

**Słowa kluczowe:** św. Augustyn, ontologizm, iluminacja, mistyka, doświadczenie religijne, intuicja, duchowość

**Keywords:** St. Augustine, ontologism, divine illumination, mysticism, religious experience, Augustinian intuition, spirituality

**Robert Warchał<sup>1</sup>**

UNIwersytet Papieski Jana Pawła II w Krakowie, POLSKA

ORCID: 0000-0002-9573-3818

# DIVINE ILLUMINATION AND THE MYSTICAL PATH IN ST. AUGUSTINE'S THEOLOGY

Instead of proposing a systematic theory of cognition or being, Augustine of Hippo draws a dynamic map of man's spiritual path – a path in which cognition, existential experience and mystical intuition intertwine. At its core is the conviction that the cognitive act cannot be separated from the relationship with the transcendent source of truth – God. The theory of illumination, a central axis of Augustine's epistemology, not only redefines the Platonic scheme of light and vision, but also intertwines with a deeply personal experience of grace, the presence of the Word and contemplation. The structure of this paper is based on four interrelated parts, which aim to show the coherence of Augustine's epistemological and mystical perspectives. First, the concept of cognition will be presented, in which rational analysis is intertwined with the experience of inner illumination as constitutive moments in the process of revealing the truth of Revelation. This will be followed by an analysis of the theory of illumination, understood not as a unified doctrine, but as a dynamic

<sup>1</sup> **Dr Robert Warchał** jest doktorem nauk humanistycznych, absolwentem Uniwersytetu Papieskiego Jana Pawła II w Krakowie (ul. Kanonicza 9/305, 31-002 Kraków), gdzie ukończył studia magisterskie z teologii oraz studia doktoranckie z filozofii. Jest nauczycielem filozofii, religii i etyki w XLIII Liceum Ogólnokształcącym im. Zofii Chrzanowskiej w Krakowie oraz w Zespole Szkół im. ks. kard. A.S. Sapiehy MIRiP. Jego najnowsze publikacje obejmują literaturę piękną, jak "Opus Incarnatum" (2024), oraz artykuły naukowe, takie jak "The concept of freedom in the thought of St. Augustine," opublikowany w "Logos i Ethos" (2023), oraz "Unraveling immortality and the genesis of human soul in St. Augustine's selected works," opublikowany w "Humaniorze" (2023). Doktor Warchał bada głównie filozofię Plotyna oraz św. Augustyna, koncentrując się na tematach wolności, duchowości i ontologii.

field of interpretation – on the one hand emphasizing the transcendent character of divine light, and on the other showing the inner search for truth as a participation of the intellect in a reality that transcends sensuality. The third part will be devoted to the anthropological-cognitive triad characteristic of Augustinian reflection, which points to the profound unity of thinking (*cogitatio*), existing (*esse*), and self-directed thought (*cogitatio sui*). The whole will close with a consideration of the place of illumination in the relationship between intellectual and spiritual experience, demonstrating its importance for both mysticism and Christian religious anthropology.

Many works devoted to Augustine's biography bear witness to the fact that his spiritual temperament never fails to arouse interest. In the Confessions alone, we find many descriptions of the rich religiosity of this remarkable man. Experts on his philosophy are divided on the interpretation of the meaning of mystical experience. Some commentators (A. Trapè, H. Marrou) consider Augustine to be a great mystic, while other scholars do not find mystical experiences in his biography and prefer to speak of a broad religiousness. The reason for this is that supernatural experiences have an individual dimension, so they are not uniform and often depend on the individual and the particular tradition. When analysing the biographies of selected saints, the most common theme is their deep knowledge of the things of God, which can be accompanied by phenomena such as ecstasy or a special kind of vision that is an expression of contemplation and developed asceticism.

The common denominator that unites the different opinions expressed is Augustine's profound vivacity and specific temperament. Such a thesis is propounded by S. Kowalczyk, who describes various stages in his spiritual development. The first of these is the preparatory stage, which includes the contemplation of a conscious experience of the beauty of nature. The Lublin theologian also mentions a feeling of despondency and a desire for inner transformation. This is not the despondency of the dark night, which is the domain of the mystical life, but rather a consciousness linked to the action of the conscience, which analyses the rightness of human behaviour. Augustine writes: „I shudder inasmuch as I am unlike it; and I burn inasmuch as I am like it<sup>2</sup>” (*Confessionum*, XI, 9, 11). The object of the anxiety expressed is the negative sensations that can define the higher stage of the contemplative life. Seen in this way, piety does not only penetrate the peripheral areas of human sensations, but fills the entire intentionality of the person, in both volitional and somatic aspects (Lebreton, 1938; Klenk, 1942; Henry, 1962).

When speaking of faith, St. Augustine always stressed its universality and the need to penetrate into the content of the truths received, the task of which

2 „Et inhorresco et inardesco: inhorresco, in quantum dissimilis ei sum, inardesco, in quantum similis ei sum”.

should be that of inner transformation resulting from the Gospel message. Sin and negative affections can make it difficult to come closer to God, and such a state is present at the moment of excessive fascination with earthly categories (*De Trinitate*, XII, XI, 16). In Augustine's interpretation, religious life should consist of an introspective relationship with the mercy of the Creator. The author mentions: "They do not cry out against me, those whom I no longer fear, when I confess to You what my soul desires, my God, and I am content with the reproach of my evil ways, and I am content with the reproach of my evil ways, so that I may love Your good ways"<sup>3</sup> (*Confessionum*, I, 13, 22). At the heart of this renewal is kerygmatic love, conceived as a model of Trinitarian life. Augustine recognised the participation of the intellect in religious life; for him, theological knowledge is all the more complete the more it is rooted in an attitude of prayer and asceticism. The thinker from Thagaste distinguished two elements in this regard: normative and doctrinal (good and truth). The author believed that union with God is achieved through Christian renewal, work on oneself and a moral attitude resulting from the fulfilment of the tasks contained in the instructions of the Evangelists (*De vera religione*, XLVI-87).

