Augustine ‘makes the equation between conversion and continence’.⁶⁰ Although he was ‘deeply wounded’ by the parting with a mother of Adeodatus, the main reason to become continent was the desire to recognise the wisdom and live the life of a philosopher. For this reason and with the intention to become a Christian, he ‘ordered [himself] not to desire, not to seek, not to marry a wife’.⁶¹

There are research papers which refer to the influence of his mother Monica as far as the separation between Augustine and his concubine is concerned.⁶² Besides, there was

⁵⁴ Conf. VI 15, 25 (CCL 27, 90; tr. Chadwick, p. 109): *Et avulsa a latere meo tamquam impedimento coniugii cum qua cubare solitus eram, cor, ubi adhaerebat, concisum et vulneratum mihi erat et trahebat sanguinem. Et illa in Africam redierat vovens tibi alium se virum nescituram.*

⁵⁵ Cf. AUGUSTINE, and CHADWICK, Henry. *Confessions*, p. xvi.

⁵⁶ Conf. VI 15, 25 (CCL 27, 90; tr. Chadwick, p. 109): *Nec sanabatur vulnus illud meum, quod prioris praecisione factum erat.*

⁵⁷ Conf. VIII 8,12 (CCL 27, 101).

⁵⁸ Conf. II 10, 18 (CCL 27, 26; tr. Chadwick, p. 34): *Te volo, iustitia et innocentia, pulchra et decora honestis luminibus et insatiabili satietate.*

⁵⁹ Cf. AUGUSTINE, and CHADWICK, Henry. *Confessions*, p. xiv.

⁶⁰ ASIEDU, F. *Following the Example of a Woman: Augustine's Conversion to Christianity in 386*. *Vigiliae Christianae*, 2003, 57(3), pp. 276-306.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*.

⁶² For more information about the topic in: LUPINSKI, Jozef. *The concubinage of St. Augustine*, 2018, [vid. 2020-11-07].

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324042787_The_concubinage_of_St_Augustine>

another barrier as Vopřada argues: ‘He would probably marry her, but according to Roman law, this was not possible due to unequal social status.’⁶³

From the previous paragraphs, we can conclude that the former couple was deeply wounded by the parting. Both vowed chastity and even though they used the same means to resolve their situation, they did it for different reasons. However, we can be left with the hypothetical question that they both sought in God ‘peace and a life immune from disturbance.’⁶⁴ Both of them have the aim to alleviate the wound and through the chastity restore their integrity. At this point it is important to explain the usage of *concupiscentia* in Augustine’s thinking. ‘Augustine characterised *concupiscentia* in his later works as an absolutely radical internal dislocation, a catastrophic disagreement with oneself.’⁶⁵ Thus, everything that moves a person away from God is *concupiscentia*. The more we follow profane desires without giving them their right place in the order of love, the more we deviate from ourselves and our identity dissipates. Therefore, Augustine chose unconditionally to belong to God to find integrity, peace and love.

2.3 The death of Augustine’s mother Monica

Augustine was thirty-three when his mother Monica died. Her ‘religious and devout soul was released from the body’⁶⁶ at the age of fifty-six. Augustine highly appreciates that they can be together on ‘the day she was to depart this life.’⁶⁷ In the course of their conversation, they meditate upon ‘the pleasure of the bodily senses, however delightful in the radiant light of his physical world, is seen by comparison with the life of eternity to be not even worth considering.’⁶⁸ This conversation was very calming for both. Talking about eternity with the beloved one who is leaving this world is mystical experience. The conversation took place in the atmosphere of total recognition that eternity is the reality; real life offering delights which cannot be captured by senses. Before Monica died, she

⁶³ VOPŘADA, David. Saint Augustine, Svatý Augustin, dobra manželství a kauza Ecdicia. In Kol. aut. *Svatost manželství jako znamení nové a věčné smlouvy*. Hradec Králové: Biskupství královéhradecké, 2019, pp. 65-96.

⁶⁴ Conf. II 10, 18 (CCL 27, 26): *Quies est apud te valde et vita imperturbabilis*.

⁶⁵ BURNELL, Peter. Concupiscence, In FITZGERALD, Allan D (ed.). *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. 1999, p. 224-227.

⁶⁶ Conf. IX 11, 28 (CCL 27, 149; tr. Chadwick, p. 176).

⁶⁷ Conf. IX 10, 23 (CCL 27, 147; tr. Chadwick, p. 170).

⁶⁸ Conf. IX 10, 24 (CCL 27, 148; tr. Chadwick, p. 171): *Cumque ad eum finem sermo perduceretur, ut carnalium sensuum delectatio quantalibet in quantalibet luce corporea prae illius vitae iucunditate non comparatione, sed ne commemoratione quidem digna videretur, erigentes nos ardentiore affectu in id ipsum*.

had expressed her satisfaction to see her son not only to become Christian but also God's servant.⁶⁹

After Monica's departure, Augustine was overcome with deep grief, even though he did not have doubts about her virtuous life and was certain that neither her state was miserable nor that she was suffering extinction.⁷⁰ Pouring out the tears after trying to suppress his sadness, Augustine feels relief. He lost his mother and companion and was deprived of her physical presence. How close their bond was, is described in the following sentence. 'I had lost the immense support she gave, my soul was wounded, and my life as it was torn to pieces since my life and hers had become a single thing.'⁷¹ The son lost his mother and he recalls and reflects all she did for him. He is aware that it was his mother who prepared him, through her prayers, the path to eternal life.⁷² Love becomes stronger and deeper when a person is able to reflect with gratitude the affection and care received from another person. Augustine's bond and love to his mother is strong and devout. Hence, in direct proportion he feels the pain of the loss. Therefore, he asks God for relief, but he is not healed because, as he interprets it, he 'should be aware of the truth that every habit is a fetter adverse even to the mind that is not fed upon deceit.'⁷³ This sentence seems to be in opposite to his grief and love to his mother. However, the future bishop should learn to divert his eyes from his personal grief and in this act of self-denial transforms his love for the others.

'My heart is healed of that wound; I could be reproached for yielding to that emotion of physical kinship. But now, on behalf of your maidservant, I pour out to you, our God, another kind of tears. They flow for my spirit struck hard by considering the perils threatening every soul that 'dies in Adam.'⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Cf. Conf. IX 10, 26 (CCL 27, 148).

⁷⁰ Cf. Conf. IX 12, 29 (CCL 27, 150).

⁷¹ Conf. IX 12, 30 (CCL 27, 150; tr. Chadwick, p.176): *Quoniam itaque deserebar tam magno eius solacio, sauciabatur anima et quasi dilaniabatur vita, quae una facta erat ex mea et illius.*

⁷² Cf. RUSSELL, J. S. *The taste of tears: memory and emotion in the Confessions*. The American Benedictine Review. 67(3), 2016, pp. 246-265.

⁷³ Conf. IX 12, 32 (CCL 27, 151; tr. Chadwick, p.174): *Omnis consuetudinis vinculum etiam adversus mentem, quae iam non fallaci verbo pascitur.*

⁷⁴ 'Ego autem iam sanato corde ab illo vulnere, in quo poterat redargui carnalis affectus, fundo tibi, Deus noster, pro illa famula tua longe aliud lacrimarum genus, quod manat de concusso spiritu consideratione periculorum omnis animae, quae in Adam moritur.' Conf. IX 13, 34 (CCL 27, 151). Ibidem. p. 176.

The sentence is a striking example of Augustine's movement to pro-existence. He describes the shifts from his personal grief, no matter how intense, to wider grief for those who go astray. Again, we can see a brilliant way of transforming his personal agony into prayers. With each loss of his beloved ones his heart finds serenity in God and his faith in the *beata vita* strengthens, as we are going to see further.

2.4 Adeodatus

Adeodatus was born when Augustine was eighteen years old. He is described as a clever boy, a source of pride to his father.⁷⁵ After Adeodatus's mother was sent away, he stayed with Augustine. The boy received baptism at the same time as Augustine and Alypius. Adeodatus died two years later, no longer after the dialogues written up by Augustine, *On the Teacher*,⁷⁶ the cause of his death is uncertain.⁷⁷ When Augustine wants to express his relationship to his son he uses Cicero's words. 'You are the only man of all men whom I would wish to surpass me in all things'.⁷⁸ This quote expresses his selfless affection to his son and gives evidence of a father's joy. Everything splendid about his son is attributed to God, and perhaps because of this, Augustine can write a sentence beyond common understanding, 'early on you took him away from life on earth. I recall him with no anxiety; there was nothing to fear in his boyhood or adolescence or indeed his manhood.'⁷⁹ With each personal tragedy Augustine's trust in eternal life deepens.

2.5 Nebridius

Nebridius is a friend from Augustine's early years. Augustine calls him his dearest friend and describes him as a chaste young man who thought all kinds of divination ridiculous.⁸⁰ The young man with a mind of marvellous quality, along with Vindicianus, helped

⁷⁵ Cf. Cf. AUGUSTINE, and CHADWICK, Henry. *Confessions*, p. xvi.

⁷⁶ Cf. ANDERSON, Robert. *Teaching Augustine's On the Teacher*. Religions. 6. 404-408, 2015.

⁷⁷ Cf. Cf. AUGUSTINE, and CHADWICK, Henry. *Confessions*, p. 178.

⁷⁸ Op. Imp. VI, 22. BROWN, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo: a biography*, p. 134.

⁷⁹ Conf. IX 6, 14 (CCL 27, 141; tr. Chadwick, p.164): *Cito de terra abstulisti vitam eius, et securior eum recendor non timens quidquam pueritiae nec adulescentiae nec omnino homini illi.*

⁸⁰ Cf. Conf. IV 3, 6 (CCL 27, 43); see also HEGEDUS, T. *Early Christianity and Ancient Astrology*. Peter Lang, 2007, p. 45. *The beginnings of Augustine's attachment to astrology dates to the mid 370's, since Augustine first mentions that he had frequented the astrologers. (Confessions 4.3.4-6) in the context of references to the time he taught rhetoric in Thagaste. (4.2.2; 4.4.7).*

Augustine forsake the art of forecasting the future.⁸¹ And as Fitzgerald states, he also ‘had helped [him] to abandon Manicheism’.⁸² The friend followed Augustine to Milan. They both had ‘burning enthusiasm for the truth and for wisdom’⁸³ The bond of their friendship was extremely close. However, there were periods when they maintained their relationship only through letters.⁸⁴ Augustine recalls Nebridius’ service to God in ‘perfect chastity and continence among his people in Africa.’⁸⁵ Nebridius died before 391⁸⁶ and Augustine finds comfort in the strong belief that Nebridius ‘lives in Abraham’s bosom’⁸⁷ after his death. He also depicts his idea of eternity and believes that Nebridius remembers him when ‘drinks as much as he can of wisdom, happy without end.’⁸⁸

We have been following Augustine’s transformation from his natural ties to the awareness of a form of relationship beyond natural experience. He believes that Nebridius thinks of him in Abraham’s bosom and in this way, Augustine can appease his grief. The grief is transformed in hope, faith and love that are found in Abraham’s bosom. There is a movement from misery to faith. Thus, we can presume that it is his desire not to be deprived of these relationships and therefore he believes he will find them in God’s love.

2.6 Verecundus

A close friend to all in the group around Augustine. He was a citizen of Milan and teacher of literature there. Verecundus offered the group his country estate at Cassiciacum where Augustine and his friend ‘rested in [God] from the heat of the world’.⁸⁹ ‘Verecundus was

⁸¹ Cf. Conf. VII 6, 8 (CCL 27, 98).

⁸² FITZGERALD, Allan D. Nebridius, In FITZGERALD, Allan D (ed.). *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. 1999, pp. 587-588.

⁸³ Conf. VI 10, 17 (CCL 27, 85).

⁸⁴ Cf. FITZGERALD, Allan D. Nebridius, In FITZGERALD, Allan D (ed.). *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. 1999, pp. 587-588.

⁸⁵ Conf. IX 3, 6 (CCL 27, 135; tr. Chadwick, p. 157): *Castitate perfecta atque continentia tibi servientem in Africa apud suos.*

⁸⁶ Cf. FITZGERALD, Allan D. Nebridius, In FITZGERALD, Allan D (ed.). *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. 1999, pp. 587-588.

