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Drama tibi primae depango laudis usyae: *A Poetic Voice from the School of St Gall*

Abstract

Medieval scribes and scholars filled empty spaces in their manuscripts with different kinds of minuscule texts. Not all of them served as direct commentary on the main text. But even when they did not, they were added often with clear intent, as can be seen with an anonymous poem written around the year 1000 or shortly after in one volume of the «Small Hartmut-Bible» (London, British Library, Add. MS 11852, fol. 118ᵛ). At first glance, the poem appears to be not much more than an elegiac colophon to the Pauline Epistles. But closer analysis reveals a consistent theoretical basis: the verses establish a link between the manuscript and predominant attitudes towards epistemology and theology in the school of St Gall. This paper will explore the content of the poem and will explain how it reflects the thought of Notker III and his pupil and successor Ekkehard IV. It will also shed light on the development and spread of ideas in the school milieu of a major Benedictine monastery.

Keywords

Notker III; Ekkehard IV; St Gall; Theology; Epistemology; Poetry

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Even though the manuscripts of St Gall have been subject to meticulous historical and philological research, they still have not revealed all of their secrets. Many of them comprise more than their original contents. Later readers filled the margins and other empty spaces with an occasionally thick web of short texts of various kinds[1]. Their notes are a valuable source for the cultures of reading, writing, and learning in an early medieval Benedictine monastery.

One particularly fascinating case can be found in the codex LONDON, British Library, Add. MS 11852, a copy of the New Testament without the Gospels[2]. On fol. 118ᵛ, following the Ps.-Pauline *Letter to the Laodiceans*, a poem in elegiac couplets was added:

> 1 *Drama tibi primae depango laudis usyae*
> *Omni sub spatio pectore cum timido.*
> *Pauli spermilogi duce te documenta relegi,*
> *Qui caelo monitus est vir apostolicus,*
> 5 *A nobis atqui summum fore te dat amari,*
> *Cerni non alibi et loca posse poli.*
> *Ignaroque tui male te simul atque fatenti*
> *Promittit varium dęmone supplicium.*
> *Remata tanta sui semper me fac imitari,*
> 10 *Aure quod audivi, insere corde mihi,*
> *Ut doctus de se valeam lemorem superare*
> *Et possis, Uto, sic fore cum Domino.*

(«For you, the first substance, I compose a song of praise, the whole time with a timid heart. Under your guidance, I have reread the letters of the word-sowing Paul, who, instructed by heaven, is an apostolic man. By all means, he imparts that you will be loved by us as the highest being and otherwise the heavenly realms cannot be seen. To the one who is ignorant of you and at the same time professes you badly, he [Paul] promises a manifold punishment by the Demon. Make it so, that I always emulate his great words, what I hear with my ear, engrave

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1 While glosses have received significant scholarly attention, textual additions without direct connection to the main content of the manuscripts have rarely been studied as a single corpus. For more details see the contribution of Ildar GARIPZANOV in this volume.

2 Accessible digitally at https://digital.library.ucla.edu/catalog/ark:/21198/zz002971c4 (accessed 12.09.24).

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onto my heart, so that taught about him I will be able to defeat the Lemur and therefore you, Uto, can be with the Lord.»)

The poem did not go completely unnoticed; it was mentioned by Bernhard Bischoff in his catalogue of ninth-century manuscripts and published by Gabriel Silagi in the MGH *Poetae*[3]. A thorough study is still missing, though. At first glance, this lack of scholarly attention is not surprising. *Drama tibi* seems to be a nicely written, but rather conventional colophon to a biblical text. Yet this impression changes dramatically if the poem is considered within its historical context. Then it becomes an important source for the literary and intellectual life in one of Europe's major monastic centres. Not only does it share many aesthetic, philosophical and religious ideas with two of St Gall's most prominent scholars and teachers, Notker III Labeo, the German (d. 1022) and Ekkehard IV (d. after 1056), it also sheds light on the ways in which these ideas were spread in and beyond the abbey's school[4].

Codicological and Palaeographical observation

Any contextualizing interpretation is based on a simple premise: One has to know the context of the text. Unfortunately in the case of *Drama tibi*, we are initially lacking any more specific information about its author and origin. However, a closer codicological and palaeographical analysis allows us to draw at least some preliminary conclusions. Add. MS 11852 belongs to the «Small Hartmut-Bible», a copy of Holy Scripture in ten volumes[5]. The eponymous abbot of St Gall was in office from 872 until 883, thereafter he lived as a recluse until his death in 905[6]. The codex was written during Hartmut's abbacy, as he himself reveals in an epigram on fol. 8[v]:

> Iste liber Pauli retinet documenta sereni,
> Hartmotus Gallo quem contulit abba beato.
> Si quis et hunc sancti sumit de culmine Galli,
> Hunc Gallus Paulusque simul dent pestibus amplis[7].