Followers of Augustine's philosophy describe several manifestations of religious experience, particularly in relation to the question of introspection. The first is the phenomenological-intuitive approach, which is concerned with direct knowledge of the sphere of the sacred. This is how J. Hessen interprets Augustine's views, according to which God is the object of intellectual vision (Hessen, 1931). Augustine writes of different kinds of spiritual vision, the first of which is *visio corporalis*, which is achieved through the senses and thus refers specifically to empiricism in the broadest sense. Another meaning is spiritual vision, which is the domain of the spiritual life. In the latter sense, it is in a sense the cause of the existence of bodily vision. Augustine eloquently states: „Since even if the form of the body, which was corporeally perceived, be withdrawn, its likeness remains in the memory, to which the will may again direct its eye, so as to be formed thence from within, as the sense was formed from without by the presentation of the sensible body"<sup>4</sup> (*De Trinitate*, XI, III, 6). Spiritual vision, then, is the activity of a thought made conscious by the image of an image stored in the memory, and, thanks to the nature of the mind, becomes partially independent of the *visio corporalis*, it can create sense images of

3 „Non clament aduersus me quos iam non timeo, dum confiteor tibi quae vult anima mea, Deus meus, et adquiesco in reprehensione malarum viarum mearum, et adquiesco in reprehensione malarum viarum mearum, ut diligam bonas vias tuas”.

4 „Quia etiam detracta specie corporis quae corporaliter sentiebatur, remanet in memoria similitudo eius, quorsus voluntas convertat aciem ut inde formetur intrinsecus, sicut ex corpore obiecto sensibili sensus extrinsecus formabatur”.

things never seen before. Its activity includes all absent material objects to which we return through memory (*De Genesi ad Litteram libri duodecim*, I, 12, 24).

The above description allows us to formulate two important insights. First, each object of the *visio corporalis* has a given content; Second, a sensory image, which could be a religious memory, for example, is the basis of my individual cognition. Seen in this way, the cognitive process of human memory is in a sense universal and objective. It is not, of course, an eyewitness form of objectivity in which private reflections become the object of public verification, but an aspect that enables human beings to interact with each other. Augustine's proposal avoids either of the extremes of a radical idealism detached from temporality and a scepticism that suspends judgements in the context of the search for truth. The dimension of prayer is primarily the domain of human thought, *orabo spiritu, orabo et mente*. The case for the action of the soul in the context of intentionality is similarly presented. The philosopher explains:

For spiritual vision is more excellent than bodily vision, and again intellectual vision is more excellent than spiritual. For bodily vision cannot exist without spiritual vision (...), for if this were not so, there would not be that sense by which things lying outside are perceived. But spiritual vision can indeed occur without bodily vision, when the likenesses of absent bodies appear in the spirit, and many are formed at will, or are shown apart from the will (*De Genesi ad Litteram libri duodecim*, XII 24, 51)<sup>5</sup>.

According to Augustine, the *visio spiritualis* is the highest level of human knowledge and at the same time a gift and work of God's grace. The direct nature of this vision is particularly emphasised by the terms *videre* and *tangere*. As S. Gaworek rightly notes, both terms refer primarily to sensory perception, but used metaphorically they can describe mystical experience. It is a state in which the soul is 'detached' from the body in such a way that all sense activity is temporarily suspended. According to S. Gaworek (2011), the direct granting of God belongs to the same kind of knowledge as the state of rapture and spiritual ecstasy.

Augustine's specific understanding of cognitive functions enabled him to formulate a not-easy question related to human intuition. The term is usually asso-

5 „Praestantior est enim visio spiritualis quam corporalis, et rursus praestantior intellectualis quam spiritalis. Corporalis enim sine spiritali esse non potest (...) quod si non fieret, nec sensus ille esset, quo ea quae extrinsecus adiacent, sentiuntur. At vero spiritalis visio etiam sine corporali fieri potest, cum absentium corporum similitudines in spiritu apparent, et finguntur multae pro arbitrio, vel praeter arbitrium demonstrantur”.

ciated with some kind of contemplation, premonition or spiritual insight into the nature of things. This multifaceted nature makes the concept of Augustinian intuition difficult to define. Nevertheless, most scholars accept the thesis of Augustine's doctrine that recognises in human knowledge the mystical intuition of the presence of God (Ivaňka, 1936). In particular, J. Hessen, already mentioned, has commented on this subject. The essential point of his philosophy is the division of the three spheres (essence, existence and value) to which the three fundamental authorities are subordinated, so that rational intuition is attributed to discursive action, while the author relates volitional and emotional intuition to essence, existence and value. It seems clear that J. Hessen (1947) defines the subject under discussion in terms of gnoseological-cognitive aspects, where the plane of action is the human intellect, feeling, and will. The proposed division is not entirely new, for in some of Augustine's dialogues we also find a distinction between mental-intuitive and mental-discursive action, but what distinguishes J. Hessen's view is the primacy of intuition of the will and emotion over the action of the intellect (Augustinus, *De ordine* II, XI-30). Hessen's interpretation went so far as to consider the divine element as a reality almost completely independent of rational cognition, and consequently excluded the possibility of rational discourse from mystical experience (Gaworek, 2011). In this connection, S. Zabielski writes: „For Hessen, God is an axiological power, he is above all the highest value, and the source of the knowledge of value is not the intellect but irrational experience (...). Religious experience, then, is indeed an experience of value. Although it is based on the interaction of all the functions of the soul, the emotional factor plays the leading role” (Zabielski, 2003, p. 117). It is impossible not to see that the German thinker reduces religious experience and experience exclusively to acts of human experience. J. Ratzinger, on the other hand, stresses that the separation of the realm of faith from metaphysics is a modern phenomenon and alien to Augustine's theology. Augustine himself describes his position in terms of the three concepts already discussed: *visio corporalis*, *spiritualis*, and *intellectualis*. In some works, our philosopher also uses the term indirect vision, which is realised through the image reflected in the mirror of the soul. Augustine notes that this type of vision enriches the religious reflections of the believer:

Likewise, spiritual vision requires intellectual vision in order to be judged, but this intellectual vision does not require the lower spiritual one; and thus bodily vision is subject to spiritual, and both to intellectual. For we also see that the soul, through spiritual vision, judges bodily things, but not otherwise than by the light of reason, by which it is also itself judged. Wherefore I do not think it absurd or inappropriate to suppose that spiritual

vision occupies a kind of middle position between the intellectual and the bodily (*De Genesi ad Litteram libri duodecim*, XII 24, 51)<sup>6</sup>.

