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Demus pro spectaculis spectacula. The role of *delectatio* in Augustine's preaching activity

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I focus, first and foremost, on aesthetic or entertaining aspects of Augustine's preaching activity. This aspect of his speech is, in fact, closely connected with *delectare* which, according to Cicero, constitutes one of the three major tasks of an orator. So my argumentation here is based on Augustine's homiletic theory presented in Book IV of his *De doctrina christiana*. Against the background of some examples taken from his exegetical homilies and from his sermons I try to show that the entertaining function of Augustine's words is in the service of his Christian teaching. The moderate style as a main source of *delectatio* is especially convenient when the preacher talks about things which his audience already know with the view of creating pleasure in talking about them. The advantage of this style is that even uneducated people can enjoy such embellished speech and might be also moved by it. To pursue this task Augustine gets use of several images among which the image of a theatre stands out. In order to lead his faithful away from theatrical performances he transforms his sermon into a Christian show.

Keywords: delectatio, theatrical show, Augustine of Hippo, stylistic ornatus, preaching, the art of rhetoric

1. Introduction

„Reflecting further in the midst of this crowd of Your Graces, it is inevitable that many will be merely natural, still of a materialist cast of mind and still not able to raise themselves to a spiritual understanding. Hence, I am very hesitant about how I might say what the Lord may give me to say, or how I might explain, within my limitations, what has just been read from the gospel. [...] And so, since I am once again convinced that some among you are capable not only of grasping the explanation, but even of understanding the text before it is explained, I will not deprive those who can grasp it, even though I fear it may be lost on those who cannot.“¹

These words from the opening part of Augustine's homilies on the Gospel of John testify to his concern about his audience. On the one hand, he is aware of the fact that some of his believers are uneducated or even illiterate², on the other hand, he knows that among them there are those who understand scriptures before they have heard his explanation. So he often asks himself how to satisfy both the groups of his believers. And thanks to his rhetorical training he finds the answer to this question in the appropriate use of *delectatio* which he adapts to the needs of Christian homiletic style.

¹ Augustinus, *Tractatus in Iohannis Evangelium* 1,1, CCL 36, 1: „... et cogitans, in hac praesenti turba caritatis vestrae necesse esse ut multi sint animales, qui adhuc secundum carnem sapiant, nondumque se possint ad spiritalem intellectum erigere, haesito vehementer, quomodo, ut Dominus dederit, possim dicere, vel pro modulo meo explicare quod lectum est ex evangelio. [...] Itaque quoniam rursus esse non dubito in numero vestro quosdam, a quibus possit non solum expositum capi, sed et antequam exponatur, intellegi; non fraudabo eos qui possunt capere, dum timeo superfluous esse auribus eorum qui non possunt capere.“, translation WSA III/12, 39.

² Cf. for instance Augustinus, *Enarratio in Psalmum* 121,8, CSEL 95/3, 96: „nos simus codex ipsorum.“

Therefore, in this article I pay particular attention to the aesthetic or entertaining aspects of Augustine's preaching. The sermon represents a specific literary genre where a significant role is played not only by its contents but also by a certain stylistic *ornatus*. In fact, this *taedium-banishing ornatus*, which charms the audience by *delectare*, manifests best rhetorical skills of a preacher who thanks to it appeals to the senses of his hearers and thus helps them better understand the biblical message (Lausberg 1998, 155, §330).³ For Augustine it was very important that his faithful not only understood Christian doctrines but also that they lived accordingly. That is why, when interpreting scriptures, he was searching for such ways of communicating Christian truth that his arguments would be both persuasive and, at the same time, pleasing to the hearers' ears and easy to remember.

Since a good preacher is a psychologist, theologian and artist in one person, the bishop of Hippo is clearly aware that the speech of the defenders of truth should not be repulsive for its hearers. In *De doctrina christiana* IV he comments on it in the following way:

„Rhetoric, after all, being the art of persuading people to accept something, whether it is true or false, would anyone dare to maintain that truth should stand there without any weapons in the hands of its defenders against falsehood.“⁴

To a certain degree, this might be reached by *delectare*, the task which, according to Cicero, constitutes one of the three major tasks of an orator.⁵ Altogether they lead to the persuasion of the audience and, consequently, to their conversion. On some examples taken from his

³ Cf. also Quintilianus, *Institutio oratoria* IV,2,116-117, 220.