3 Bischoff 2004, pp. 94sq., *Drama tibi*, pp. 669sq.

4 On the school of St Gall in general, cf. among others: Berschin 2005a, pp. 27sq., Grotans 2006, pp. 49-109, Kintzinger 2009, Ochsenbein 1999b.

5 The other surviving volumes are St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 7, 19, 46, 68 (possibly also Cod. 42 and 50), and Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, HB II 20. Cf. Von Euw 2008, vol. 1, p. 104 and Schmuki - Schnorr - Tremp - Berger 2012, p. 28.

6 On Hartmut cf. Duft 1991, pp. 64-68.

7 Hartmut, *Versus* 4, pp. 1110sq., cf. Berschin 2005b, pp. 174-177.

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(«This book holds the letters of serene Paul, which abbot Hartmut offered up to Blessed Gall. If someone takes it away from the house of Saint Gall, Gall and Paul shall give him at once ample plagues.»)

Hartmut's verses also offer a clue about the formation of Add. MS 11852, since he mentions only the Pauline Epistles (fol. 5ʳ-118ᵛ). Obviously, the second codicological unit with the Catholic Epistles and the Book of Revelation (fol. 119ʳ-215ᵛ) was not part of the original plan. However, it was added not much later. When Ratpert lists the volumes of the «Small Hartmut-Bible» in his *Casus S. Galli*, he mentions *reliquorum librorum Novi Testamenti volumen I* («one volume with the remaining books of the New Testament»), following a now lost copy of the Gospels[8]. Therefore, Add. MS 11852 must have comprised today's textual arrangement already at the time when Ratpert's *Casus* was written, that is no later than the 890s[9].

The question remains, though, when *Drama tibi* was added to the manuscript. There is little doubt that it was created exactly for that spot. Not only is there no other textual witness for the poem, but it also fits perfectly on that specific page. The length of the poem corresponds exactly to the twelve lines remaining after the Explicit of the *Epistle to the Laodiceans*. Moreover, the couplets mirror the admonishment to strive for God on top of the page (although they focus more explicitly on biblical studies)[10]. Verse 10 is almost a metric version of Ps.-Paul's words in line 8sq.: *Et quę audistis et accepistis, in corde retinete* («and what you have heard and received, retain in your heart»)[11]. But while the poem was carefully fitted to its manuscript contexts, it was not written simultaneously with either one of the two codicological units. Paleographical criteria suggest that it was supplemented long after the formation of Add. MS 11852[12]. Bischoff and Silagi date *Drama tibi* to the tenth century[13].

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8 Cf. Ratpert, *Casus S. Galli*, p. 226.

9 One the (not undisputed) date of origin cf. Hannes Steiner's introduction in Ratpert, *Casus S. Galli*, pp. 19-24.

10 Cf. *Epistle to the Laodiceans* 10-20.

11 *Epistle to the Laodiceans* 16.

12 Due to St Gall's uniquely well-preserved library, the development of its writing culture can be studied closer than in any other early medieval monastery, cf. Berschin 1992, Grotans 2020, Von Scarpatetti 1999.