Augustine's spiritual analyses continue to inspire admiration and, in a sense, raise the question of the extent to which his witness can be mystical. In the Christian tradition it is sometimes said that God himself enters into a special relationship for the purpose of revealing certain truths of faith, so that the mystic is a chosen person, but not in the sense that his role is predetermined. It is not a matter of some kind of compulsion but, like the prophets, a conscious response to a calling. There are many studies on the mystical experience, so it is worth looking at the words of Augustine, who describes his own experience as an expression of the Christian journey. While in Ostia, the author presents us with three stages of mystical experience. The first is divided into contemplation of the natural world and going beyond the realm of the senses. His spiritual experience is one of awe and contemplation of the beauty that results from the work of creation. Augustine explains:

And You sent Your hand from above, and drew my soul out of that profound darkness, when my mother, Your faithful one, wept to You on my behalf more than mothers are wont to weep the bodily death of their children. For she saw that I was dead by that faith and spirit which she had from You, and You heard her, O Lord. You heard her, and despised not her tears, when, pouring down, they watered the earth under her eyes in every place where she prayed; yea, You heard her (*Confessionum*, III, 11, 19)<sup>7</sup>.

Augustine lets the reader know that the theme evoked is inherent in human existence, but not in the sense of fatalism, but through the witness of mercy expressed through the biblical virtue of *agape* (*Confessionum*, IX, 2, 3). It is this form of religiosity that shows us a certain affinity with later mystics such as St. Faustina Kowalska or even St. John of the Cross. This is not a comparative interpretation, but a free analogy. Of course, their temperaments were fundamentally different, but

6 „Item spiritalis visio indiget intellectuali ut diiudicetur, intellectualis autem ista spiritali inferiore non indiget; ac per hoc spiritali corporalis, intellectuali autem utraque subiecta est (. ...). Quapropter non absurde neque inconvenienter arbitror spiritalem visionem inter intellectualem et corporalem tamquam medietatem quamdam obtinere”.

7 „Et misisti manum tuam ex alto, et de hac profunda caligine eruisti animam meam, cum pro me fleret ad te mea mater, fidelis tua, amplius quam flent matres corporea funera. Videbat enim illa mortem meam ex fide et spiritu, quem habebat ex te, et exaudisti eam, Domine. Exaudisti eam nec despexisti lacrimas eius, cum profluentes rigarent terram sub oculis eius in omni loco orationis eius: exaudisti eam”.

one cannot help noticing that they all had an experiential share in the life of God (*Confessionum*, X, 27, 28).

## DESIRE FOR GOD LIES AT THE HEART OF HUMAN NATURE

In Augustine's personal development we find at the same time high intellectual demands and deep mystical aspirations, which developed in him an attitude of repentance and godliness. The following words may serve as an example: „The which fruits having sprung forth from the earth, behold, because it is good; *Genesis* 1:12 and let our temporary light burst forth; *Isaiah* 58:8 and let us, from this inferior fruit of action, possessing the delights of contemplation and of the Word of Life above, let us appear as lights in the world, *Philippians* 2:15 clinging to the firmament of Your Scripture<sup>8</sup>” (*Confessionum*, XIII, 18, 22). We recall that, after his conversion, Augustine began to introduce evangelical values and norms into his own life, which led him to affective prayer and a training involving the mastery of the senses. This action is rich in moral purification and signifies an attempt to turn away from evil, that is, to orient our author towards the perspective of holiness. Augustine confides: „But now are my years spent in mourning. And You, O Lord, art my comfort, my Father everlasting. But I have been divided amid times, the order of which I know not; and my thoughts, even the inmost bowels of my soul, are mangled with tumultuous varieties, until I flow together unto You, purged and molten in the fire of Your love<sup>9</sup>” (*Confessionum*, XI, 29, 39). These very words allude to the theology of Saint Paul who writes of the personal split between the tendencies of the inner man and the carnal-sensual inclinations (O'Collins & Farrugia, 2002). The aretological process of growth consists in the gradual interiorisation of the mysteries of Revelation, which means that the realisation of the principles of the Gospel is the fruit of an interior work on oneself and of the love of God in others. This position allows us to draw two important conclusions: First, we can describe the mysticism of Hippo as essential, since the experience is the end and culmination of an action conceived as a way of life, and second, the ascetic effort must abound in sincere love, goodness, and also justice (*De Trinitate*, I, VIII, 17 ). Let us quote the testimony of our author: „Now it is possible to know God more than a brother;

8 „Quibus in terra natis fructibus vide, quia bonum est, et erumpat temporaria lux nostra, et de ista inferiore fruge actionis in delicias contemplationis verbum vitae superius obtinentes appareamus sicut luminaria in mundo cohaerentes firmamento Scripturae tuae”.

9 „Nunc vero anni mei in gemitibus, et tu solacium meum, Domine, Pater meus aeternus es; at ego in tempora dissilui, quorum ordinem nescio, et tumultuosis varietatibus dilaniantur cogitationes meae, intima viscera animae meae, donec in te confluum purgatus et liquidus igne amoris tui”.



clearly more known, because more present; more known, because more within; more known, because more certain. Embrace the love of God, and by love embrace God<sup>10</sup> (*De Trinitate*, VIII, VIII, 12). In his words, contemplation must be combined with spiritual insight and the presence of God's gift. Particularly noteworthy is the current of devotion, which is expressed in a deep desire for union, achieved through a moral renewal of life. Augustine gives particular expression to this when he says: „Behold, I am soaring by my mind towards You who remainest above me. I will also pass beyond this power of mine which is called memory, wishful to reach You whence You can be reached, and to cleave unto You whence it is possible to cleave unto You<sup>11</sup>” (*Confessionum*, X, 17,26). Ecstasy and rapture are described as a brief moment followed by a return to ordinary reality<sup>12</sup>. The author reveals to us the two great spheres of the mystical life, the first being knowledge *par excellence* and thus a kind of culmination of the teleology of faith, and the second being his personal commitment to the spiritual transcendence of limits.

For St. Augustine of Hippo, the statements contained in the commentary on *Psalms* 41 will also be signs of mystical experience. In this work, the author reveals to us various contemplative states: the restlessness of the soul, the thirst for grace, spiritual exaltation, incorporation into the faith of the Church and, finally, the sublime moment of vision of God. This strong will to cling to the unchanging truth became a dominant feature of his theology and made him one of those who achieved this goal. Augustine proclaims:

„That I might touch Him, I have meditated on these things, and have poured out my soul above myself. When shall my soul attain to that which is above my soul, unless my soul should pour itself out above itself? For if it remained in itself, it would see nothing but itself; and when it sees itself, it does not see its God. (...) I have meditated, nevertheless, on the inquiry after my God; and through the things that are made, desiring to per-

10 „Ecce iam potest notio rem Deum habere quam fratrem; plane notio rem, quia praesentio rem; notio rem, quia interio rem; notio rem, quia certio rem. Amplectere dilectionem Deum et dilectione amplectere Deum”.