⁴ Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana* IV,2,3, CCL 32, 117: „Nam cum per artem rhetoricam et vera suadeantur et falsa, quis audeat dicere, adversus mendacium in defensoribus suis inermem debere consistere veritatem, ut videlicet illi, qui res falsas persuadere conantur...“, translation WSA I/11, 201.

⁵ The means the orator uses in his speech in order to attain *persuasio* are summarized by Cicero in three verbs determining three levels of communication which should be well coordinated between themselves: *docere/probare*, *delectare/conciliare* and *movere*. Cf. Cicero, *Orator* 21,69, 23; Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana* IV,12,27, CCL 32, 135.

exegetical homilies on the Psalms (*Enarrationes in Psalmos*)⁶ and from his sermons (*Sermones ad populum*)⁷ I will try to show that behind the entertaining function of Augustine's words a profound theology is hidden. This theology is often well manifested through his homiletic oeuvre and that is why his homilies still attract a considerable number of Augustinian scholars today who focus both on their theological and rhetorical aspects.⁸

In pursuing the task of *delectare*, Augustine is helped by his sense of the symbolic language which encodes unique experience of man in an easy and attractive form facilitating to absorb even more complex theological concepts and moral admonitions. In developing my argumentation, the image⁹ of a theatre is particularly interesting among other images used by Augustine. Spontaneous and pleasing style of his sermons captured senses of his believers during almost four decades. These sermons are basically simple improvisations on the topic of the meaning of a particular biblical passage which had been read at a liturgical setting. They have intentionally an informal character and for homiletic purposes the bishop of Hippo demands clarity and lucidity which in practice means to adapt one's style to the taste and needs of ordinary people of his time.

⁶ Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, CCL 38-39-40, E. Dekkers – J. Fraipont (eds.), Brepols, Turnhout 1956; Fiedrowicz (2001).

⁷ Augustinus, *Sermones*, CCL 41, C. Lambot (ed.), Brepols, Turnhout 1961; CCL 41A, P.-P. Verbraken (ed.), Brepols, Turnhout 2008.

⁸ In my argumentation I refer myself to some more recent works focusing on Augustine's homiletic preaching practice which I cite throughout this paper. For more information about the subject see also for instance Mc Larney (2014), Fiedrowicz (1997) and Harmless (1995).

⁹ The image as a part of stylistic *ornatus* and a means of persuasion in the language represents a particular kind of a symbol which realizes the transfer from one area of reality to the other with the aim to offer clearer reference for certain terms difficult to understand or to prove. Cf. Poque (1985), 867 sq.

2. The role of *delectatio* in Christian homiletic style

The starting point of my argumentation is Augustine's homiletic theory presented in Book IV of his *De doctrina christiana*.¹⁰ When in his theoretical reflection upon the functions of speech he replaced *docere* by three tasks of an orator, i.e. by *docere*, *delectare* and *movere / flectere*, he had to confront himself also with the linguistic function of *delectatio*, that is to say with the category that he undoubtedly considered slightly controversial (Prestel 1992, 173). In fact, Augustine warns his readers against the danger of a vain quest for beauty and he underlines the importance of moral virtue.¹¹

In this respect, Augustine shares the Stoic conviction that language should be employed for the purpose of articulating truth as lucidly as possible.¹² Influenced by Ciceronian Stoicism, he believes that eloquence is the mark of wisdom and the life of virtue. From his viewpoint, however, any gifts which the rhetor or preacher possesses flow from divine grace.¹³ And while he is receptive to the benefits derived from every rhetorical technique, he finds the best rhetorical models in scriptures or in his Christian predecessors. In this regard, his theory of rhetoric provides an excellent illustration of his tendency to enhance Stoic insights by means of Christian teaching. (Fitzgerald 1999, 818)

Although Augustine was clearly aware of certain difficulties linked with *delectatio*, however, in *De doctrina christiana* he prepared a way to its more positive acceptance already in Books II and III where he was dealing with particular aspects of a biblical language which help mainly to entertain or please its readers or hearers.¹⁴ The symbolic form is more pleasing (*suavius*) and the use of metaphors (*similitudines*) as well as a certain difficulty in understanding the text increases delight in learning (*libentius, gratius*)¹⁵. The language of *signa translata* uses figures and

¹⁰ The standard monograph on this topic is Pollmann (1996).

¹¹ Cf. Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana* IV,14,30, CCL 32, 137.

¹² Ibid. IV,10,24, CCL 32, 132 sq.

¹³ Ibid. IV,16,33, CCL 32, 139 sq.

¹⁴ Ibid. II,6,7, CCL 32, 35 sq.