⁸⁷ Cf. AUGUSTINE, and CHADWICK, Henry. *Confessions*, p. 158. *Augustine believes that Nebridius ‘lives in Abraham’s bosom’ and then he admits that he does not know that ‘bosom’ symbolized, ‘Whatever is symbolized by ‘bosom?’; See also CARROLL, John T., Luke: A Commentary: Westminster John Knox Press. 2012, p. 337: According to Carroll the word depicts ‘Lazarus’s blessed condition of intimate fellowship with the patriarch Abraham. It suggests intimate association and care of which Lazarus was deprived before death.*

⁸⁸ Conf. IX 3, 6 (CCL 27, 135; tr. Chadwick, p. 158): *bibit, quantum potest, sapientiam pro aviditate sua sine fine felix*

⁸⁹ Conf. IX 6, 14 (CCL 27, 141): *ubi ab aestu saeculi requievimus in te*

afraid of losing the company of Augustine, Adeodatus and Alypius when they were about to be baptised.⁹⁰ He would follow their example but only ‘as an ascetic since married Christians enjoyed second-class status,’⁹¹ and he had a wife. However, he died as a baptised Christian. For this fact, Augustine expresses his happiness that his friend of outstanding humanity belongs to God and that he was rewarded with the loveliness of [His] evergreen paradise.⁹² Again, we can see Augustine trying to transform his grief into faith in God who rewards people by His beauty. There is another beautiful feature of Augustine. He appreciates the affection of others to him. The fellowship is valued highly, and his friends are embodied in his life.

In this chapter we studied how Augustine perceived the death of his closest relatives and friends and the separation with his former love in the light of his cognition of *beata vita* and desire for God. At first, we could see how he suffered while losing his friend from youth. This tragic and painful experience opens him to wider awareness of mortality. He starts to understand that to be attached to mortal thing bears the potentiality of loss. Therefore, a person is exposed to misery, and through loss, he or she learns about the temporality of everything that is not God. Augustine comes up with a method of how not to be deprived of anyone. Loving others in God.

The next paragraph examines the separation from his concubine. He suffers a lot by parting with her and not even another relationship appeases his wound. For Augustine, the most difficult thing was to renounce the bodily pleasure. At the same time, his concubine was a great example for him to stay continent. He believes that this sacrifice can bring him closer to *beata vita*, offering absolute satisfaction.⁹³

Augustine suffers severe pain by losing his mother Monica. Their meditation the day before she died was the climax of that day. They pondered on eternity surpassing all delights. Augustine experiences real tearing off from the strong and supportive bond with his mother. This recognition leads him to the conclusion that every attachment is a chain which limits us. In the course of this period, he also experiences the gift of tears and their

⁹⁰ Cf. Conf. IX 3, 5 (CCL 27, 135).

⁹¹ Cf. AUGUSTINE, and CHADWICK, Henry. *Confessions*, p. 178.

⁹² Cf. Conf. IX 3, 5 (CCL 27, 135).

⁹³ Cf. McWILLIAM, J. *Beata Vita*, In FITZGERALD, Allan D (ed.). *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. 1999, pp. 94-95.

relieving impact. The death of his mother made him a man caring for others. His sufferings change Augustine towards pro-existence.

Augustine learned detachment painfully in the course of losing his closest people. He becomes profoundly immersed in God's love and his strong belief in *beata vita* gives him enormous reassurance. His attitude to the attachment to mortal things is recorded in the following sentence he wrote in the interval of more than ten years. 'I was in misery, and misery is the state of every soul overcome by friendship with mortal things and lacerated when they are lost. Then the soul becomes aware of the misery which is its actual condition even before it loses them.'⁹⁴

His strong opinion on the bad influence of the attachment to family and friends made him to give preference to the Christian bonds.⁹⁵ It is understandable that the loss of his beloved ones and grief were unbearable for such a sensitive man. We may ask whether this was the reason why he had such a desire for *beata vita*. If so, we can assert that there can be direct proportion between desire and distance.

⁹⁴ Conf. IV 6, 11 (CCL 27, 45; tr. Chadwick, p. 58): *Miser enim eram et amiseram gaudium meum. An et fletus res amara est et prae fastidio rerum, quibus prius fruebamur, et tunc ab eis abhorremus, delectat?*

⁹⁵ Cf. POWER, Kim. Concubine/Concubinage, In FITZGERALD, Allan D (ed.). *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. 1999, pp. 222-223.

3 Augustine's perceptual journey

As we pointed out earlier, it is hard and often painful to keep distance from someone we love or something we are attracted to. However, it is essential for moving forward to the fulfilment promising rest and eternal happiness. Otherwise, we could grasp the creation for our satisfaction and vice versa. For this reason, to lose someone or something can be an opportunity to reveal the desire for God as Augustine's story demonstrates. If this moment is reflected, the search for appeasing agonising pain might become energy leading to transcendence. By each loss, the art of loving, which means finding everybody and everything in God, can be discovered. It is obvious from Augustine's story that with each loss he opens his wounded mind and heart to God as the only source of healing.⁹⁶

However, it has to be emphasised that detachment, the act of distancing oneself, does not mean a life without love and friendship. On the contrary, as Fromm stresses after analysing the biblical story of Adam and Eve, 'the awareness of human separation, without reunion by love – is the source of shame. It is at the same time the source of guilt and anxiety. The deepest need of man is the need to overcome his separateness to leave the prison of his aloneness'.⁹⁷ Everybody, more or less, detests the feeling of being lonely and left. Everybody tries to avoid separateness and makes efforts to reduce these anxieties by creating relationships in which he or she can feel being loved, valued, desired. Baumeister and Leary invite us to understand that 'human beings are fundamentally and pervasively motivated by a need to belong, that is, by a strong desire to form and maintain enduring interpersonal attachments'.⁹⁸ People are determined by a strong desire to establish relationships and strengthen them. If a person does not have positive relationships, this fact of 'being rejected, excluded, or ignored leads to potent negative feelings,' as Baumeister and Leary emphasise. Hence, the basic need to belong has to be satisfied for obvious reasons. As a human being is fragile, he or she can get lost in them and as a result, can become unable to see the Creator and the others and himself or herself as such. However, there is a way for man to obtain stability which lies in 'being loved in God'.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Cf. Conf. X 38, 63 (CCL 27, 190).

⁹⁷ FROMM, Erich. *The art of loving*. Centennial ed. New York: Continuum, 2000, p. 7.

⁹⁸ BAUMEISTER, R. F. a LEARY, M. R., *The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation*. Psychological Bulletin 117(3), pp. 497-529.

⁹⁹ Conf. IV 12, 18 (CCL 27, 50): *in Deo amentur*

What happens when a person is loved in God? What kind of pleasure arises from loving someone in God? Augustine discovers that if a soul is loved in God, it will be established in Him and will not cease to exist.¹⁰⁰ This is how not to be deprived of a lover, a friend, anyone. Furthermore, if we love others in God, they do not overshadow the Creator and do not narrow the horizon to perceive interventions of His grace. Subsequently, we can take pleasure from the whole creation if there is a distance. Augustine, therefore, teaches, ‘to praise God for them and return love to their Maker’.¹⁰¹ This advice helps us keep distance and as well as give more love to others by loving them in God. Based on the foregoing, we can say that each distance is appeased by the cognition that there is a possibility to lessen the void by seeing and praising God in those we love. Augustine therefore emphasises that ‘far superior to these things is He who made all things, and He is our God’¹⁰² and introduces the concept of ‘the order of love’ (*ordo amoris*).

At this stage, we have to refer to the three-tiered hierarchy based on the Platonist hierarchy of being, since the great convert ‘thinks of the unchangeable God as ontologically superior to the changeable soul’.¹⁰³ For this reason, created things cannot satisfy our deepest desires and they can obscure God’s intervention in our lives. Therefore, Augustine introduces the order of love.

However, there is no way to the perfect love for God and the ability to perceive His friendship without exhaustive searching and careful distinguishing. As we can see from Augustine’s story, it took him about twenty-two years to surrender and gave up his strong and long resistance to God’s grace. ‘Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you’.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, he also discovers that creation can keep him far from God and shadow His radiance and beauty.¹⁰⁵ He ponders on why we love certain things and what attracts us to them and offers a fascinating discovery. There ‘must be the grace

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Conf. IV 12, 18 (CCL 27, 50).

¹⁰¹ Conf. IV 12, 18 (CCL 27, 50; tr. Chadwick, p. 63): *deum ex illis lauda et in artificem eorum retorque amorem*

¹⁰² Conf. IV 11, 17 (CCL 27, 49; tr. Chadwick, p. 63): *sed longe his melior qui fecit omnia, et ipse est Deus noster*

¹⁰³ CARY, Phillip. *Inner Grace: Augustine in the traditions of Plato and Paul*: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 35.

¹⁰⁴ Conf. X 27, 38 (CCL 27, 175; tr. Chadwick, p. 200): *Sero te amavi, pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova, sero te amavi!*

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Conf. IV 13, 20 (CCL 27, 51).

and loveliness inherent in them, or they would in no way move us.¹⁰⁶ We can be caught in a trap if we do not exercise the effort to praise the Creator for creation.

We endeavour to find the way through profane desires to eternity. Longing is an engine, and it has been said that things *ad utendum* cannot satisfy the deepest human longing. Tocarczuk refers to the import of relation between desire and destination, ‘Desire in itself is empty; in other words, it merely indicates direction, but never a destination. And then she explains that the ‘process of striving is best encapsulated in the preposition “towards”. Towards what?’¹⁰⁷ Desire strives to be accomplished, but a person has to give the right direction to it. If a desire for God is written in the human heart, then a path to Him has to be offered.

Augustine’s thinking was influenced by Neo-Platonism. The happy life (*beata vita*) has to be understood as, ‘something like ultimate human fulfilment, the deepest and most genuine human flourishing’.¹⁰⁸ As Cary points out further, the question is where the real happiness lies, and he clarifies that human fulfilment is not same as feeling happy.¹⁰⁹ Thus, to practise the order of love it is an inevitable to go forward, to seek and achieve fulfilment. However, it requires an effort to constantly renew this knowledge of the hierarchy of love because there is a direct proportion: the more we are connected with God, the more we experience how good everything He created is. For the great convert, ‘there is no stage in his career as a Christian writer at which he thinks the soul can reach its ultimate goal, the wisdom and happiness of knowing God, by its own unaided efforts’.¹¹⁰ Therefore, to give everyone and everything their right place in the order of love requires not only discipline of will but, furthermore, God’s grace.

With the power of divine help, a person can see the truth behind words, emotions and judgements. By this, he or she opens the door to the wisdom that teaches to place everything in the right order. The negative consequences of loving creation more than the Creator are described in Augustine’s reflection in which he admits that by loving

¹⁰⁶ Conf. IV 13, 20 (CCL 27, 51; tr. Chadwick, p. 64): *Nisi enim esset in eis decus et species, nullo modo nos ad se moverent.*

¹⁰⁷ TOKARCZUK, Olga. *Flights*, pp.146-147.

¹⁰⁸ CARY, Phillip. *Inner Grace: Augustine in the traditions of Plato and Paul*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem.* p. 9

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem.* p. 26.

‘beautiful things of a lower order’ exceedingly move him away from the Beauty par excellence.¹¹¹ He demands that a soul should be ‘attached to the solid rock of truth’, otherwise there is a danger that it will not reach the goal of its pilgrimage because of false assumptions, hiding the reality as such.¹¹² For this reason, to experience lack and loss could be a means to learning and embracing the hierarchy of love. As Cary expresses so well, ‘we move toward this happiness by loving eternal things like Truth and turning away from absorption in lower, changing things, which are external and earthly’.¹¹³ The effort also lies in perceiving God’s grace in our lives so that we can perceive a path leading to rest and joy.