11 „Ecce ego ascendens per animum meum ad te, qui desuper mihi manes, transibo et istam vim meam, quae memoria vocatur, volens te attingere, unde attingi potes, et inhaerere tibi, unde inhaereri tibi potest”.

12 „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 perambulavimus gradatim cuncta corporalia et ipsum caelum, unde sol et luna et stellae lucent super terram. Et adhuc ascendebamus interius cogitando et loquendo et mirando opera tua et venimus in mentes nostras et transcendimus eas, ut attingeremus regionem ubertatis indeficientis, ubi pascis Israel in aeternum veritate pabulo, et ibi vita sapientia est, per quam fiunt omnia ista, et quae fuerunt et quae futura sunt, et ipsa non fit, sed sic est, ut fuit, et sic erit semper” *Confessionum*, IX, 10.24 (PL 32).

ceive the invisible things of my God, I have poured out my soul above myself. And now there remains not any one whom I may touch, but my God. For the house of my God is above my soul: there He dwells, from thence He looks upon me, from thence He made me, from thence He governs me, from thence He advises me, from thence He arouses me, from thence He calls me, from thence He directs me, from thence He leads me, from thence He brings me to Himself (*Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 41, 8)<sup>13</sup>.

The heights of spirituality described are preceded by deep sensitivity, purification and prayer. Augustine recognises in his experience an indirect knowledge of the realm of the sacred, which is confirmed by statements that speak of “touching” divine reality in a fleeting and brief way. In his statements, the author confirms that one of the conditions of mystical knowledge is the observance of ethical norms and constant spiritual development, because without the fulfilment of the commandments, man will not be able to recognise their source and their author. In the testimonies cited, we find a description of the inner struggle in the search for God *ex tota anima tua et ex tota fortitudine tua*, directed towards ultimate union with Him. It is therefore worth considering Augustine’s stance towards illumination, as it provides a key reference point for understanding how religious experience integrates the personal dimension of man. The theory of the illumination of the mind shows that religious cognition is not the result of human efforts alone but is the result of an inner approach to the source of all being. It is in dialogue with a transcendent reality that God reveals Himself as the source of meaning and truth, directing the human heart towards the fullness of life in union with Him. This kind of religiosity transcends intellectual considerations, becoming a living encounter that renews the human mind and heart by giving them an ultimate purpose in the perspective of salvation.

13 „Ergo, ut eum tangerem: Haec meditatus sum, et effudi super me animam meam. Quando anima mea contingeret quod super animam meam quaeritur, nisi anima mea super seipsam effunderetur? Si enim in seipsa remaneret, nihil aliud quam se videret: et cum se videret, non utique Deum suum videret. (...) meditatus sum tamen inquisitionem Dei mei, et per ea quae facta sunt, invisibilia Dei mei cupiens intellecta conspicerere, effudi super me animam meam; et non iam restat quem tangam, nisi Deum meum. Ibi enim domus Dei mei, super animam meam: ibi habitat, inde me prospicit, inde me creavit, inde me gubernat, inde mihi consulit, inde me excitat, inde me vocat, inde me dirigit, inde me ducit, inde me perducit”.

## TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF LIGHT

Reflections on the concept of ontologism should begin with a review of the etymology and scope of the title word, which is an artificial construction, i.e., a grammatically adapted cluster of two Greek words: τὸ ὄν and λόγος (Warchał, 2019). Although the term was first used by the Italian philosopher V. Gioberti in his *Introduction to the Study of Philosophy*, published in 1840, the doctrine had already been propounded by the French philosopher N. Malebranche (Gioberti, 1939). Despite its clear etymology, it is not easy to determine the meaning of the word ontologism, the difficulty being that the above term refers to a number of different views that often seem irreconcilable. Roughly speaking, it is the thesis according to which every human spiritual cognition has a necessary basis which guarantees its possibility in a direct view of the absolute divine Being (Rahner & Vorgrimler, 1987). This approach is often referred to as ‘seeing in God’, according to which man, through illumination, can directly and intuitively know the Creator and His nature, from which are derived the exemplary ideas of all entities. Ontologism is also called a conception that recognises the primacy of metaphysics over the theory of knowledge, and in epistemology itself is intuitionistic, but without rejecting speculative rationality. Contrary to some philosophical traditions, empirical reality is known indirectly, through the innate idea of being that resides in our minds.

Advocates of ontologism have claimed to draw on the Augustinian tradition in their reasoning. Such a thesis was propounded by the aforementioned N. Malebranche. He was followed by other thinkers such as A. Rosmini-Serbati, V. Gioberti, G. C. Ubaghs, F. Hugonin and M. F. Sciacca (Kita, 2012). The reference to the thought of the Bishop of Hippo sufficiently indicates that the representatives of this direction did not consider their beliefs to be new by suggesting that it was Augustine who proclaimed the truth of seeing in God. According to this theory, all causality – both in the realm of cognition and in the realm of action – is to be attributed to God alone, with man merely providing the opportunity for this activity to come to fruition in both domains. Of course, the quoted theme refers not so much to the theory of illumination as such but to the concept called occasionalism, which is characteristic of the thought of N. Malebranche<sup>14</sup>.

Augustine himself did not deal with this complex issue directly, nor did he anywhere state that we see bodies in God. However, it cannot be denied that some of his statements, especially when taken out of context, can invite illuminist interpretations. The problem under discussion therefore calls for a deeper analysis.

14 In the history of philosophy, occasionalism and illumination theory may have appeared together, but they are neither identical nor necessarily related.

This seems warranted, especially when we take into account some contemporary studies, from which it is clear that Augustine did not overlook the role of sense cognition, and that his position on the issue of implicit ontologism raises many doubts. The question of the role of enlightenment in Augustine's thought discussed above, including its possible ontological interpretations, is closely related to attempts to understand its impact on human existence. The complexity of this issue means that both its philosophical and theological implications continue to be the subject of intense research and debate.