¹⁵ Ibid. II,6,8, CCL 32, 36.

tropes¹⁶ that are one of the characteristic traits of a moderate style (*genus temperatum*) and, at the same time, a major producer of *delectatio*.¹⁷

Since the rhetoric itself is neither good nor bad,¹⁸ Augustine feels free to develop the dimension of *delectatio* in his homilies while emphasizing the fact that its true source is the unique adequacy of the biblical language.¹⁹ Moreover, it is convenient when talking about things which are already known in order to create pleasure in talking about them. The task of *delectatio* has thus its place also in Christian teaching because it helps the preacher to hold the attention of his hearers even when they already know the topic, however, their mind can find pleasure in the way it is presented:

„Because if you also aim at giving the audience pleasure, you can also say things they already know very well; but here it is not what is said, but the way it is said that holds their attention.“²⁰

Therefore, in Christian teaching *delectatio* does not have only an aesthetic value but it also exerts didactic function since it serves mainly to attract the attention of the hearers,²¹ and, by doing so, it facilitates the Christian instruction. When hearers are attentive and pleased, they absorb more easily the content and are able to follow preacher's teaching longer.²² In a particular sense, *delectatio* is a concession to the weakness of the audience but as such this function remains a factor of the language which can be omitted in the preacher's speech. However, since many people find it difficult to accept the truth in an unattractive form,

¹⁶ Ibid. IV,7,11-12, CCL 32, 123-125; IV,7,15, 127 sq.; IV,21,46, 152 sq.

¹⁷ Ibid. IV,7,15, CCL 32, 127 sq.

¹⁸ Ibid. IV,2,3, CCL 32, 117.

¹⁹ Ibid. IV,12,28, CCL 32, 135 sq.

²⁰ Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana* IV,10,25, CCL 32, 133: „Nam delectandi gratia etiam nota dicuntur; ubi non ipsa, sed modus, quo dicuntur, adtenditur“, translation WSA I/11, 214.

²¹ Cf. for instance Augustinus, *De catechizandis rudibus* 13,19, CCL 42, 142 sq.

²² Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana* IV,12,27, CCL 32, 135: „Ut teneatur ad audiendum, delectandus auditor.“

delectatio plays an important role even in Christian eloquence.²³ Nevertheless, it should never become the aim of the speech but rather it should contribute to the persuasion (*persuasio*) of the audience.

3. The image of a theatre

The role of *delectatio* in Augustine's homilies is thus usually highly purpose-oriented and fits well his pastoral-exhortative goals. Many a time, the bishop of Hippo was looking for the ways how to attract the attention of his African lively audience loving music and entertainment so that they did not flee from the church directly to the circus or to the theatre.²⁴ In his time, mimes, jugglers and acrobats enjoyed such great popularity that many bishops feared that on Christian feasts their churches would be empty because their faithful were much more interested in theatrical shows than in Christian teaching itself. In one of his sermons, Augustine notes that if Christians did not attend the shows, there would indeed remain very few people there.²⁵

Obviously, it was not easy to hold attention of such heterogeneous audience. Especially in Carthage, the capital city of the province, Augustine feared the audience who were quite demanding and often more educated than in his episcopal seat. Thus it was not easy to satisfy them just with some simple words.²⁶ Moreover, during his numerous visits to Carthage, many people were coming to the church only out of curiosity to watch a former rhetor who, in the meantime, became a renowned preacher.

Augustine seeks to please them all: some of them by means of clarity and lucidity of his speech, others by using a variety of images and by a pleasing style. But what is it that helps him to complete his task?

²³ Cf. Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana* IV,13,29, CCL 32, 136 sq.

²⁴ Cf. Augustinus, *Tractatus in Iohannis Evangelium* 10,9; 7,6, CCL 36, 106, 414-419.

²⁵ Cf. Augustinus, *Sermo* 88,17, RBen 94, 91: „Tam pauci essent in theatris, ut erubescendo discederent, si Christiani ad theatra non accederent.“

²⁶ Aurelius, the bishop of Carthage, often invited his friend Augustine to deliver a homily in his episcopal seat on big Christian feastdays in order to keep his believers in the church. Unfortunately, on these days homilies were often unable to compete with the shows. For more information about Aurelius, the Primate of Africa, see for instance Brown 1969, 136-138.