Augustine’s conversion reveals in detail how dramatic it can be if a person under the God’s guidance begins arranging his or her life, relationships and habits according to the order of love. Augustine’s transformation was dramatic; he ‘was weeping in the bitter agony of [his] heart’. In the middle of the torment, he heard the voice of a child inviting him to read the Bible, which he interpreted it as a ‘divine command’.¹¹⁴ The sentences brought him consolation and, as he confessed, ‘all the shadows of doubt were dispelled’.¹¹⁵ To a reader it might sound as a surprise that after such a fight with his hesitations, he was released from his chains so easily. ‘The effect of your converting me to yourself was that I did not now seek a wife and had no ambition for success in this world.’¹¹⁶ Thus, it was God’s work to free Augustine from the obstacles and his answer to God’s grace was ‘to reject his own will and to desire [God’s]’.¹¹⁷ The great convert could direct his will to God and leave all attachment behind, only after recognising that God himself ‘entered to take their place, pleasanter than any pleasure.’¹¹⁸ Finally, there is a decision to carry out the plan. Augustine does so with the awareness that it is God who transforms Him, that God heals the wounds. Karfiková clearly interprets grace in Augustine’s *Confession*, ‘Only with the help of grace can the will efficaciously want what it resolved to do. But even the wanting itself is God’s gift, so is the consent to one’s own

¹¹¹ Cf. Conf. IV 13, 20 (CCL 27, 51).

¹¹² Cf. Conf. IV 14, 23 (CCL 27, 52).

¹¹³ CARY, Phillip. *Inner Grace: Augustine in the traditions of Plato and Paul*, p. 25.

¹¹⁴ Conf. VIII 12, 29 (CCL 27, 131): *divinitus mihi iuberi*

¹¹⁵ Conf. VIII 12, 29 (CCL 27, 131; tr. Chadwick, p. 153): *omnes dubitationis tenebrae diffugerunt*

¹¹⁶ Conf. VIII 12, 30 (CCL 27, 131; tr. Chadwick, p. 153): *convertisti enim me ad te, ut nec uxorem quaererem nec aliquam spem saeculi huius*

¹¹⁷ IX 1, 1 (CCL 27, 131; tr. Chadwick, p. 133): *dicta mea aut, si non dicta, voluntas mea fuit*

¹¹⁸ Conf. IX 1, 1 (CCL 27, 133; tr. Chadwick, p. 155): *Vera tu et summa suavitas, eiciebas et intrabas pro eis omni voluptate dulcior.*

good will.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, God's servants were great encouragement for him. He could see in their example that it is possible to follow God and that it is God who delivers his followers from death to life.¹²⁰

Augustine has to find that God is pleasanter than his previous experience with delight. He finds it in contemplating Lord's face he desires with all his being.¹²¹ His source of knowledge is that God heals by his presence the wounds made by passion and attachments and therefore he seeks God's presence represented by Lord's face.¹²² If he was afraid of not experiencing a woman's embrace again, he had to learn that by seeking Lord's face his desire will be appeased. As described in this sentence: 'And sometimes you cause me to enter into an extraordinary depth of feeling marked by a strange sweetness. If it were brought to perfection in me, would be an experience quite beyond anything in this life.'¹²³ Through intimate bond with the Lord he ceaselessly deepened his desire for eternity.

To sum up, a loss or a difficult situation can be a starting point for experiencing a desire for reality beyond known thinking patterns. It can reveal a new creative response to the original desire written in the human heart. Creativity helps to find the means to appeasing the pain and transforming it. Augustine discovers a method for lessening his agony and abandonments in therapeutic communication with God and in the hope his beloved ones live forever in Him. The invitation to settle relationships with others and things according to the order of love can be a valuable inspiration. Nevertheless, it requires a determination to set off and in disturbing restlessness to glimpse an opportune moment helping one to discover the reality without distortion.

We studied two layers of Augustine's life. We observed how he recalls the death of his beloved ones in the *Confessions* and how their loss transforms him and his trust in God. Then, we touched upon his conversion, the most determinative event in his life. In the

¹¹⁹ KARFÍKOVÁ, Lenka. *Grace and the Will According to Augustine*: BRILL, 2012, p. 96.

¹²⁰ Cf. Conf. IX 1, 1 (CCL 27, 134).

¹²¹ Cf. Conf. IX 3, 6 (CCL 27, 135).

¹²² VOPŘADA, D. *Augustine's Eternal Search for the True Face of God*. In: Seeking God's Face, Mireia Ryšková (ed.). Praha: Karolinum Press, 2018, pp. 137-158: *Again, it is the face of God that he seeks, and he is convinced that failing to follow this search means to be far from the face of God, that is, in the darkness of passion (1.18.28). In fact, "no object of love is healthier than God's truth" (2.6.13), and any search for truth outside God is a sin (1.20.31).*

¹²³ Conf. X 40, 65 (CCL 27, 218; tr. Chadwick, p. 217): *Et aliquando intromittis me in affectum multum inusitatum introrsus ad nescio quam dulcedinem, quae si perficiatur in me, nescio quid erit, quod vita ista non erit.*

following chapter, we will study the opportune moment in Augustine's life and how it helped him nourish his relationship with God. We will further explore how this profound and extraordinary experience made him a notable preacher, encouraging others to distinguish the desire for God in their lives. Augustine describes this moment as being stirred by inward goads.¹²⁴ This feeling would not allow him to carry on in the same direction. The great convert, the eloquent narrator, confesses that finally, he was ready to respond to the roar of his conscience in him.

¹²⁴ Cf. Conf. VII 8, 12 (CCL 27, 101).

4 The transformation of desire in Saint Augustine's *Confessions* and the *Sermones ad Populum* as a paradigm for our pilgrimage¹²⁵

The chapter reflects upon the opportune moment in the course of Augustine's conversion. Sullivan calls it *kairos of decision*. The moment in which a listener faces the power of the moment with a sense of the numinous. If the response is no, the vision begins to dissipate, and if the response is yes, then a metanoia, a change of mind, occurs.¹²⁶ The focus on the words *cupiditas* and *desiderium* in the *Confessions* is an important part of this chapter. At this point, it should be explained why we narrowed down the terminology of desire the great rhetorician uses. The reason is that the chapter investigates Augustine's journey, *metanoia*, through the profane desires to the desire for eternity. The importance of discerning desire in our lives as a real stimulus to discover who we are and where we belong is a significant part of spiritual theology. In our society, where so many possibilities shatter the identity of an individual, it is vital to offer some guidance. Hence, Augustine, so attractive for all generations, will be our companion. His conversion offers a pattern for recognising and determining the moment of the activation of transformation, in which he was able to look beyond his worldly ambitions and recognise a voice ordering him to read the Gospel to follow his Redeemer. It is the moment when Augustine finds in himself the strength to go along Saviour's narrow paths.¹²⁷ Furthermore, he comes to believe that God is the source of pleasure and repose.¹²⁸

The second part of the chapter concentrates on Augustine's selected sermons from *Sermones ad Populum*. The study seeks to demonstrate his effort to lead his audience to see past their worldly determinations and help them perceive God's grace in their lives. Augustine is the speaker who influences his audience through the ages. As a rhetorician he knows that 'a speaker must say precisely the right word at the right time; otherwise, it can have the wrong effect, be disastrous, or lose its worth and power.'¹²⁹ We intend to show where his sermons reflect the experience with the opportune moment, which he depicted in the *Confessions*. The hypothesis is that the opportune moment, as the

¹²⁵ This chapter is based on the paper given by Hana Benešová at Patristics Conference 2019 in Oxford.

¹²⁶ Cf. SULLIVAN, D.I., *Kairos and the rhetoric of belief: Quarterly Journal of Speech* [online]. 78(3), pp. 317-332.

¹²⁷ Cf. Conf. VIII 1, 1 (CCL 27, 113).

¹²⁸ Cf. Conf. VI 16,26 (CCL 27, 90).

¹²⁹ BABICH, Babette. *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire: Essays in Honor of William J. Richardson, S.J.*: Springer Science & Business Media, 1995, p. 346.

beginning of a transformation, has to be reflected because at this moment, God reveals himself. To experience this, we believe two facts have to meet together: the awakening of the desire to discern God's love to us and divine grace. Therefore, we will also study when the seeker of wisdom experienced the encounter with divine grace.

Augustine wrote the *Confessions* around 397, fourteen years after his conversion. By writing his autobiography, he portrayed his journey from his secular ambitions to the realisation that it is the Lord that grants him happiness in Himself.¹³⁰ Hence the question is: How was Augustine transformed through the experience with God's revelation? What helped him understand that God made him for himself and that his heart does not find peace until it rests in Him?¹³¹ We can see the following fundamental features during Augustine's conversion: – the discernment of his desires and realisation that his senses are blurred – the perception of the moment which is opportune to recognise God's love for him – the discovery of *imago Dei* in him and longing for *beata vita*, and finally the decision for constant movement of his will through *cupiditas* to *desiderium*. In the following paragraphs, we will clarify these stages.

In book VI of the *Confessions*, Augustine explains which cupidities distorted his perception and confesses that he 'aspired to honours, money, marriage, and you laughed at me. In those ambitions I suffered the bitterest difficulties; that was by your mercy – so the greater in that you gave me the less occasion to find sweet pleasure in what was not you.'¹³² We can object that the first two ambitions are indifferent and can be either good or bad according to their realisation, and particularly that marriage itself is the sacrament. As Vopřada points out in his study, 'Augustine was convinced that marriage leads to the perfection and holiness of a married couple.'¹³³ However, Augustine – and this has to be emphasised – did not find sweet pleasure (*dulcedines*) in them. He explains in book VII why he could not take delight from those magnetic objects. Augustine believes in God who cares for us and judges us. Nevertheless, he endures enormous suffering that he is

¹³⁰ Cf. Conf. X 4 (CCL 27, 156).

¹³¹ Cf. Conf. I 1 (CCL 27, 1).

¹³² Cf. Conf. VI 6, 9 (CCL 27, 79; tr. Chadwick, p. 97): *Inhiabam honoribus, lucris, coniugio, et tu irridebas. Patiebar in eis cupiditatibus amarissimas difficultates te propitio tanto magis, quanto minus sinebas mihi dulcescere quod non eras tu.*

¹³³ VOPŘADA, David. Saint Augustine, Svatý Augustin, dobra manželství a kauza Ecdicia. In Kol. aut. *Svatost manželství jako znamení nové a věčné smlouvy*. Hradec Králové: Biskupství královéhradecké, 2019, pp. 65-96.

able to share even with his closest friends. The source of this torment lies in his vigorous search for the origin of evil. In his searching, he stands before God who knows his desires (*desiderium suum*). The battlefield is in his heart which has not experienced – unlike his intellect – the new dawn fully yet. It is described in this sentence, ‘What torments my heart suffered in mental pregnancy, what groans, my God!’.¹³⁴ Only after finding his right place between God and things could he discover rest and health. He realises that he has to turn his attention inward to find the source of sweet pleasure which is God’s love and mercy. At last, he discovers the light that surpasses him and recognises that he lives in the region of dissimilarity.¹³⁵ Hence, he has to retire from everything so familiar to his senses and set off on a pilgrimage.

On the contrary, *desiderium* drew him to God, cleansed his sight and his perception. For example, after having read Cicero’s Hortensius in 374, he started longing for the immortality of wisdom.¹³⁶ Later, when Augustine unveils his memory before God, he confesses that Lord is his love and desire.¹³⁷ *Cupiditas* inhibits him from finding the wisdom he discovered at the age of nineteen but *desiderio*¹³⁸ makes him restless to think and to view his place in the order of the creation and search for the strength to help him abandon secular hopes and dedicate himself wholly to God.

According to Augustine, the truth beyond the created beauty is not apparent.¹³⁹ This limitation is the cause why we tend to respond to the things with craving, which necessarily leads us to grasp, to possess and to use others and things for our gratification. However, sometimes to our great surprise, this kind of satisfaction leaves us uneasy and frustrated, as we could see in Augustine’s search for gratification. The perception of the senses becomes distorted by being obsessive, which results in dissatisfaction and anxiety.

¹³⁴ Conf. VII 11 (CCL 27,100; tr. Chadwick, p. 119): *Quae illa tormenta parturientis cordis mei, qui gemitus, Deus meus!*

¹³⁵ Conf. VII 10, 16 (CCL 27, 103; tr. Chadwick, p. 123): *et inveni longe me esse a te in regione dissimilitudinis*

¹³⁶ Cf. Conf. III 4, 7 (CCL 27, 30; tr. Chadwick, p. 39): *Ille vero liber mutavit affectum meum, et ad te ipsum, domine, mutavit preces meas, et vota ac desideria mea fecit alia. viluit mihi repente omnis vana spes, et immortalitatem sapientiae concupiscebam aestu cordis incredibili.*

¹³⁷ Cf. Conf. X 2, 2 (CCL 27, 155).