The theory of illumination is one of the most recognisable themes in the teaching of the Bishop of Hippo, and its impact on human existence has been variously described by Augustinian scholars. The subject is so complex and multifaceted that all attempts to understand it in depth have encountered numerous difficulties. At times they have even led to solutions that may seem divergent or even contradictory. Not surprisingly, the theory under discussion continues to be of keen interest to scientists, theologians, and philosophers alike. Among the commentaries on the impact of illumination on the human person, we can distinguish at least two views with which the importance of this theory is justified. According to the first, man is deprived of independent knowledge and the possibility of objective creation. Proponents of this description suggested that Augustine negated the meaning of science. The position of illuminism seems to be supported by some of the philosopher's statements: „If, then, the images of sensible things are false and cannot be discerned by the senses themselves, and if nothing can be truly perceived unless it is distinguished from what is false, then the senses cannot establish the judgment of truth<sup>15</sup>” (*De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*, 9). It should be mentioned that there are numerous texts in which Augustine emphasises the positive value of the action of the senses (*Soliloquiorum*, II, XX, 34-35. *De quantitate animae*, XX-34). Illumination is not about a direct experience of God, nor is it about receiving some kind of extra-natural enlightenment that questions the value of reason (Conybeare, 2006). All the indications are that in this gnoseology we can speak of different forms and degrees of knowledge. Such a thesis is confirmed by many scholars, for example É. Gilson (1953) rules out any Platonic preexistence by also denying the notion that God has deposited ready-made concepts in us once and for all. According to this interpretation, the enlightenment of the mind takes place when one concentrates inwardly and enables one to personally experience one's contacts with God.

15 „Si igitur sunt imagines sensibilibus falsae, quae discerni ipsis sensibus nequeunt, et nihil percipi potest nisi quod a falso discernitur, non est constitutum iudicium veritatis in sensibus”.

According to the second view, truth is found within the human being and is related to the existential openness of the human being to divine enlightenment. In the *Soliloquies*, for example, Augustine uses the metaphor of the sun of the mind enabling the understanding of conceptual truths (*Soliloquiorum*, I, 15). In his works, he makes it clear that illumination makes it possible for man to participate in truth. One hears here an echo of the theology of St. John, who proclaims: „αὕτη δέ ἐστιν ἡ κρίσις, ὅτι τὸ φῶς ἐλήλυθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον, καὶ ἠγάπησαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι μᾶλλον τὸ σκότος ἢ τὸ φῶς· ἦν γὰρ πονηρὰ αὐτῶν τὰ ἔργα” (John, 3, 19). When we analyse this passage, we are confirmed in the conviction that only the Absolute is the source of light, which does not shine for itself but for all those who live in the truth. In his writings, St. Augustine often touched on the interrelation of these two concepts (*Confessionum*, IV, 15).

As for the question of reminiscence, the philosopher separated the concepts that the soul has created through empiricism from the concepts it creates by considering only itself. The author refers to introspective cognition; in his teaching, an impression is an action that the soul itself performs, hence sense images are not creations of the corporeal world but come from human thought. This is reminiscent of the antecedent of the phenomenological attitude, attributing intelligible acts to the analysis of consciousness. Augustine’s views support the conclusion that the experience of illumination is not a supernatural vision of things that the soul would be expected to see in a perfect world. In contrast to illuminationism, the author bases gnoseology on an introspective discourse, for he separates the images that man has produced through the senses from the concepts discovered through self-knowledge. We read: „The mind, therefore, just as it gathers knowledge of corporeal things through the senses of the body, so also of incorporeal things through itself. Therefore, it knows itself through itself, because it is incorporeal<sup>16</sup>” (*De Trinitate*, IX, III, 3).

Thus, in Augustine’s view, genuine knowledge transcends sensory experience, as it is shaped by the soul’s inward turn and its participation in divine light. In his view, any information acquired must have a definite content, i.e. it is a definite result arising from the cooperation of *intellectus*, *voluntas*, and *cogitatio*. In his statements, the author does not ignore issues concerning empirical cognition, although the truths of faith were more important to him than philosophical issues of natural science. Second, Augustine’s reflections, based on his acceptance of illumination, may provide the impetus for a rediscovery of the creative relationship occurring between the content of faith and human experience. The position postulated by him was enthusiastically used by many later thinkers such as M. Grabmann and M. F. Sciacca.

16 „Mens ergo ipsa sicut corporearum rerum notitias per sensus corporis colligit, sic incorporearum per semetipsam. Ergo et se ipsam per se ipsam novit, quoniam est incorporea”.

## DIVINE ILLUMINATION—EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE QUESTION OF ONTOLOGISM

The title term is one of the most difficult problems of Augustine's doctrine and raises a variety of difficulties, since it balances between a position that speaks of seeing ideas in God and a worldview that recalls the necessary role of impressions. There is no doubt that the participation of reason in eternal and universal truths was an important theopoetic theme for our author. In order to understand this thoroughly, it is necessary to analyse the phenomenology of the nature of light, which is precisely the point of contention for ontologism.

Some experts on Augustinianism have come to the conclusion that the divinely enlightened concepts of *notiones* have no content beyond the judgement by which they become explicit. According to this interpretation, man receives *a priori* cognition principles that are completely independent of empirical knowledge (Gilson, 1943). The recognition of these principles is possible through the inner light of truth and intuition. Other thinkers, however, maintained that Augustine was not an ontologist in the strict sense, although he taught a direct vision of the idea of God. Among others, J. Hessen was one of these. This German philosopher held that knowledge of ideas does not imply insight into their nature. As is well known, the statements of Augustine himself seem to contradict such theories (*De Trinitate*, IX, VI, 9). It seems reasonable to conclude that illumination does not refer to a necessary element, connecting with the data of empiricism, but transcendent to them, which means that the interiority of truth does not exhaust the divine potential of giving it (*Confessionum*, VII, 16-17). Clearly, the light in question is not understood by the author literally, but metaphorically. This is confirmed by a number of statements in which he refers to the analogy between God and the Sun (*De beata vita*, IV-35). Indeed, Augustine writes: „Those things also which are taught in the schools, which no one who understands them doubts in the least to be absolutely true, we must believe to be incapable of being understood, unless they are illuminated by somewhat else, as it were a sun of their own<sup>17</sup>” (*Soliloquiorum*, I, VIII-15). The action of illumination is the archetype of the cognitive powers of spiritual intuition, the issue under discussion is defined as an act of inner vision that is realised in the dimension of being, i.e. ontology (*De Magistro*, XII-39). The above analysis does not necessarily express an exclusively mystical vision, for the philosopher speaks of

17 „Ergo et illa quae in disciplinis traduntur, quae quisquis intellegit, verissima esse nulla dubitatione concedit, credendum est ea non posse intellegi, nisi ab alio quasi suo sole illustrentur. Ergo quomodo in hoc sole tria quaedam licet animadvertere; quod est, quod fulget, quod illuminat: ita in illo secretissimo Deo quem vis intellegere, tria quaedam sunt; quod est, quod intellegitur, et quod caetera facit intellegi”.

various aspects resulting from illumination—the difference being that mysticism—taken as one form of illumination—most often refers to the understanding or discovery of the mysteries of faith. In the treatise *On the Trinity* (XII, XV, 2), the author uses the term immaterial light. This formulation has encountered much controversy and has become a subject of keen interest among those concerned with his philosophy. This is particularly explained by S. Kowalczyk who, like J. Hessen, concludes that Augustine is not an ontologist. We can speak of at least two meanings, the first of which refers to agatology, i.e. the view of ideas and immutable values, while the latter refers to the interiorism of intuition (Kowalczyk, 1987).