First and foremost, it is his everlasting love of art and, in particular, of theatre. He came to understand that he himself should become an actor or singer for them (cf. Andoková 2013, 127), simply said, that he should transform his homily into a Christian show:

„Suppose then I'm a pop singer – what more could I sing to you? Here you are – I have brought a harp; it has ten strings. You were singing this yourselves a little earlier on, before I began to speak. You were my chorus. You were singing, weren't you, earlier on: *O God, I will sing you a new song, on a harp of ten strings I will play to you* (Ps 144:9)? Now I am strumming these ten strings. Why is the sound of God's harp sour? Let us all play on the ten-stringed harp. I am not singing you something that you are not meant to do. You see, the decalogue of the law has ten commandments.“²⁷

As a brilliant rhetor, trained in the school of Cicero, he knows that a good speaker should be orator and actor at the same time. In fact, the idea of a rhetor as an actor was quite common in Graeco-Roman antiquity. In this regard Cicero states:

„For there are no lawsuits or contentions to compel mankind to sit through bad acting on the stage, as they would bear with indifferent oratory in court. Therefore our orator must carefully see to it, that he not only contents those whom it is necessary to satisfy, but is wonderful as well in the eyes of such as have the right to judge freely.“²⁸

²⁷ Augustinus, *Sermo* 9,6, CCL 41, 117 sq.: „Putate me cytharoadum esse, quid vobis possem amplius canere? Ecce psalterium fero, decem chordas habet. Hoc vos paulo ante cantastis, antequam inciperem loqui. Chorus meus vos fuistis. Nonne vos paulo ante cantastis: Deus canticum novum cantabo tibi, in psalterio decem chordarum psallam tibi? Ipsas decem chordas modo percutio. Quare amara est vox psalterii Dei? Psallamus omnes in psalterio decem chordarum. Non hoc vobis canto quod vos non faciatis. Decalogus enim legis decem praecepta habet.“

²⁸ Cicero, *De oratore* I,26, 46: „Nullae enim lites neque controversiae sunt, quae cogant homines, sicut in foro non bonos oratores, item in theatro actores

From Augustine's personal testimony it becomes evident how strong and passionate was his sense of beauty²⁹ (cf. Pontet 1944, 91). In fact, he mentions this topic quite frequently, especially in his *Confessions* where we learn that already as a boy he was fascinated by theatrical performances.³⁰ However, after his conversion Augustine continuously points to the malice of such theatrical shows which spoil the morals of good people and, consequently, he does everything to turn them away from such entertainment:

„For example, have you seen a brother running off to the theatre? If the zeal for the house of God consumes you, restrain him, warn him, show your disappointment“³¹

He comes back to the topic of the theatre also in the first book of his *De doctrina christiana* where we read:

„If, for example, in the theatres of godlessness has a favorite actor, and enjoys his art as a great, not to say the greatest good, he also loves all those who share his love for this actor, not loving them for their own sakes, but on account of the man they all love together...“³²

malos perpeti. Est igitur oratori diligenter providendum, non uti eis satis faciat quibus necesse est, sed uti iis ipsis admirabilis esse videatur quibus libere liceat iudicare.“, translation 83-86.

²⁹ Augustine's interest in beauty is also well attested by his lost treatise *De pulchro et apto*, composed in Carthage some time between the years 374 and 383 which is said to have Neo-Platonic traits. Cf. Augustinus, *Confessiones* IV,13,20, CCL 27, 50 sq.

³⁰ Cf. for instance Augustinus, *Confessiones* I,10,16; III,2,2; IV,2,2; IV,14,22, CCL 27, 9, 27 sq., 40 sq., 51.

³¹ Augustinus, *Tractatus in Iohannis Evangelium* 10,9, CCL 36, 106: „... vides fratrem currere ad theatrum? Prohibe, mone, contristare, si zelus domus Dei comedit te.“, translation WSA III/12, 206.

³² Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana* I,29,30, CCL 32, 23: „Si enim in theatri nequitiae, qui aliquem diligit histrionem et tamquam magno vel etiam summo bono eius arte perfruitur, omnes diligit, qui se cum eum diligunt, non propter illos, sed propter eum, quem pariter diligunt“, translation WSA I/11, 119.