¹³⁸ KARFÍKOVÁ, Lenka. *Jazyk touhy v Augustinových prvních dílech*. In Kol. aut. Touha a Žádostivost v Dějinách Evropské Filosofie. Praha, Togga, 2014, pp. 83-116: *Thus, rather than cupio, the term desidero also admits the meaning of a desire that desires something, not for themselves, but to achieve another's goal.*

¹³⁹ Cf. Conf. X 10, 17 (CCL 27, 163).

The great convert knew how difficult it was to cast off the chains¹⁴⁰ which bind the freedom, blur the truth and pull us away from God. Why is it so important to cleanse the senses from the chains of obscurity? We have said above that it is crucial to know who we are. The first task, the vocation of all human beings, is to live. To be alive means to move forward. If there is no movement forward, there is a threat that, as Emmanuel Mounier writes, ‘if he ‘loses height’ man does not descend to some average human level, not, as many suppose, to the animal level, but to something much lower.’¹⁴¹ It can be understood that if she or he does not make effort to see creation from a distance, which means not to cling to people and objects, there is a danger that a person loses direction towards revealing the *imago Dei* in him or her. Therefore, we are called to make an effort to find the way out through all that hinders us and to go forward.¹⁴²

Therefore, it is essential to acquire perception without distortion. This effort requires to put aside blindness, fear and anxiety so that we can start to comprehend the subtle but real and intensive desire, which leads us to the Truth. This task, this vocation of a person requires to take some essential steps. Firstly, to cleanse our perception so that we can see the Creator, ourselves, creature, people and things without distortion, as they are. Next, to ceaselessly continue living in a tension between desiring the world and desiring God.¹⁴³ How this ambition (mission) can be pursued will be explored further. We will also show the dynamic and fundamental connection between movement and desire.

The third stage is to analyse the critical moment in Augustine’s life in which, by God’s grace, he finds the paths leading through *cupiditas* to *desiderium*. There is an inspiring story told by Augustine’s friend Ponticianus (386), who worked at the court. His colleagues – while walking outside the town – came across a house of God’s servants and being inspired by reading a book about Saint Anthony they immediately decided to take up the life of hermits. Augustine, after hearing the story was humiliated and ashamed by these two uneducated men ‘rising and capturing heaven’, because he, a man with ‘high culture without any heart’, did not even attempt to follow.¹⁴⁴ Augustine describes this moment as being stirred by inward goads.¹⁴⁵ This feeling would not allow him to carry

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Conf VIII 11, 25 (CCL 27, 129).

¹⁴¹ MOUNIER, Emmanuel. *Personalism*.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001, p. 68.

¹⁴² Cf. Matt. 16:24.

¹⁴³ Cf. Rom. 12:2.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Conf. VIII 8, 19 (CCL 27, 126).

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Conf. VII 8, 12 (CCL 27, 101).

on in the same direction. The great convert, the eloquent narrator confesses that finally, he was ready to respond to the roar of his conscience in him.

Having reached a dead-end in which a human being turns to God and is delivered from blindness, sin, it is a transition to an entirely new situation. St. Paul calls this new existence to be in Christ, to be a new creation, to clothe ourselves with Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁶ For the future bishop of Hippo, it was not without burning struggle and experience of the agony of death to finally give up and surrender himself to God.¹⁴⁷ There is much to say about the passage where he – a man of profound faith well acquainted with Scripture – finally renounces himself entirely in God’s arms. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised here that he did so with the knowledge that ‘no one can be continent except God grants it, and this very thing is part of wisdom, to know whose gift this is’.¹⁴⁸ He could confess this because he has already experienced the effects of divine power at the beginning of his new life when God’s grace released him from his bonds.¹⁴⁹

In the course of Augustine’s conversion, we can see crucial moment of transition stirred up by the experience of divine revelation in his life. He reflects on his thoughts, worries and feelings, and in this reflection, he can reveal God’s interventions and grace in his life. Moreover, Augustine, in his cognition proves that a human being is *imago Dei*. Even though *imago Dei* remains distorted, yet because of it, a person is *eius capax* and has a participation in God’s life.¹⁵⁰ Thus, the desire for God makes a human being undertake an effort to deepen his or her knowledge of God. A prerequisite of this is a journey into one’s own memory. For clarification of the thought process, it is necessary to analyse the desire for God described in book X of the *Confessions*.

Augustine starts with the declaration that the Lord gives him delight and is an object of love and longing.¹⁵¹ He knows that the Lord is the only one who can heal his sicknesses¹⁵² and also confesses that his love for the Lord is a matter of conscious certainty. Subsequently, Augustine starts explaining his comprehension of the memory. He

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Rom. 13:14.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Conf. VIII 8, 19 (CCL 27, 125).

¹⁴⁸ Conf. X 29, 40 (CCL 27, 176; tr. Chadwick, p. 202): *Et cum scirem, ait quidam, quia nemo potest esse continens, nisi Deus det, et hoc ipsum erat sapientiae, scire cuius esset hoc donum. (Sap 8:21).*

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Conf. VIII 30 (CCL 27, 132).

¹⁵⁰ Cf. trin. XIV, 8,11 (CCL 50A, 436).

¹⁵¹ Conf. X 2,2 (CCL 27, 155: *tu refulges et places et amaris et desideraris*

¹⁵² Cf. Conf. X 3,3 (CCL 27, 156).

compares it to vast profundity where we can do some investigations but he himself cannot grasp the totality of what he is.¹⁵³ He emphasises the difference between ‘*cogo*’ and ‘*cogito*’; the former means to collect passively, while the latter means to think. There are four perturbations of cupidity, gladness, fear, sadness.¹⁵⁴ He points out that we can recall these agitations out of memory’s store but without sensing them. Augustine marvels at the potency of memory and portrays its infiniteness. Then he asks where and how he can find God and discerns that seeking God he seeks *beata vita*¹⁵⁵. Augustine poses a question of how we know about the happy life we desire and wants to know ‘whether the happy life is in the memory’¹⁵⁶. For clarification, he gives an example of the knowledge of numbers: when a person knows numbers, the search for this knowledge is completed. Augustine however, stresses that to learn about the happy life does not stop desiring it and to hear this word makes us happy. Finally, he declares what he already learned from Cicero that the desire for happiness is found in everybody. The real happiness is in God, and other joys are not true ones.¹⁵⁷

We now turn to the second part of the chapter in which we want to make a brief inquiry into how the eloquent preacher uses in his sermons his own profound experience with almighty God who delivered him from the great sicknesses of his sins¹⁵⁸ ‘into his marvellous light’.¹⁵⁹ We will do it by reading some of his Sermons.¹⁶⁰ The sermons were selected according to the framework of Augustine’s conversion, which means that we can find similar stages in them: the discerning of desires and the realisation that our senses are blurred — the perception of the moment which is opportune to recognise God’s love for us and his grace – the discover of *imago Dei* in us and longing for *beata vita*, and finally the decision for the constant movement of his will through *cupiditas* to *desiderium*. How he uses these terms in his sermons will be the matter of our interest. Augustine’s cognition of infinity is profoundly transcendent, beyond average comprehension, and his

¹⁵³ Cf. Conf. X 8,15 (CCL 27, 162).

¹⁵⁴ Conf. X 14,22 (CCL 27, 166): *cupiditatem, laetitiam, metum, tristitiam*

¹⁵⁵ Conf. X 20,29 (CCL 27, 171).

¹⁵⁶ Conf. X 20,29 (CCL 27, 171). *utrum in memoria sit beata vita*

¹⁵⁷ Conf. X 20,29 (CCL 27, 172).

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Conf. II 7, 15 (CCL 27, 25).

¹⁵⁹ 1 Pet. 2:9.

¹⁶⁰ There are about 580 Sermones of populum, and I recommend for further study the book written by Anthony Dupont, Preacher of grace. DUPONT, Anthony. *Preacher of Grace: A Critical Reappraisal of Augustines Doctrine of Grace in His Sermones Ad Populum on Liturgical Feasts and During the Donatist Controversy*: Brill, 2014. For further information on Augustine’s sermons in VOPŘADA, David. *Svatý Augustin: Vánoční promluvy [Saint Augustine: Christmas Sermons]*. Praha: Krystal OP, 2015.

desire to capture heaven. Leads him to lay aside his rights and interests and to surrender himself to God. The preacher of Hippo transmitted this mystical knowledge, *gnosis*, with great responsibility to his audience.¹⁶¹ It is essential to note that unlike the *populum Dei* who thought that the world was the battlefield, Augustine turned the Christian struggle inwards; for him, the soul is the place where an inner struggle against forces is.¹⁶²

4.1 Desire in Augustine's selected sermons

In the selected sermons from *Sermons ad Populum* we want to clarify in which context the preacher uses the words *concupiscencia* and *desiderio*. The interpretation of the sermons shows his effort to help his audience mirror God's love and the beauty of eternity. We will pay attention to how he awakens in the audience's the desire for eternal life. At the same time, our aim is to show where Augustine implicitly reveals his experience with *kairos*, God's intervention in his life, as portrayed in the *Confessions*.

Sermon 96¹⁶³, which Augustine wrote in 416 or 417, is given on the words from Mk. 8:34, 'if anyone wishes to follow me, let him deny himself', and on the words of 1 John 2:15, 'whoever loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him'. In this sermon, Augustine reflects on the meaning of love. He distinguishes love to the world from love to the Father. His thoughts in this sermon are based on his own experience. At first, he shares with his audience his strong faith in the Lord's help to everyone who wants to keep His commands. Then the difference between getting lost themselves and denying themselves on their way to follow Jesus is presented. He also makes a quip on how much people are willing to endure to get what they love. The preacher lists the same *concupiscentiae* he once aspired for: love for money, ambition and lust. Augustine does not mince his words and calls the loves by their proper name. 'The lover of money is called a miser; the lover of prestige and power is called ambitious; the lover of beautiful

¹⁶¹ DUPONT, Anthony. Preacher of Grace, p. 1. *When the elderly and Greek-speaking bishop Valerius of Hippo needed an eloquent preacher, he appointed the former professor of rhetoric Augustine (354-430) as a priest. Valerius gave Augustine as a priest (at that time) the exceptional authorization to preach, a heretofore unheard of assignment for a non-bishop. When Augustine succeeded Valerius as bishop of Hippo, he considered this ministerium sermonis one of his most critical episcopal duties. His solicitude to deliver good sermons is testified to by his roughly 800 preserved sermons, which represent probably a mere ten per cent of the sermons he actually gave.*

¹⁶² Cf. BROWN, Peter. Augustine of Hippo: a biography, p. 244.

¹⁶³ PL 38, 584-589 [212].

bodies is called licentious'.¹⁶⁴ He explains that by loving what is outside themselves means forsaking God. As an example, Augustine takes the prodigal son and demonstrates two movements on this parable. The first movement takes him from the Father, and it means losing himself, and the second movement leads from himself to the Father where 'he can keep himself in the utmost security'.¹⁶⁵ There is a significant shift in *redit ad se*, but as Augustine emphasises, one should not stop on his or her journey but should *pergere ad Patrem*. This is the opportune moment to reflect and be aware of the desire to be saved by God; it is pure cognition. Augustine knows it from his own life; therefore, he can be so convincing in his sermons. He writes in the *Confessions* 'I travelled away from you into a far country to dissipate my substance on meretricious lust'.¹⁶⁶ He also reveals his feelings about dwelling in the world. 'We are beset by so many fears and griefs on earth.'¹⁶⁷ His teaching on the order is beautifully presented in the sermon. He does it poetically by introducing contrasts. 'We love the world, but we should put the one who made the world before it.'¹⁶⁸ We love the world even though there are some fears and griefs. Augustine wants to show the disorder of affections and advises to find the utmost security in God by following Christ to find the holy world in the Church. It is the beautiful truth that being in God, we are loved, therefore, we can give affectionate love towards others. On the other hand, there is a question of how much Augustine himself was influenced by fear of losing someone with whom he had an affectionate relationship, as we described in detail earlier in Chapter Two. As Power explains, 'These experiences helped shape an ecclesiology where Christian ties were to be privileged over familial and God's love was the only safe love.'¹⁶⁹ There is a strong emphasis on the movement from *concupiscencia* to the desire for the *beata vita* in this sermon.