In a similar way, the issue under discussion was described by É. Gilson. He also argued that Augustine's doctrine is not characterized by ontologism. According to this view, however, the action of divine concepts on thought does not contain any ontologism, as it is primarily regulative and lacks content (Gilson, 1943). Furthermore, Gilson maintained that the experience of illumination does not limit human freedom; moreover, it corresponds to the regularities of virtue in the moral order, and therefore does not identify with *visio spiritualis*, since truth and moral virtue involve man in his own deficiencies and limitations. This spiritual cognisance, ascribed to the life of man, does not consist in an existential dependence, but is expressed through participation. In some studies, a distinction is made between the mind embracing the truth in ourselves and viewing through the light of God (Gilson, 1943). This position seems legitimate, for what is different is mystical vision and what is natural insight of reason, since illumination is not something external to God, i.e. it is either the light of God or God himself (*De Genesi ad Litteram libri duodecim*, XII, 31. 59). Thus, as can be seen, Augustine distinguishes between the two concepts; the former belongs to the nature of the human mind and makes it possible to recognise truth through the insight of introspective cognition, while the latter consists in giving not so much the content of general concepts as an understanding of their truthfulness and necessity.

The acceptance of illumination does not imply, in Augustine, an active participation in the nature of the Absolute (*De Trinitate*, I, XIII, 31). It is a fact that the author was writing about concepts accessible to the human mind, but the real recognition of these realities was not identified with the acceptance of direct cognition, since truths innate and recognised by reason are not the same as their Creator. Augustine stipulates: „For this is the most evident and universally known light, not only to human flesh but also to beasts and worms; beholding it, you are accustomed to enlarge the image conceived in the heart, and to say that it is the light where God



the Father dwells with his saints<sup>18</sup> (*Contra Faustum manichaeum*, XX, 7). In the quoted passage, we distinguish between three categories; the first concerns material clarity, while the second is the domain of the recognition of concepts and ideas. The author points out the above difference and declares that: „One light is that which is perceived by the eyes; another is that by which, through the eyes, perception takes place. The former is in the body; the latter, though it receives what it perceives through the body, is in the soul<sup>19</sup>” (*De Genesi ad Litteram imperfectum*, V, 24). The light of reason is not the same as supernatural light; the former is a gift received from God and also one of the most important skills by means of which we are able to participate in the inner life of the soul (*De Quantitate Animae*, XIV-24).

The third meaning of illumination is the light of God’s truth. Augustine uses the idea of *veritas* (truth) from the Bible, and even when he talks about truth in judgements or mental understanding, he doesn’t forget the important role of the supernatural (*De vera religione*, XLIX-97). The difference between the ideas is clear: after all, using reason alone may not be enough to discover the truth, which is God (*De Genesi ad Litteram libri duodecim*, IV, 23[40]). After studying the Gospel of St. John (John 1:4), Augustine realised that the Son of Man is the only light we have. This means that the way we think becomes a spiritual act, because Jesus, as the light that we can understand, lets us be part of the supernatural and the rational. In his commentary, St. Augustine of Hippo wrote:

There is indeed a great difference between the knowledge of each thing in the Word of God and the knowledge of it in its own nature: so that the former may rightly be attributed to the day, the latter to the evening. For in comparison with that light which is beheld in the Word of God, all knowledge by which we know a creature in itself can justly be called night; yet it differs so greatly from the error or ignorance of those who do not even know the creature itself, that in comparison to them it may not inappropriately be called day (*De Genesi ad Litteram libri duodecim*, IV, 23[40])<sup>20</sup>.

18 „Hoc enim conspicuum et omni carni, non tantum hominum, verum etiam bestiarum et vermiculorum notissimum lumen intuentes, ex illo conceptam corde phantasiam in immensum soletis augere, et eam lucem dicere ubi Deus Pater habitat cum regnicolis suis”.

19 „Alia est enim lux quae sentitur oculis aliud qua per oculos agitur ut sentiat. Illa enim in corpore, haec autem quamvis per corpus ea quae sentit accipiat, in anima est”.

20 „Multum quippe interest inter cognitionem rei cuiusque in Verbo Dei, et cognitionem eius in natura eius; ut illud merito ad diem pertineat, hoc ad vesperam. In comparatione enim lucis illius quae in Verbo Dei conspicitur, omnis cognitio qua creaturam quamlibet in seipsa novimus, non immerito nox dici potest: quae rursus tantum differt ab errore vel ignorantia eorum qui nec ipsam creaturam sciunt, ut in eius comparatione non incongrue dicatur dies”.



The quotation cited seems to support the thesis of ontologism, but it should be strongly emphasised that the author himself often uses the rich terminology that is characterised by the language of the Bible with its multidimensionality of parables, metaphors, or parabolas. He mostly passes over the parabolic nature of the biblical formulations, sometimes only minimally attempting to explain the more difficult or obscure terms, which is why many issues relating *ex post* to ontologism remain obscure. The reason for this is that Augustine did not consider the ontological priority of being over knowing. With this in mind, it is important to bear in mind the numerous texts that refer to illumination through the visible world of creatures.