However, in developing this image, he goes even further and shifts the whole problem to a moral level when he compares man's conscience to a theatre where Christ is a spectator watching our struggle in which mind and body fight together.³³

4. *Spectaculum Christianum*

That is why Augustine wishes to offer a kind of show during his sermons not in order to be applauded but in order to make his believers praise the Lord who had created them all. So he offers to those who prefer games in the circus images of the ring where a charioteer controlling firmly four horses is compared to the Lord controlling various vices, or where the acrobat walking on a tightrope is compared to Peter walking on the sea. In his exegetical homily on Psalm 39(40), preached probably in Carthage on July 14, 413 (cf. La Bonnardière 1971, 79; Fiedrowicz 1997, 432), we find this beautiful passage in which the preacher promotes a Christian spectacle instead of an acrobat's show:

„What shall we do, then? Let us give him other wonderful things to watch, in place of the shows he has given up. And what kind of entertainments are we going to offer to a Christian man or woman, whom we want to wean away from those other shows? I give thanks to the Lord our God, for in this next verse of the psalm he has indicated what shows we must provide and put on for show-addicts who want shows. Our convert has turned away from the circus, from the theatre, from the fights in the stadium, so let him inquire what there is to look at among us; yes, by all means let him inquire, for we do not want to leave him with no spectacle to enjoy. What shall we give him instead? Listen to the next verse: *You have wrought many wondrous deeds, O Lord my God*. He used to watch prodigies performed by human beings, let him now watch God's wondrous deeds. Many are the wondrous feats of the Lord, so let him look at them. Why

³³ Cf. Augustinus, *Sermo* 154A, MA 1, 602: „Spectat te ergo Christus pugnantem. Theatrum est conscientia tua, ubi duo contendunt, mens et caro.“; see also *Sermo* 18D,2, Dolbeau 211.

did they ever become worthless in his eyes? He applauds the charioteer who controls four horses which run their course without slipping or stumbling; but has the Lord not performed feats just as wonderful in the spiritual sphere? Let him control licentiousness, let him control cowardice, control injustice, control rashness; let him, I mean, control the passions which, when they fall into excess, produce those vices. Let him harness them and subject them to himself, and hold the reins, and not be whirled away; let him steer where he chooses, and not be dragged off in a direction where he does not want to go. He was used to applauding a charioteer, and as a charioteer he will be applauded; he used to shout for a charioteer to be invested with the victor's insignia, but he himself will be clothed with immortality. These rewards, and these wonderful events, God provides. He shouts to us from heaven, "I am watching you. Fight bravely, I will help you; win, and I will crown you." *You have wrought many wondrous deeds, O Lord my God; deep are your thoughts and no one is like you.* Now consider an actor. After much practice a man has learned to walk a tightrope, and as he hangs balancing there he has you hanging in suspense. But look at one who achieves feats even more worth watching. Your acrobat has learned to walk on a rope, but he has never made anyone walk on the sea, has he?"³⁴

³⁴ Augustinus, *Enarratio in Psalmum 39,9*, CCL 38, 432: „Quid ergo facimus, fratres? Dimissuri eum sumus sine spectaculo? Morietur, non subsistet, non nos sequetur. Quid ergo facimus? Demus pro spectaculis spectacula. Et quae spectacula daturi sumus christiano homini, quem volumus ab illis spectaculis revocare? Gratias ago Domino Deo nostro; sequenti versu psalmi ostendit nobis, quae spectatoribus spectare volentibus spectacula praebere et ostendere debeamus. Ecce aversus fuerit a circo, a teatro, ab amphitheatro, quaerat quod spectet, prorsus quaerat; non eum relinquimus sine spectaculo. Quid pro illis dabimus? Audi quid sequitur: multa fecisti tu, Domine Deus meus, mirabilia tua. Miracula hominum intuebatur, intendat mirabilia Dei. Multa fecit Dominus mirabilia sua; haec respiciat. Quare illi viluerunt? Aurigam laudat regentem quattuor equos, et sine labe atque offensione currentes; forte talia miracula

The imagination of those who like theatre might be easily seized by this colorful and vivacious picture Augustine draws in front of his audience. Moreover, we may admit that he offers them a kind of a „one man show“. Only then we realize how far he was able to go in his desire to hold the attention of his hearers. In addition to that, even today we can be pleased by reading this Latin text soaked with the folk rhetoric which manifests itself mostly by the use of rhetorical questions, fictitious dialogues, short sentences often linked asyndetically, frequent repetitions of certain words, as well as by the use of anaphors which remind us of the fact that here we deal with a spontaneous and improvised speech.