Sermon 98¹⁷⁰ was written on the words of the Gospel of Luke 7:11-15 shortly before 418. Augustine echoes familiarity with sin and liberation from an evil habit which weighs on

¹⁶⁴ *Sermo* 96, 1.1; tr. Hill, p. 29: *Sive sit honoris amator, qui vocatur ambitiosus; sive sit corporum pulchrorum amator, qui vocatur lascivus?*

¹⁶⁵ *Sermo* 96, 3.3: *summa pax, perpetua securitas.*

¹⁶⁶ Conf. IV 16,30 (CCL 27, 55). *Sed profectus sum abs te in longinquam regionem, ut eam dissiparem in meretrices cupiditates.*

¹⁶⁷ *Sermo* 96, 3.3; tr. Hill, p. 31.: *Maxime quia multum timoribus et doloribus laboratur in terra.*

¹⁶⁸ *Sermo* 96, 4.4; tr. Hill, p. 31: *Amatur mundus: sed praeponatur a quo factus est mundus. Magnus est mundus: sed maior est a quo factus est mundus.*

¹⁶⁹ POWER, Kim. Concubine/Concubinage, In FITZGERALD, Allan D (ed.). *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. 1999, p. 222

¹⁷⁰ PL 38, 591-595.

the soul. He emphasizes the effects of miracles on people. Moreover, it is of lesser importance when people are only astonished by seeing a miracle. There is more behind Jesus' performance of miracles. This sermon focuses on the three people whom the Lord raised from the dead. What he sees beyond the miracles is the restoring of life through Jesus' presence in a soul. He names four stages of sin and the places where they are realised. We can follow the pattern of movement in this case. First it leads from the house to the tomb. Which, in the figurative sense, means from the inside of a heart to the whole body outside. A sin starts inside a heart; then the movement continues when someone is moved by the lust¹⁷¹ and thoughts are put into practice. After that, it terminates in a habit¹⁷² and ends in a grave.¹⁷³ The prerequisite condition for experiencing Jesus' power in one's life means to be stirred by the words of truth.¹⁷⁴ Augustine has its own experience with the power of Jesus' words and can share with his audience implicitly how the Lord delivered him from the chain of sexual desire, by which he was tightly bound, and from the slavery of worldly affairs.¹⁷⁵ The conclusion of the sermon has an encouraging and caring tone. There is no need to despair as Christ knows how to release a soul from the chains. The preacher presents his total trust in the Lord, whose words bring the dead into life through forgiveness.

In Sermon 99¹⁷⁶ on the words of the Gospel of Luke 7:36-50, written between 411 and 412, Augustine speaks about forgiveness of sins. He describes a woman, a sinner, who burst uninvited into a party organised by a Pharisee. She shed tears and silently showed her devotion. The Pharisee was surprised that Jesus 'allowed himself to be touched by a sinful woman.' The preacher points out that the Lord wishes to cure both. The Pharisee from his pride and the woman from compunction. Augustine explains that Jesus longs for their faith¹⁷⁷ and wants them to recognise who He is. Hence, this shows the longing of God for His people. This act opens their senses to desire either to invite Him into their house or to touch His feet. Augustine explains that God approaches people in different ways but requires that everybody recognises being a debtor. Through God's

¹⁷¹ Cf. *Sermo* 98,5; tr. Hill, p. 46: *Nescio quis commotus est aliqua concupiscentia.*

¹⁷² Cf. *Sermo* 98,5; tr. Hill, p. 46: *etiam mala consuetudine se implicant consuetudine*

¹⁷³ Cf. *Sermo* 98,5; tr. Hill, p. 46: *Tales consuetudine maligna pressi tamquam sepulti sunt.*

¹⁷⁴ Cf. *Sermo* 98,5.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Conf. VIII 6, 13 (CCL 27, 121).

¹⁷⁶ PL 38,595-602.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. *Sermo* 99,3.

desiring, the woman recognised her real situation and her faith allowed her to see in Jesus someone who forgives sins and therefore she believed that ‘Christ was not only man but also God’.¹⁷⁸ Unlike the Pharisee, who shows little love as he does not see that ‘under God’s guidance, has committed only a few’.¹⁷⁹ Augustine depicts *kairos* in the woman’s life. The woman came close to Jesus. Before that, she had left her familiar milieu and took a risk. She enters the space, the sacred space, where she stands bare before Christ, and therefore, she could see God.

Augustine wrote Sermon 107¹⁸⁰ on the words of the Gospel of Luke 12:13-21: ‘I tell you, refrain from all avarice’ between 411–420. From the beginning, the preacher of Hippo stretches out the audience’s mind towards hope in God’s promises. While on the journey, we are given the command by the Lord to ‘refrain of all avarice’.¹⁸¹ He continues clarifying this command by explaining the story of two brothers and their attitude to their inheritance. The brother who came to Jesus for support was left with the Lord’s words ‘I tell you, be aware of all avarice’.¹⁸² Augustine shows that even though we think we are right when we claim something which belongs to us; Jesus, on the contrary, wants to make us more than mans.¹⁸³ Augustine continues explaining the Lord’s words that if a man detaches himself from ‘an inheritance’, if he or she makes an effort to be without avarice, then he or she acts as ‘the sons of the Most High’¹⁸⁴. To refrain from all avarice also means not to cling to something we acquire wrongfully; otherwise, we can be manipulated to do wicked things. Augustine preaches about the danger of attachment to property and emphasises the shift from demanding the rights to presumed possession to the desire for eternal wisdom¹⁸⁵. By this sermon he explains the danger of attachment. Augustine leads his listeners to make an effort to eliminate the obstacles to freedom and to be able to appreciate the inheritance offered by God¹⁸⁶.

¹⁷⁸ *Sermo* 99,7; tr. Hill, p. 54: *Christum non hominem tantum, sed et Deum credidit.*

¹⁷⁹ *Sermo* 99, 2.3; tr. Hill, p. 51: *ille gubernante Deo pauca commisit*

¹⁸⁰ PL 38, 627-632.

¹⁸¹ Luk.12:15 *Abstinete ab omni avaritia.*

¹⁸² *Sermo* 107, 3.4; tr. Hill, p. 46: *Ego dico vobis, cavete ab omni cupiditate.* transl.

¹⁸³ Cf. *Sermo* 107, 2.3; tr. Hill, p.110: *Volebat illum facere aliquid plus quam est homo.*

¹⁸⁴ *Sermo* 107, 2.3.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. *Sermo* 107, 9.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. *Sermo* 107, 1.2.

Sermon 252/A¹⁸⁷, written after 400, preaches on the words from John's Gospel, Chapter 21. It is about Jesus' appearance to his disciples after His resurrection. Jesus recalls the fishing expedition and the calling of the fishermen. Augustine emphasises that they will first cast their nets on both sides because the Church contains both good and bad.¹⁸⁸ Later on, they will cast the nets on the right-hand side, for those who are going to receive the Kingdom.¹⁸⁹ However, the good rhetorician calms down his audience by telling them that there will be thousands and thousands of them. Augustine loves numbers and starts playing with the number one hundred fifty-three thousand. Biblical scholars are not unanimous concerning this comment. He explains that this number derives from number seventeen. Number ten stands for commandments and number seven for the Holy Spirit. Hence, the eloquent preacher intertwines these two numbers and comes up with satisfying results. First, he asks: 'But who can fulfil the law without help? Absolutely nobody.'¹⁹⁰ But immediately he confesses that it is possible through the faith in Jesus Christ.¹⁹¹ Augustine seeks to explain the meaning behind the words by expressing the strong recommendation: 'Do not covet. Do not covet your neighbour's property'.¹⁹² He strengthens their determination to keep the law by quoting the Bible to depict the beauty of the Lord: '*Domini est terra et plenitudo eius*' (Ps. 23:1). There is a similar recommendation in the *Confessions*. A person should give thanks to God for the beauty and in this way he or she keeps the order of love so as he or she does not lose in confusion.¹⁹³

Augustine wrote Sermon 255¹⁹⁴ during the Easter season in 410. He begins the sermon with the reassurance that singing Alleluia transfers us before God because by praising God together, we encourage each other to perceive and continue our journey home. However, the quality of our praising depends on our lives.¹⁹⁵ Augustine emphasised that we are travellers on our way home and clarifies why it is essential to praise God. First, he

¹⁸⁷ PL 38,1171-1179.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. *Sermo 252/A*, 3

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Matt. 25: 34.

¹⁹⁰ *Sermo 252/A*, 6; tr. Hill, p. 145: *Sed legem quis implet sine adiutorio? Prorsus nemo.*

¹⁹¹ Cf. Gal. 3: 22.

¹⁹² *Sermo 252/A*, 6; tr. Hill, p.145: *Non concupiscas. Rem proximi tui non concupiscas.*

¹⁹³ Cf. Conf. IV 12, 18 (CCL 27, 50).

¹⁹⁴ PL 38,1186-1190.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. *Sermo 255*, 1.1; tr. Hill, p. 158: *Eum tantum homo securus laudat, qui non habet unde displiceat.*

explains, using the example of Mary and Martha, that there are certain things which are necessary to be done, the model of Martha. Then there is a model of Mary who chooses for herself what appeases the desire and lasts. Augustine distinguishes exquisitely the difference between desire – hunger which cannot be satisfied in this life while on the road, and happiness – the fulfilment of desire, satisfaction when we achieve the goal.¹⁹⁶ Augustine also asks what someone who praises God gets besides good health, the priceless gift which is given to everyone, even to animals? And he comes up with the answer that the sons of men who praise God have the hope that God ‘suckles us, nourishes us, strengthens us.’¹⁹⁷ Then he continues thinking about the desires we have while being on the way to the true health. Augustine distinguishes desires held by sick people and desires held by sick people which fade away when the person is healthy again.¹⁹⁸ Thus, he explains that true health is immortality and it eliminates all desires.

The preacher took his mission with great concern and led his audience to distinguish desires that can hinder them on the way home. He endeavours to stir up his listeners to yearn for eternal life and encourages them not to set their ambitions on things which can cloud the cognition. Through this sermon, the preacher of Hippo leads his audience to the reality where we see the glory of God, and there will ‘only be God to delight us’.¹⁹⁹ The last sentence expresses Augustine’s longing and confidence in this promise. The eschatological desire accompanies his teaching and life, and we can presume that preaching helps him to handle desire between world and God.

Through the selected sermons, we presented some of Augustine’s thoughts. We focused on the word *concupiscentia* and *desiderium* in his sermons. He has a firm conviction that God can give him more sweetness and pleasure than he has ever experienced. Therefore, he leads his audience in the same direction. He shares his confidence in God’s forgiveness with his consolation in secure love in God. His teaching of the order of love is a thread running through most of his sermons. Thus, we can presume that his main struggle was

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *Sermo* 255, 5.5; tr. Hill, p. 160: *Sitimus, esurimus, opus est ut satiemur: sed in via fames, in patria satietas.*

¹⁹⁷ *Sermo* 255, 5.5 ; tr. Hill, p. 160: *lactat nos, nutrit nos, confirmat nos*

¹⁹⁸ Cf. *Sermo* 255, 7.7; tr. Hill, p. 162: *Venit sanitas, et perit cupiditas.*

¹⁹⁹ *Sermo* 255, 7.7; tr. Hill, p. 162: *Et solus Deus erit quo delectemur.*

not to give the first place in his heart to anybody and anything else except for God. The man with a restless heart keeps his audience on the move from concupiscence to the desire for eternal life. His faith in the Lord's help to those who look for it is gratifying and supports the listeners to believe in God who is affectionate and caring. Augustine speaks to us even nowadays; therefore, we wanted to present his experience as a paradigm for our journey from the anxiety of a foreigner to the happiness of a pilgrim desiring *beata vita*. To discern the subtle voice leading us to the source of our longing requires a moment of dead-end in which a person is profitably agitated (*utiliter concutiuntur*).²⁰⁰

The opportune moment of encounter par excellence directs a soul to real happiness in God. He reflects his profound experience with God 'who has called him out of darkness into his marvellous light'.²⁰¹ Moreover, he strives to share this fact with others also through preaching. As Vopřada states, 'Augustine gives himself, his whole self, into his sermons, with all his efforts to understand the faith, and by this understanding to deepen his faith'.²⁰² Augustine suggests the way through profane desires to eternity by finding the right place in the order of love, in praising God for the creation. He sets an example of how important it is to share the personal experience with God's love with the others. We can assume that this is the way to endure the tension between desiring the world and desiring God.