The vast majority of scholars disagree on St. Augustine of Hippo adopting the theory of ontologism. Such a view was propounded by the aforementioned É. Gilson. A special position was taken on this issue by F. Cayré (1947) who considered that the object of enlightenment in Augustine's philosophy is factual data, such as the obviousness of existence and the phenomenon of thought defined as the unquestionable form of presence; of course, the higher truth, which is the transcendental reason, i.e. the ontological condition, has a different meaning. According to this view, every logical and moral certainty, in the categorical sense, would be inconceivable without an intuitive view of a non-accidental rationale, that is, immutable and objective. The author's position is subtle, for, in his view, participation in transcendent truth doesn't completely reveal God's essence and therefore requires us to believe in those supernatural aspects that elude human experience. Its complicity, together with the necessity of engaging the intellect, implies cognition from an intuitive aspect (*Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 7,9). It goes without saying that any attempt to dominate this light will be met with critical consequence. Truth does not reveal itself completely in its essence; in Augustine's philosophy, its light harmonises the phenomenological data with the metaphysical perspective and subordinates at the same time to a single principle the diversity of numerous threads manifested through other categorical rationales. Illumination granted by God makes truth reveal its commanding power in the mind and heart. The French commentator's position is disagreed with by other scholars who emphasise that Augustine did not limit the phenomenon of divine illumination exclusively to fundamental and immutable truths. However, there is no doubt that the position of F. Cayré encompasses a broad spectrum of the problematic under discussion having fundamental reference to the most perfect Being, which is the condition for the existence of truth in the ontological aspect.

The concept of ontologism was also explored by the Italian metaphysician M. F. Sciacca (1951), who considered that the natural light of the mind can merge with the supernatural light. In the Italian thinker's view, reason participates in eter-

nal and universal truths that guarantee the truthfulness of rational knowledge. The function of the supernatural light is to enable the soul to know fundamental principles, with the proviso, however, that it does not give man *a priori* knowledge but concerns the interiority of truth (Sciacca, 1971). Strictly speaking, it is understood as the intuition of first principles, which are immutable forms for all other things. In his writings, the author distinguishes between two modes of mental cognition: discursive and intuitive. Each of these refers to the inner acts of Augustinian gnoseology and is, in a sense, open to the reception of illumination, especially when one contemplates one's own being.

The variety of approaches to ontologism often creates new difficulties that lead to philosophical inconsistencies. An additional problem is the fact that Augustine never reached a clear and definitive conclusion, which is why this subject continues to be of great interest to many contemporary scholars. One of them is F. Piemontese (1963); in his reflections, the author draws attention to the natural light of reason being a manifestation of the activity of the soul which, through self-consciousness, moves towards the inner life. According to F. Piemontese, self-reflection enables man to discover the fundamental truths of existence (*De Trinitate*, X, III, 5). This position is confirmed by certain statements of the Bishop of Hippo: „You will attain these things, believe me, once you devote yourself to education, by which the soul is purified and refined – in no way fit, before that, to be entrusted with divine seeds<sup>21</sup>” (*De ordine*, I, 2, 4). According to F. Piemontesi, it is the soul that has the capacity to know itself. In his interpretation, the author draws attention to man's subjectivity and concludes that the natural light of reason is linked to the capacity for self-reflection. A similar thought is also emphasised by pointing out that the inner enlightenment of man makes *lucem animae* a natural part of the human psyche.

In the presented reconstruction of the idea of ontologism, one can find a synecdochic aspect that is important for Augustine<sup>22</sup>. This phenomenon, explained through the theory of illumination, is rooted in the inner image of man as a disciple of truth who, gazing into its light, recognises the true good. The philosopher presents what is objective by starting from, or rather remaining within, the inner life of the subject. His reflections definitively confirm that, contrary to subjectivism, basing objectivity on the inner life of the subject is fully possible. A careful study shows that Augustine's adoption of the priority of the knowledge of God and the soul not

21 „Assequeris ergo ista, mihi crede, cum eruditioni operam dederis, qua purgatur et excolitur animus, nullo modo ante idoneus cui divina semina committantur”.

22 We are talking about the natural ability to intuitively grasp the universal and first principles of human action.

only does not limit the philosophical perspective but opens the reader to a broader understanding of the culture of the time.

From the above juxtaposition, it can be seen that Augustine recognised a gnoseology open to intuition and experience, and presented a combination of objective idealism and metaphysical realism. The latter overlaps with his theory of interiorism, with the essential philosophical perspective provided by the author's Christian-Neoplatonic inspiration. What is interesting about Augustine's thought is that the experience of God is closely linked to the concept of ontologism, which is linked to the themes of mysticism, intuition and divine illumination. The philosopher most often uses the term *visio*, with which he defines cognition in its sensory, intellectual and supernatural aspects. The problem with clearly defining his views is that in the West ontologism has been officially rejected by the highest ecclesiastical authority. The author himself, on the other hand, is sometimes mentioned among, or at least associated with, ontologists in various studies. Proponents see in his views a theoretical basis for recognising and explaining the manifestations of divine illumination. Everything points to the fact that, for Augustine, the inadequacy of any human cognition of God requires a supernatural aid by which we can grasp something of Him and thus learn something about Him, but He cannot be completely grasped and thus fully comprehended. Let us remember that for our author, knowledge of the preferred direction and object of knowledge, though partial and imperfect, means more than the most perfect knowledge of the whole world<sup>23</sup>.

St. Augustine's reflection on cognition, ontology and mysticism reveals a coherent conception of the relationship between man and God, in which intellectual inquiry is inseparable from the spiritual experience of the subject. The theory of illumination, a key element of Augustinian epistemology, reveals the profound dependence of the inner, ontological desires of the human heart on the sacred dimension of humanity. The application of this truth within two distinct interpretive currents—those emphasising the transcendental character of illumination and those emphasising the inner search for God—reveals both the complexity and the potential of the author's thought in relation to his mystical contemplation. The cognitive analysis of the Augustinian anthropological-cognitive triad of being and existence points to the fundamental connection between cognition and existence. The juxtaposition of these themes with the thought of other mystics, especially from the Western and Eastern traditions, can open new perspectives in the understanding

23 „Ex quo fit ut maior ad illa invenienda sit labor, quam ad illum a quo facta sunt, cum sit incomparabili felicitate praestantius illum ex quantulumcumque particula pia mente sentire, quam illa universa comprehendere”. Augustinus, (*De Genesi ad Litteram libri duodecim*, V, 16, 34).

of human cognition vis-à-vis theological and spiritual development, taking into account ontological and epistemological aspects. The Augustinian vision of man thus remains a living and inspiring point of reference for contemporary inquiries not only in anthropology but also in mystical theology.