Besides that, in case of a less educated audience, *delectatio* might have been achieved by the image of a charioteer controlling four horses that they used to admire in the circus. On the other hand, more educated Christians could find pleasure in this image since it reminded them of Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus*³⁵ where the charioteer controls the passions. In addition, we can observe Stoic reminiscences in the part where Augustine says: „...let him steer where he chooses, and not be dragged off in a direction where he does not want to go“ (*ducat quo vult, non trahatur quo non vult*). In fact, here we deal with an adapted form of Seneca's sentence from his *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*: „Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt.“³⁶ However, it is not the only context where we come across this citation. Augustine evokes it also in another place where he says:

spiritalia non fecit Dominus? Regat luxuriam, regat ignaviam, regat iniustitiam, regat imprudentiam, motus istos qui nimium lapsi haec vitia faciunt, regat et subdat sibi, et teneat habenas, et non rapiatur; ducat quo vult, non trahatur quo non vult. Aurigam laudabat, auriga laudabitur; clamabat ut auriga veste cooperiretur, immortalitate vestietur. Haec munera, haec spectacula edit Deus. Clamat de caelo: specto vos; luctamini, adiuvabo; vincite, coronabo. Multa fecisti tu, Domine Deus meus, mirabilia tua; et cogitationibus tuis non est qui similis sit tibi. Nunc specta histrionem. Didicit enim homo magno studio in fune ambulare, et pendens te suspendit. Illum adtende editorem maiorum spectaculorum. Didicit iste in fune ambulare, numquid fecit in mari ambulare?“, translation WSA III/16, 205.

³⁵ Cf. Plato, *Faidros* 246a-b, 225 sq.

³⁶ Seneca, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* 107,11, 513.

„Father supreme, You ruler of the lofty heavens,
Lead me where'er it is Your pleasure; I will give.

...

The Fates do lead the man that follows willing;
But the man that is unwilling, him they drag.”³⁷

These references to Seneca testify to Augustine's wide-ranging, though at times critical, uses of Stoicism. Although its influence is especially discernible during the period from his composition of the Cassiciacum dialogues until his completion of the first book of *De libero arbitrio* (386-388), however, Stoic presence is evident at every stage of Augustine's career. Occasionally, he appropriates its teachings to suit his diverse needs as an apologist or exegete, in other cases he employs them in a highly selective manner, correcting them with teachings drawn from Christian and pagan sources. In other places, Augustine opposes Stoic positions or merely refers to them for polemical purposes. Nevertheless, as rightly observes Fitzgerald (1999, 817-818), in connection with Augustine's usage of Stoicism, one should not overlook the crucial role played by Neoplatonism. No doubt that some Stoic insights penetrate also into Augustine's preaching regardless the fact whether his faithful were aware of it or not. Finally, in connection with the topic we can recall another Stoic aphorism to which Augustine refers in his *Homily on Psalm 127* where we read: „Get out of the way, it's our show now. The whole life of the human race, a life of trial and temptation, is no more than a show played out on a stage...”³⁸ Once again, he draws his inspiration in Seneca's letters³⁹ and this idea would survive throughout the following centuries and would find its expression also in great masters of art, such as Shakespeare, who in his play *As you like it* puts in

³⁷ Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* V,8, CCL 47, 135-136: „Duc, summe pater alti que dominator poli, quocumque placuit, nulla parendi mora est. Adsum impiger: fac nolle, comitabor gemens malus que patiar, facere quod licuit bono.”, translation Dyson, 369.

³⁸ Augustinus, *Enarratio in Psalmum 127*,15, CSEL 95/3, 226: „Eia, cogitate ire hinc, agamus et nos mimum nostrum. Mimus est enim generis humani tota vita tentationis...””, translation WSA III/20, 113.

³⁹ Cf. Seneca, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* 80,7, 305.

the mouth of Jacques these melancholic words: „All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players ...“⁴⁰

5. Conclusion

Undoubtedly, we could find many more examples of the kind throughout Augustine’s oeuvre. However, I believe these might suffice to support and illustrate my argumentation in this paper. Augustine is apparently a heir of the triple tradition: First of all, he was deeply rooted in Graeco-Roman culture which provided him with the grounds for his homiletic theory; secondly, his whole life was permeated by Holy Scriptures which he was unceasingly expounding to his faithful; and finally, he drew inspiration in his own imagination and in the world that surrounded him. And it is precisely this triple tradition thanks to which he became an excellent preacher who was able to get use of classical rhetoric in the way that suited his Christian purposes.

In his preaching activity he did not fear to use the advantages of a moderate style producing *delectatio* in his audience with a view to instructing them in Christian doctrines. For these purposes he employs several images which could please his faithful, among which the image of a theatre stands out. In case of a more educated audience it could help him hold their attention longer, even when dealing with the topics they had already been familiar with. Moreover, uneducated people can also enjoy such embellished speech and be moved by it.

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⁴⁰ Shakespeare, *As you like it* II,7.

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