²⁰⁰ *Canones et decreta Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Tridentini: sub Paulo III., Iulio III. et Pio IV. Pontificibus Maximis; cum additamentis et indicibus ad Conc. Trident. spectantibus; cum permissu Reverendissimi Ordinariatus Archiepiscopalis Bambergensis*, (Manz, 1866) p. 25.

²⁰¹ 1 Pet. 2:9.

²⁰² VOPŘADA, David. *Svatý Augustin: Vánoční promluvy*. Praha: Krystal OP, 2015, p. 18.

5 Consequences of the relationship between desire and distance for female spirituality²⁰³

In this chapter, we want to explore desire through the prism of women's experience with insufficiency and detachment. As we have written earlier, movement is the fundamental part of desire. According to the Bible, the first sentence addressed by the Lord God directly to the woman was²⁰⁴: 'What is this that you have done?'²⁰⁵ She also learned that the third provision of her curse would be to desire her husband, who will rule over her.²⁰⁶ The woman would desire the man who laid the blame for his yield to temptation on her. However, she also blamed him for not warning her against the danger.²⁰⁷ That is the inheritance for women, resounding as an echo the rebuke 'What is this that you have done?' hearing and making a permanent effort to break the curse so that she would not feel inferior to man but to consider herself his companion and partner.

This reflection shows the movement from the feeling of being ashamed and abandoned to discovering the beauty of being an image of God through the experience of Saviour's liberation.²⁰⁸ The outline of the most famous tale of Wife of Bath from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*²⁰⁹ will help us reveal the journey from 'the curse' to the recognition that God is Abba.²¹⁰

The main message of the tale is finding the answer to the most challenging question: 'What do women desire most?' The young knight who violently disgraces a young woman could spare his life by solving the riddle given to him by the Queen of the kingdom. The convict has limited time to find the answer, and therefore, he is willing to give up his comfort at once and faces obstacles he has to overcome in order to fulfil the

²⁰³ This chapter is based on the article published in BENEŠOVÁ, Hana. Po čem ženy nejvíce touží. In MAŠEK, Vojtěch. (ed.). *Učednice každodennosti: perspektivy katolické spirituality žen v současném světě*. Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart, 2019, s. 35-45.

²⁰⁴ Cf. FRUCHTENBAUM. Arnold G., *The Book of Genesis, Ariel's Bible Commentary*. 1st edition. San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2008, p. 100.

²⁰⁵ Gen. 3:10.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Gen. 3:16.

²⁰⁷ Cf. FRUCHTENBAUM. Arnold G., *The Book of Genesis, Ariel's Bible Commentary*. 1st edition. San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2008, p. 100.

²⁰⁸ Rom. 5:17.

²⁰⁹ Chaucer, Geoffrey, and Nevill Coghill. *The Canterbury Tales*. London: New York: Penguin Books, 2003.

²¹⁰ Rom. 8:15 For more about it is in the article: Van GEMEREN, Willem A. 'Abbā' in the Old Testament? 1. edition. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 1988, pp. 385-398.

task. This question from Chaucer's short story, which raises high expectations, is crucial in the search for other contexts and possibilities to understand some aspects of women's spirituality and their realisation in the relationship between desire and distance. The chapter aims to describe these aspects and to point out some obstacles for women on the perceptual journey. Within this intention, the concepts of desire, clinging and the general priesthood will be analysed, in confrontation with the spiritual concepts of Therese of Lisieux and Renaude Barbaras.

5.1 Impulse to search

The story shows that coming out of everyday certainties is inevitable if there are circumstances threatening our lives. It is probably naive to think that we would give up our comfort – which we build to satisfy our needs – without some strong impulses. Thanks to them, we begin to notice our desires, freedom and reality beyond our experience. According to Barbaras, 'desire exceeds the need of life; it is pure overflowing'²¹¹, and he therefore distinguishes desire from need. Barbaras explains that need can be satisfied by things and disappears by its fulfilment, but desire, on the other hand, cannot be appeased by any particular object. He defines desire as tension that sets us in motion.²¹² His thesis confirms that it is necessary to embark on a journey if we experience the burning desire. The danger posed to us by comfort and easy satisfaction of our needs is enormous. The rigid comfort can lead to violence and aggressive degradation of human beings' rights and dignity. Moreover, life can be at stake, as in the case of the protagonist's story.

Equally, an important step is to perceive what a person desires. Moreover, this raises further questions: Why it is essential to know what we desire? How much are we willing to set out on the journey to follow the desired goal? Furthermore, the most crucial question for us is: What makes female spirituality specific in the context of desire? It follows from the above that it is vital to focus on that moment, on that transition from seeking to meet one's needs to the desire which cannot be satisfied but which leads to a search for lasting values, for life-saving values.

²¹¹ BARBARAS, Renaud. *Desire and Distance: Introduction to a Phenomenology of Perception*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 147.

²¹² BARBARAS, Renaud. *Desire and Distance*, p. 124.: *Desire is the tension that establishes the autonomy of movement, the unassignable excess beyond the self that defines living movement.*

Firstly, it is essential to answer the above questions, and we will do so through a conversation with Therese of Lisieux. Therese entered a convent at the age of fifteen to become a Carmelite nun. She describes with great accuracy and reflection in her biography the smallest events of her life in the light of the Gospel. Therese does it with an overwhelming desire to belong entirely to God and to cling only to Jesus. Her genius lies in that she becomes aware of the possibility of using everything that happens to her for the transformation of her heart. The quoted event happened at the beginning of her formation, and she recalls it in a letter addressed to her superior mother Gonzaga.

‘I remember when I was still a postulate that I had such violent temptations to satisfy myself and to find a few crumbs of pleasure that I was obliged to walk rapidly by your door and to cling firmly to the banister of the staircase in order not to turn back. There came into my mind a crowd of permissions to seek, in a word, dear Mother, I found a thousand reasons for pleasing my nature. How happy I am now for having deprived myself from the very beginning of my religious life! I already enjoy the reward promised to those who fight courageously. I no longer feel the necessity of refusing all human consolations, for my soul is strengthened by Him whom I wanted to love uniquely.’²¹³

This particular episode determined a few important aspects of the transformation of her heart. She describes the process straightforwardly and accurately. Without this effort, her heart might otherwise remain infertile and selfish; however, because of her bravery, it opens up to sacrificial and unconditional love. Therese’s courageous struggle not to be attached and cling to her loved ones also had to be supported by the physical effort to achieve love which ‘does not insist on its own way’.²¹⁴

Several objections may be raised: Therese was only fifteen years old, and her personality was still developing both physically and psychologically. Furthermore, at that age, she had several painful and traumatic experiences with innocent attachment to her loved ones,

²¹³ LISIEUX, S.T. and J.C. OCD. *Story of a Soul, The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux [The Authorized English Translation of Thérèse’s Original Unaltered Manuscripts]*. 3rd edition. *Translated from the Original Manuscripts*. I C S Publications, 2013, p. 237.

²¹⁴ 1 Cor. 13:5.

and with their, even though unintentional, abandonment.²¹⁵ It could be wrongly interpreted that she attached herself to God with all her being because she wanted to escape further suffering from feeling insecure and left behind. However, Vitz and Lynch disprove this hypothesis in their article.

‘Therese’s openness and response to God, however, turned her separations – with their many psychological manifestations – into spiritual gain. With each new separation, her first tendency was to turn to another human attachment. In time, however, her spiritual formation and love of God led her to the only possible, stable attachment: an attachment to God.’²¹⁶

There is, of course, no doubt that it is easy to lose courage when one’s own heart, which always can expand or turn into a piece of ice, requires steadfast perseverance and constant strength. So, the vital question arises, what helped Therese to persevere? Indeed, she learned from her childhood to have a close relationship with Jesus, and from an early age, she had a desire for contemplation.²¹⁷ The longing for God is the basis for all her reflections, thoughts, intentions and behaviour. Would it be wrong, on the other hand, to satisfy her needs for human closeness? In principle, it would certainly not be wrong at all, but she was well aware that this step would prolong her journey to the goal. Therefore, she was determined to find opportunities to strengthen her determination in everyday life in the monastery. There is another example of how wisely she interprets the relationship with her superior. As she describes, because of the sternness with which the mother superior treated her²¹⁸, she learned not to attach her heart to those she wanted to love with the pure love. Being aware of this trap and by exercising detachment to cleanse her sensations, she purifies her love and this act raises her to the Bridegroom of her soul.²¹⁹

Therese is a doctor of the Church. At the age of fifteen, she understands the difference between satisfying her needs – being with her superior, talking to her and enjoying her

²¹⁵ Cf. VITZ, Paul C. a Christina P. LYNCH, 2007. Thérèse of Lisieux From the Perspective of Attachment Theory and Separation Anxiety. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*. 17(1) pp. 61-80: *She was abandoned by her mother (who died) and by her two older sisters who left for Carmel (and she then joined them). It seems reasonable that the term abuse should be restricted to actual physical or psychological mistreatment, and not generalized to unintentional abandonments.*

²¹⁶ Ibidem.

²¹⁷ Cf. LISIEUX, S.T. a J.C. OCD. *Story of a Soul, The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux* p. 74.

²¹⁸ Cf. Ibidem. p. 149.

²¹⁹ Cf. Ibidem. p.151.

company, and the desire for God, always connected with distance, deprivation or hardship. She faces these inconveniences consciously as she believes in love that is unconditional and eternal. Just as Barbaras defines the dialectical relationship between desire and distance based on his rational knowledge of the philosopher²²⁰, Therese perceived not only the difference between needs and desire but also the far side of desire, which is distance. The time of desire is the future and trying to grasp or possess an object of one's desire is, therefore, a delusion. We can admire Therese's bravery and clear perception of God's grace as she preferred emptiness and aridity to temporary satisfaction, and patiently waited for the gift of the One who went to prepare a place for her.²²¹

The decisive impulse for setting off on a journey can be experience of abandonment and desire to attach oneself to a close person again. To expose oneself to desire also means to endure emptiness and wait for the Lord, who always comes with the redemption.²²² Therese did not want to lose those she loved. Therefore, in a similar way as Augustine who believes that 'he loses none dear to him, for all are dear in the one who cannot be lost'²²³, she clings to God with the firm 'assurance that God's Will is to love in her all those He commanded her to love'.²²⁴

Before continuing, it is important to emphasise Therese's help in answering the question we asked at the beginning of the chapter. She teaches that knowing what we desire helps us not become desperate in difficult and deadlock situations. If we see beyond the difficult reality, beyond the hopes of our desire, it is much easier to go through them and utilize them for transformation of our thinking pattern, our heart. We pointed out above that women's spirituality is burdened by a strong feeling of abandonment and inferiority. Therese removes these burdens by becoming attached to the Lord and letting Him love

²²⁰ Cf. BARBARAS, Renaud.: *Desire and Distance*, p.111.: *Need refers to a definite lacking, it aims at restoring vital completion, which is why it is always a need for something determinate. Desire, on the other hand, is not based on a lacking and strictly speaking it does not lack anything. The aspiration that animates it is not the reverse side of an absence, it exceeds vital necessities and is pure overflowing. Nevertheless, to affirm that desire does not lack anything is or to reduce it to some state of fulfilment or closure, on the contrary, it is to recognize that nothing can fulfil it, that the positivity of its affirmation is synonymous with an absolute dissatisfaction that no determinate object can appease.*

²²¹ Cf. Jn. 14:6.

²²² Ps. 130:7.

²²³ Conf. IV, 9, 14 (CCL 27, 47): *Solus enim nullum carum amittit, cui omnes in illo cari sunt, qui non amittitur.* tr. Chadwick, p. 60.