## Bibliography

- Augustinus. (1844). *Confessiones*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 32). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 32).
- Augustinus. (1845). *Contra Faustum manichaeum*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 42). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 42).
- Augustinus. (1845–1846). *De Civitate Dei*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 41–42). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 41–42).
- Augustinus. (1845). *De Duabus Animabus*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 42). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 42).
- Augustinus. (1845). *De Genesi ad litteram imperfectum*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 34). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 34).
- Augustinus. (1845). *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 34). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 34).
- Augustinus. (1844). *De libero arbitrio*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 32). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 32).
- Augustinus. (1844). *De magistro*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 32). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 32).
- Augustinus. (1844). *De musica*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 32). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 32).
- Augustinus. (1844). *De ordine*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 32). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 32).
- Augustinus. (1844). *De quantitate animae*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 32). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 32).

- Augustinus. (1846). *De Trinitate*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 42). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 42).
- Augustinus. (1845). *De vera religione*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 34). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 34).
- Augustinus. (1844). *De beata vita*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 32). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 32).
- Augustinus. (1849–1850). *Enarrationes in Psalmos*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 36–37). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 36–37).
- Augustinus. (1844). *Soliloquiorum*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 32). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 32).
- Augustinus. (1845). *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*. W J.-P. Migne (Ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini opera omnia* (t. 40). Parisiis. (*Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, 40).
- Cayré, F. (1947). *Initiation à la philosophie de saint Augustin*. Études Augustiniennes, Paris.
- Conybeare, C. (2006). *The irrational Augustine*. In G. Clark & A. Louth (Eds.), Oxford.
- Gaworek, S. (2011). *Dotknięcie Boga w doświadczeniu mistycznym według św. Augustyna*. Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne, XXIV/2.
- Gioberti, V. (1939). *Introduzione allo studio della filosofia*. Edizione nazionale delle opere editate e inedite di Vincenzo Gioberti. Fratelli Bocca, Milano.
- Gilson, É. (1943). *Introduction à l'étude de saint Augustin*. J. Vrin, Paris.
- Gilson, É. (1953). *Wprowadzenie do nauki świętego Augustyna* (Z. Jakimiak, Trans.). PAX, Warszawa.
- Henry, P. (1962). *Die Vision zu Ostia*. W C. Andresen (Ed.), *Zum Augustinus – Gespräch der Gegenwart*, Darmstadt.
- Hessen, J. (1931). *Augustins Metaphysik der Erkenntnis*. Berlin.
- Hessen, J. (1947). *Lehrbuch der Philosophie, Bd. 1: Wissenschaftslehre*. München.
- Ivańska, E. von. (1936). *Die unmittelbare Gotteserkenntnis, Vom Platonismus zur Theorie der Mystik*. Scholastik. Vierteljahresschrift für Theologie und Philosophie, 11.
- Kita, M. (2012). *Logos większy niż ratio, dwa świadectwa chrześcijańskiego modelu racjonalności u progu epoki współczesnej*. Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków.
- Klenk, G. Fr. (1942). *Wert, Sein, Gott, Ihre Beziehungen wertphilosophisch und neuscholastisch geschaut*. Roma.
- Kowalczyk, S. (1987). *Człowiek i Bóg w nauce św. Augustyna*. Ośrodek Dokumentacji i Studiów Społecznych, Warszawa.
- Lebreton, J. (1938). *Sainte Monique et saint Augustin. La vision d'Ostie. Recherches de science religieuse*, 28.

- O'Collins, G., & Farrugia, E. G. (2002). *Leksykon duchowości katolickiej*. Wydawnictwo „M”, Lublin-Kraków.
- Pałucki, J. (2002). *Ojcowie Kościoła*. W M. Rusecki (ed.), *Leksykon Teologii Fundamentalnej*. Lublin-Kraków.
- Piemontese, F. (1963). *La Veritas agostiniana e l'agostinismo perenne*. Milano.
- Rahner, K., & Vorgrimler, H. (1987). *Mały słownik teologiczny* (T. Mieszkowski & P. Pachciarek, Trans.). Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warszawa.
- Ratzinger, J. (1970). *Der Weg der religiösen Erkenntnis nach dem hl. Augustinus*. In: *Kyriakon. Festschrift Johannes Quasten*. Münster.
- Sciaccia, M. F. (1951). *L'existence de Dieu* (R. Jolivet, trans.). Paris: Aubier.
- Sciaccia, M. F. (1971). *Interpretazioni rosminiane* (Vol. 3). *Opere complete*. Milano. The International Bible Society. Accessed August 26, 2024.
- Warchał, R. (2019). *Czy niektóre aspekty nauczania św. Augustyna mogą być ex post nazwane ontologizmem?* *Kwartalnik Filozoficzny*, XLVII(3-4). Polska Akademia Umiejętności, Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Kraków.
- Zabielski, S. (2003). *Święty Augustyn i fenomenologia. Historycznofilozoficzna analiza stanowiska Jana Hessena w kwestii intuicji augustyńskiej*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.

# DIVINE ILLUMINATION AND THE MYSTICAL PATH IN ST. AUGUSTINE'S THEOLOGY

## SUMMARY

This paper examines the epistemological, ontological and mystical aspects of St. Augustine's thought, showing how his reflection on faith, religious experience and cognition shapes a coherent vision of the human relationship with God. The central theme is the search for the light of truth, which, in Augustine's view, involves both intellectual speculation and profound spiritual experience. The conception of cognition encompasses rational analysis and inner illumination in the space of religiosity. Augustine's piety grows from his personal journey of conversion, following the maxim: „Interior intimo meo et superior summo meo (Confessiones, III, 6, 11)”. A particular phenomenology of spirituality emerges in the philosopher's writings, combining elements of St Paul's theology, Neoplatonism and the Christian tradition of asceticism and contemplation. Central to this is the commandment of love, which constitutes both the path to mystical union with God and the ethical foundation of spiritual life. Augustine emphasises that full knowledge of God is only possible through grace and inner enlightenment. The paper explores the theory of illumination as a key element of Augustinian gnoseology and the relationship between cognition and being, presenting two main interpretative currents: one emphasising the transcendental nature of divine illumination, the other the inner search for truth as participation in transcendent reality. Augustine's anthropological-cognitive triad, pointing to the relationship between cognition and existence, is examined in the context of his epistemology and ontology. Illumination is presented as a conscious process where reason plays a key role. The final section presents Augustine's ontological perspective, where the unity of thought, being, and existence reveals the relationship between cognition and existence, while leaving open the possibility of fully understanding God in ontological terms. Ultimately, the juxtaposition of Augustine's spiritual experiences offers a deeper understanding of his theology as a dynamic synthesis of life, faith and also Christian prayer.

*Article submitted: 23.02.2025; accepted: 24.04.2025.*

Robert Warchat