²²⁴ Cf. LISIEUX, S.T. a J.C. OCD. *Story of a Soul, The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux* p. 221.

others in her. By being aware of God's intervention in her life, she experiences Lord's love to her. Therese's genius lies in generous sharing of the fruits resulting from this strong bond. Her spirituality, her desire is to let Jesus act through her. That gives her life a meaning. In addition, the more she desires God and being attached to Him, the more she is willing to experience insufficiency.

5.2 Do not touch me

After describing the importance of recognising the impulse to set off and leave rigid patterns and comfort, let us now observe closely the moment that is prepared in advance by an intense impulse and evokes desire. Longing opens human perception of the transcendent, which is perceived as being so attractive that one is willing to subject oneself to hardship, scarcity and austerities.²²⁵ We could see this reality present in both Augustine's and Therese's conversion. In their diversion from transient, even though beautiful creatures to God, in whom each person is found again and loved with pure love.

As stated before, the object of desire cannot be possessed. And therefore, neither can we desire God. Longing for God makes us to set off and look for appeasement until our heart is fulfilled. With reference to Matt 7:8, Augustine wants to seek the Lord, as in seeking him, he can find him.²²⁶ The paradigm par excellence of searching the Lord is the meeting of the Risen Christ with Mary Magdalene. She desperately missed her Master, so she eagerly ran to the grave to be with Him. Nevertheless, when she arrived, His body was not there, and although she did not know where He had gone, she began to look for Him. As she ran around, she met a man, thinking he was a gardener. Because of the tears she shed, she did not know who the man was. However, as soon as she heard her name spoken by this man, she recognized the Master she was looking for and longed for. Naturally, she wanted to touch her loved one, cling to Him and rejoice in His presence. However, to her great surprise, Magdalene, one of the Lord's closest apostles, was not allowed to touch Him. Contrary to her expectations, Jesus asked her to go to His brothers and transmit His words to them.²²⁷

²²⁵ 1 Cor. 2:9.

²²⁶ Conf. I, 1, 1 (CCL 27, 1).

²²⁷ Jn. 20:17. *'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'*

We can certainly agree with some scholars that ‘the reason Jesus did not allow Mary this kind of presence is that His body was transformed and He wanted her to know the true meaning of the resurrection and to invite her to see their relationship on a completely different level.’²²⁸ This opinion is also affirmed by Augustine in his sermons (s.143,4; 244,4; 245,4; Jo. ev. tr. 121,3), where he warns against carnal beliefs and invites to the spiritual touch of faith (ep. 149,32; s.244,4).²²⁹ We can work on the assumption that Jesus changed her heart. He wanted her to know a whole new dimension of the relationship offered. Thanks to that, she was able to answer immediately and was able to go. Undoubtedly, she must have been confused and depressed at first, perhaps close to despair. Similarly, we could also see in Therese’s story that stepping into the world of faith requires not only mental effort, but also physical effort.

The example illustrates all the elements we mentioned above: a strong impulse, an awakened desire, and experience of deficiency, which means not possessing the object of longing. Hence, this is the key moment of recognition, of a change, when the desire for God leads a person to endure the moment of dead-end. It is the crucial moment when a person recognises that loving neighbours by touching the mystical body of Christ and spreading the Lord’s words are means to shortening the distance between a creature and the Creator.

The distance from the loved one increases the desire for him or her. This experience is well known also in the literature describing passionate relationships. The most famous scene from the tragedy where Julie cried her pain could be used for depicting the horrifying experience of being far from a lover, the symbol of happiness. ‘Romeo is banished – there is no end, no limit, measure, bound. In that word’s death; no words can that woe sound.’²³⁰ Shakespeare’s expression is not limited to this Renaissance story only but is, in fact, timeless. The second example, taken from spiritual literature, will help us point out that the pain coming from separation is not the end but can be an opportunity and an indicator of aporia inevitably helping to rise to another mode of perception. The

²²⁸ Cf. Reimun Bierinder, R, Karlijn. Demasure a Barbara. Baert. *To touch or not to touch?: interdisciplinary perspectives on the Noli me tangere*. Leuven: Peeters, 2013, p. 64.

²²⁹ Cf. TESELLE. Eugene, Faith and Salvation (Credere in Deum) In FITZGERALD, Allan D (ed.). *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. 1999, pp. 349-350.

²³⁰ SHAKESPEARE, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. London: Penguin, 1998, p. 304.

example comes from John of the Cross's letter to a Carmelite nun in which he explains to her how to attain freedom of heart. He strictly refers her to Christ, in whom she is to shed tears. If she wants to tell John of the Cross about her troubles, she should firstly stand in front of Christ, where he sees her soul as in a mirror. He wants her to be detached from all human support.²³¹ These two examples try to depict the tough experience of separation. However, there is a correlation between desire and distance. Hence, if there is no experience of insufficiency, there is no need to set off and seek reality beyond the experience with transience.

5.3 Life under grace

Two women from different backgrounds were introduced to show the transformation of their heart. Their journey from giving preference to attachment to the Lord – desire for eternity – was effectuated through the painful and reflected experience of abandonment. Both became great apostles of the Lord's word and love. They discovered and actualised general priesthood through their desire to belong to God. Hence, each woman is invited to undergo such a transformation. As it has been pointed out, a human being is defined by movement. Therefore, to make an effort to set off is the foundation for breaking the curse. After that, each woman can interpret God's first words to her not as a rejection but as God's desire for her salvation.

Now, we can return to the story of the Wife of Bath and listen to the answer to the question that saved the life of the young knight: 'A woman wants the self-same sovereignty over her husband as over her lover. And master him; he must not be above her.'²³² The answer was quite obvious to those who know the second part of God's curse of Eve in the Old Testament, as recorded in in the third chapter of the book of Genesis: 'Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'²³³ From the above we can deduce the hypothesis that attachment is an essential threat for woman. As a consequence of that she tends to become submissive and might be in danger of losing authenticity and integrity. On the contrary, a woman can turn into a deftly eloquent 'wife of Bath' who knows very

²³¹ Cf. Sv. Jan od Kříže. *Krátké dopisy a korespondence*. Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství 1998. p. 134. *I want to see you with a great exposure of the spirit and so detached from all human support that not even the whole of hell could worry you.* (translated by Hana Benešová)

²³² CHAUCER, Geoffrey. *Canterbury Tales*, p. 304.

²³³ Gen. 3:17.

well how to make her husband to do everything she wants because she is aware of her powerful weapons.

On the other hand, the oscillation between submission and domination is a movement and as such it can be turned into an opportunity to step out from stereotypes. Yet before the curse, the promise of saving comes, ‘He will crush your head.’²³⁴ Jesus comes into the world to show all the tenderness of the Father; He redeemed us from the original sin. After baptism, we became God’s beloved children who ‘do not live under the law, but under grace.’²³⁵ Thus, this is an opportunity to become aware of that reality that comes with the transformation of the heart. There is no doubt that the path from clinging to surrender requires the experience of a strong impulse that lifts a woman to awareness of transcendence. It is a long and demanding pilgrimage, which is both sweet and bitter because there is desire and distance in it. However, it is worth fighting bravely, because as Therese of Lisieux said, when a heart is fixed on God, it is enlarged and can give genuine and selfless love to those who are dear to her.²³⁶ Edith Stein, another doctor of the Church, offers the order of surrender.

‘The deepest longing of women’s heart is to give herself lovingly, to belong to another, and to possess this other being complete. This longing is revealed in her outlook, personal and all-embracing, which appears to us as specifically feminine. But this surrender becomes perverted self-abandon and a form of slavery when it is given to another person and not to God.’²³⁷

The need to belong is one of the deepest needs each person longs for.²³⁸ This need is therefore inevitable for building strong family relationships in a family, in a community and in society and the Church. Such effort brings satisfaction and provides the meaning of life. However, if a woman inverts the order, the journey to freedom and peace of heart may become jeopardized.

²³⁴ Gen. 3:15 ‘Genesis 3:15 contains the *proto-evangelium*, meaning “the first gospel”, because this is the first messianic prophecy of the First Coming.’ FRUCHTENBAUM, Arnold G., *The Book of Genesis, Ariel’s Bible Commentary*. 1st edition. San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2008, p. 104.

²³⁵ Rom. 6:14.

²³⁶ Cf. LISIEUX, S.T. a J.C. OCD. *Story of a Soul The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux*, p. 237.

²³⁷ STEIN, Edith. *Essays on Woman: The Collected Works of Edith Stein. vol. 2*. Washington: DC: ICS Publications, p. 55.

²³⁸ Cf. BAUMEISTER, R. F. a LEARY, M. R., *The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation*. *Psychological Bulletin* 117(3), pp. 497-529.

5.4 Possible appeasements of desire

Surrender is a driving force and an important aspect of female spirituality. Woman finds her true image in devotion. The beauty of woman who can heal the world²³⁹ lies in this reality. The greater the desire to touch Christ woman has, the more longing compels her to come out and look for ways to appease this burning pain. As we have seen above, desire is directed at its object, but it cannot be seized. Barbaras explains that an object of desire cannot be grasped, and therefore satisfaction means dissatisfaction.²⁴⁰ Hence, the deficiency of an object helps us not cling to it but find through it the desire leading to eternity. It is an essential feature of a dynamic and creative spiritual life. Absence increases desire that cannot be satisfied, and the desire leads to movement. Hence, the search for how to appease the longing to touch but not to cling is inevitable. Based on this statement, we can arrive at a conclusion how to alleviate the tension caused by desire: to touch our neighbours in their pain and wounds in order to find God. That is the lesson that St. Therese of Lisieux gives us when she describes her struggles on the path to unconditional love. These deeds, this search, are spiritual sacrifices, and as Breck explains in his book, recovering a genuine sense of sacred longing requires first to recover our most basic vocation, which is to exercise our universal priesthood.²⁴¹

To clarify the great importance of practising the priesthood of all believers, we now turn to the document of the Second Vatican Council. The document *Lumen Gentium* emphasises that this priesthood is actively exercised ‘in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity.’²⁴² According to the Bible, we distinguish among objects that should be in the centre of our interest. They are seeking the Lord²⁴³, seeking His face²⁴⁴, seeking help from

²³⁹ Cf. EVDOKIMOV, Pavel. Nikolajevič. *Žena a spása světa*. Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2011, p. 274.

²⁴⁰ Cf. BARBARAS, Renaud. *Desire and Distance*, p. 147. *That which desire covets and that which satisfies it are therefore given in its very presence as the absence of what can in no way be present, which is why satisfaction is dissatisfaction, desire's excess, which is renewed in each pleasure, responds to the retreating of the desired object behind what arouses pleasure.*

²⁴¹ Cf. BRECK, John. *Longing for God: Orthodox Reflections on Bible, Ethics and Liturgy: Orthodox Reflections on Bible, Ethics and Liturgy*. U. S: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006, p. 13.

²⁴² LG 5.

²⁴³ Zeph. 2:3.

²⁴⁴ Ps 27:8.

the Lord²⁴⁵, seeking peace,²⁴⁶ caring for the things of the Lord²⁴⁷, seeking the kingdom of God²⁴⁸, and keeping in mind what serves others.²⁴⁹ Šmejdová suggests that ‘specific woman’s charism lays emphasis on concreteness of a person, concreteness of a moment and concreteness of an action’.²⁵⁰ Through baptism a woman also has a share in Christ’s prophetic authority. Therefore, each woman is invited to the art of discernment of the opportune moment and to help others reveal and discover the desire for God in his and her life story.

²⁴⁵ 2 Chr. 20:4.

²⁴⁶ 1 Pet 3:11.

²⁴⁷ 1 Cor 7:34.

²⁴⁸ Mat 6:33.

²⁴⁹ Phil 2:4.

²⁵⁰ ŠMEJDOVÁ, Barbora. *Autorita, moc a ženy v katolické církvi: Sonda do tématu na základě díla H. U. von Balthasara a Adrienne von Speyr*. MKR Communio 24, 95, 2020, 179-192.

6 Conclusion

The primary aim of the thesis was to conduct an analysis of the theme of profane desire as a means to discover longing for eternity. The first part reflected lack and insufficiency as the stimuli for movement through profane desires to longing for eternity. This motion is called a perceptual journey because a person becomes aware of his or her cravings and starts to perceive their insufficiency. The next objectives of the introductory part were to show the fact that if desire for God is written in the human heart, then nothing less than God can fulfil the heart. This knowledge leads to distinguishing between *res ad utendum* and *res ad fruendum*. Therefore, Augustine's concept of the order of love (*ordo amoris*) as a medium to peace and integrity is introduced. The aim is to demonstrate that the awareness of insufficiency of profane desire requires an effort which lies in facing discomfort and in carrying on. For this reason, the phenomenological concept of *epoché* defined by Barbaras is propounded. *Epoché* helps see things as such and it is similar to detachment, which also requires to keep distance from everything that overshadows being and keeps from carrying on. A brief analysis of restlessness and movement as vital features describing a person as well as fundamental components of the process of perceptual journey is presented.

The thesis focused on following Augustine's experience with the loss of his beloveds and his concubine. We found out that with each loss Augustine experienced deep relief in his strong belief in *beata vita* and conviction that nobody being loved in God is lost. The transformation of his grief and sadness is remarkable. During the first encounter with death he was in agony and confessed that he lost the source of his joy, but on the other hand, he recognized God as a healer of his soul. He suffered to the extent that he had to leave his hometown. However, as he described it, his grief was more about him and his suffering than about his friend who died. After this painful and irrecoverable loss, Augustine was convinced that attachment to mortal things lead to misery. An objection can be made that Augustine's teaching about the futility of affectionate relationships is too strict, but he was convinced that if a person loves according to *ordo amoris*, his or her relationships do not cease to exist but last in God.

The separation from his concubine brought him enormous agony. Only after abandoning her he could recognise that there was nothing to appease his grief from separation except

for total surrender to God. Through the profound awareness that bodily satisfaction does not have the power to heal his wound, Augustine recognised that nothing could satisfy him and heal him except for God's healing hand. Despite being strongly attached to bodily pleasure, Augustine attributes high importance to continence as a way to gaining integrity and happiness.

The death of his mother Monica brought Augustine completely different experience of grief. He had an intimate relationship with his mother that played a crucial role in his life. Their conversation about eternity was mystical experience on the day before she died, and increased his confidence that delights experienced in the world cannot be compared to the delights of eternity. Augustine discovers the healing relief of tears. He also learnt that his grief for his mother would be healed after diverting his pain from himself to the others. Losing his mother, Augustine became a man who cares for those who go astray.

The description of his son Adeodatus, who died very young, is remarkable. He proved his confidence in *beata vita*. Augustine's hope in eternal life intensified with each personal tragedy. Augustine's experience of loss led him to insatiable desire for God. The more he experienced insufficiency, the more he thought about *beata vita*. The analysis we conducted revealed that there is evidence of direct proportion between desire and loss.

In its second part, the thesis dealt with the analysis of Augustine's conversion and selected *Sermons ad Populum*. Firstly, the analysis focused on transformation of desire and the usage of the words *cupiditas* and *desiderium* in the *Confessions*. The individual steps of Augustine's conversion were described. The meeting with his friend Ponticianus, who told him a story about two men who took up the life of hermits, changed his life. Under the influence of that story about two uneducated men who captured heaven, Augustine's conversion of his heart started. The opportune moment that lies in perceiving God as the source of sweet pleasure is a significant moment of the conversion. The second one is the recognition that God grants continence. For Augustine, to surrender to God meant also to become continent. He recognised that continence is an important means of gaining integrity. Further, the thesis dealt with the selected sermons where were observed similar stages of Augustine's conversion: the discerning of desires, the awareness of blurred reality, the perception of the opportune moment, the discovering of *imago Dei* in us, the longing for *beata vita* and the decision for the constant movement through *cupiditas* to

desiderium. The focus is on his effort to share with the audience his authentic experience with God's grace and intervention in his life story.

The last aim of the thesis concentrated on the context of desire and distance in female spirituality, introduced by the biblical story of Adam and Eve. At first, woman's effort to break her curse by learning to love but not cling is described as a challenging task. The perceptual journey means to overcome the feeling of being ashamed and abandoned and to discover the beauty of being an image of God.

Significant differentiation is made between need, which can be fulfilled, and desire, which is aimed at future and therefore cannot be satisfied. If a woman recognises that her desire to belong cannot be quenched unless she surrenders to God, she can learn to love unconditionally. She can transform her longing into creative serving to others to the whole, to humankind in the church, without boundaries. This journey was experienced by Therese of Lisieux. She learnt to become attached to God through several painful experiences of unintentional abandonment. She was an example of courageous transformation of the heart which did not want to cling to another human being, but only because she wanted to share with others love which lasts. There was the same moment in Augustine's attitude to love others. He taught to love others in God, and Therese taught that God loved others in her.

Noli me tangere represents movement through profane desire to desire for God. This longing which cannot be satisfied brings the energy and important means to serving others and exercising unconditional love. This final strive suggests some aspects of female spirituality, namely the dialectical relationship between devotion and attachment, desire and distance. Woman realises in herself the image of God also through devotion and dedication. There is something very satisfying about being God's property, and to realise it, to think about it in contemplative reflection and in an intimate dwelling before God's presence, is to believe that the curse has been destroyed.

Bibliography

SOURCES

1. AUGUSTINE, and CHADWICK, Henry. *Confessions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
2. AUGUSTINUS, Aurelius, and GREEN William M., *De doctrina Christiana libri quattuor*. Vindobonae: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1963.
3. CATHOLIC CHURCH, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. New York: Doubleday, 1995.
4. Saint AUGUSTINE. *Confessionum libri tredecim*; CCL 27.
5. Saint AUGUSTINE. *De libero arbitrio libri tres*; CCL 29.
6. Saint AUGUSTINE. *De trinitate libri quindecim*; CCL 50.
7. Saint AUGUSTINE. *Sermones*; PL 38.
8. Saint Therese of LISIEUX. a J.C. OCD. *Story of a Soul, The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux [The Authorized English Translation of Thérèse's Original Unaltered Manuscripts]*. 3. edition. *Translated from the Original Manuscripts*: I C S Publications, 2013.
9. SKUTELLA. Martin a VERHEIJEN Luc, *Sancti Augustini Confessionum libri XIII* Turnholti, 1981.
10. Saint AUGUSTINE. *De libero arbitrio libri tres*. Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1956.
11. Saint AUGUSTINE. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century. Part III – Sermons*: New City. 1990.
12. Svatý Jan od KŘÍŽE. *Krátké dopisy a korespondence*. Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství 1998.
13. VATICAN COUNCIL, ed., *The documents of Vatican II: with notes and index*. Strathfield, N.S.W.: St Pauls Pub, 2013.

STUDIES

1. ANDERSON, Robert. *Teaching Augustine's On the Teacher*. Religions. 6, 2015, pp. 404-408.
2. ASIEDU, F. *Following the Example of a Woman: Augustine's Conversion to Christianity in 386*. Vigiliae Christianae, 2003, 57(3), pp. 276-306.
3. BABICH, Babette. *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire: Essays in Honor of William J. Richardson, S.J.*: Springer Science & Business Media, 1995.
4. BARBARAS, Renaud. *Desire and Distance: Introduction to a Phenomenology of Perception*. 1st edition. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.
5. BAUMEISTER, Roy F. a Mark R. LEARY. The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*. 117(3), 1995, pp. 497-529.
6. BENNER, David G. *Soulful Spirituality: Becoming Fully Alive and Deeply Human*. Brazos Press, 2011.
7. BOONE, Mark J., *The Conversion and Therapy of Desire: Augustine's Theology of Desire in the Cassiciacum Dialogues*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016.
8. BRECK, John. *Longing for God: Orthodox Reflections on Bible, Ethics and Liturgy: Orthodox Reflections on Bible, Ethics and Liturgy*. U. S: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006.
9. BROWN, Peter, *Augustine of Hippo: a biography*. Rev. ed. Faber and Faber, 2000.
10. CARY, Phillip. *Inner Grace: Augustine in the traditions of Plato and Paul*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
11. CHAUCER, Geoffrey, and COGHILL Nevill. *The Canterbury Tales*. London; New York: Penguin Books, 2003.
12. DOSOUDIL, Jiří: *Boží království a jeho teologické konotace se zaměřením na Ježíšovo hlásání: bakalářská práce*. Vedoucí práce: Mireia Ryšková. Brno, 2014.
13. DUPONT, Anthony, *Preacher of Grace: A Critical Reappraisal of Augustines Doctrine of Grace in His Sermones Ad Populum on Liturgical Feasts and During the Donatist Controversy.*: Brill, 2014.
14. EVDOKIMOV, Pavel Nikolajevič. *Žena a spása světa*. Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2011.

15. FITZGERALD, Allan D (ed.). *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. 1999.
16. FRANCE, R. T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. CAMBRIDGE: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007.
17. FROMM, Erich. *The art of loving*. Centennial ed. New York: Continuum, 2000.
18. FRUCHTENBAUM, Arnold G. *The Book of Genesis, Ariel's Bible Commentary*. 1st edition. San Antonio: Ariel Ministries., 2008.
19. HEGEDUS, T. *Early Christianity and Ancient Astrology*. Peter Lang, 2007.
20. KEARNEY, Richard, *The God who May be: A Hermeneutics of Religion*. Indiana University Press. 2001.
21. MERLEAU-PONTY, Maurice. *The World of Perception*. 1st edition. Routledge, 2004.
22. MOUNIER, Emmanuel. *Personalism*. University of Notre Dame Press, 2001.
23. O'DONOVAN, OLIVER. Usus and fruitio in augustine, de doctrina christiana I. *Journal of Theological Studies*. XXXIII, 1982, pp. 361-397.
24. POWER, Kim. Concubine/Concubinage, In FITZGERALD, Allan D (ed.). *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. 1999.
25. Reimun Bierinder, R, Karlijn. Demasure a Barbara. Baert. *To touch or not to touch?: interdisciplinary perspectives on the Noli me tangere*. Leuven: Peeters, 2013.
26. ROGERS, Brian. *Perception: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
27. RUSSELL, J. S. *The taste of tears: memory and emotion in the Confessions*. *The American Benedictine Review*. 67(3), 2016, pp. 246–265.
28. SCHRIJVERS, Joeri. *Jean-Yves Lacoste: A Phenomenology of Liturgy*. *The Heythrop Journal*. 46 2005, pp. 314-333.
29. SHAKESPEARE, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. London: Penguin, 1998.
30. SULLIVAN, Dale L. Kairos and the rhetoric of belief, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 78:3, 1992, pp. 317-332.
31. TOKARCZUK, Olga. *Flights*. Penguin, 2018.

32. KARFÍKOVÁ, Lenka. *Jazyk touhy v Augustinových prvních dílech*. In Kol. aut. *Touha a Žádostivost v Dějinách Evropské Filosofie*. Praha, Togga, 2014, pp. 83-116.
33. KARFÍKOVÁ, Lenka. *Grace and the Will According to Augustine*. BRILL, 2012.
34. VANGEMEREN, Willem A. *'Abbā' in the Old Testament?* 1. edition. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 1988, pp. 385-398.
35. VITZ, Paul & LYNCH, Christina. *Thérèse of Lisieux From the Perspective of Attachment Theory and Separation Anxiety*. *International Journal for The Psychology of Religion - INT J PSYCHOL RELIG*. 17, 2007, pp. 61-80.
36. VOPŘADA, David. *Augustine's Eternal Search for the True Face of God*. In: *Seeking God's Face*, Mireia Ryšková (ed.). Praha: Karolinum Press, 2018, pp. 137-158.
37. VOPŘADA, David. *Svatý Augustin, dobra manželství a kauza Ecdicia*. In Kol. aut. *Svátost manželství jako znamení nové a věčné smlouvy*. Hradec Králové: Biskupství královéhradecké, 2019, pp. 65-96.
38. VOPŘADA, David. *Svatý Augustin: Vánoční promluvy [Saint Augustine: Christmas Sermons]*. Praha: Krystal OP, 2015.
39. WOOLLCOTT, P. *Some Considerations of Creativity and Religious Experience in St. Augustine of Hippo*. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 5(2), 1966, pp. 273-283.