13 Cf. Bischoff 2004, p. 95, *Drama tibi*, p. 669.

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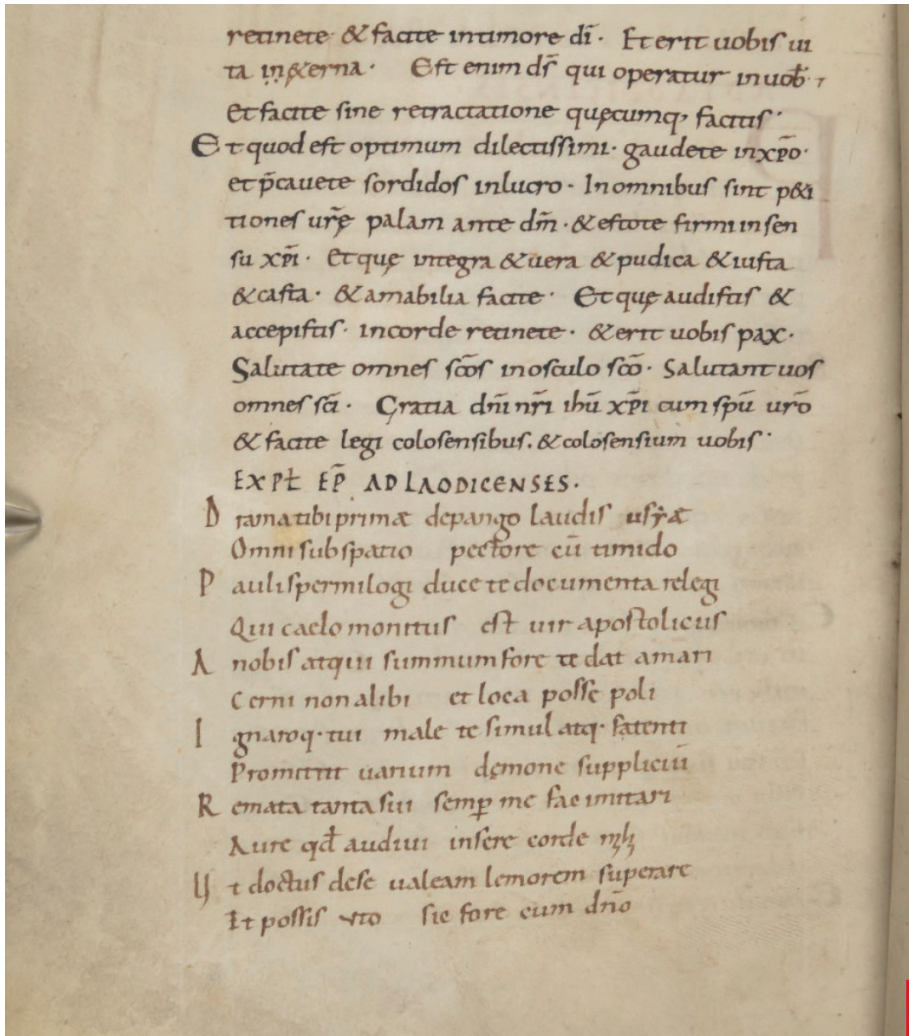
London, British Library, Add. MS 11852, fol. 118ᵛ

Some palaeographic criteria point to the end of this period or even to the early eleventh century. The script is not of the highest standard known mostly from biblical and liturgical manuscripts, like the main text of Add. MS 11852 or later cases like Cod. Sang. 390 («Antiphonarium Hartkeri»). But it is still elegant and carefully executed[14]. The compression of the ascenders and descenders and

14 Occasionally, the St Gall scripts are subdivided into a book, a middle/documentary, and a school

the focus on the central, vertical parts of the letters as well as the very regular writing angle are characteristic of the «silver age» of the abbey's scriptorium, after the recovery from the Hungarian invasion in 926 to the mid eleventh century, giving the script an almost rigid appearance[15]. This is in obvious contrast to the passage from the *Letter to the Laodiceans* at the top of the page, but quite similar to books written in the late tenth or early eleventh century, such as Cod. Sang. 148. Further, some of the bows start to break: In the case of f and s, the difference from the lines on top of the page is evident, with a curve being replaced by a hook, composed of separate strokes. The form of the r, on the other hand, has shifted gradually from an already angular to a distinctively broken shape. The e has a tiny head, the middle vertical stroke of the m turns left while the two others are straight[16]. All these features appear in St Gall only from 975 onwards[17].

These observations are supported by the only tangible historical detail offered by the poet: the name ‹Uto› in the last verse. Uto (Oto, Uoto, Huoto) was a common name, which shows up several times in documents from St Gall[18]. One of them makes an appearance in an early eleventh-century manuscript, Cod. Sang. 245 (Ambrosius Autpertus, *Expositio in Apocalypsin* VI–X), where two scribes left the following note on p. 526: *Hanc partem Gallo patrat Uodalricus et Uto* («Uodalrich and Uto carried out this portion for Gall»)[19]. Not only does this discovery support the palaeographic considerations about the date of *Drama tibi*, it also throws some light on the network of scholars and scribes, in which the poem was written. If the Uto in *Drama tibi* is identical with his namesake in Cod. Sang. 245, Silagi's assumption that the reference to him is a «Selbstanrede des Dichters» can be disallowed[20]. A shift from the first to a self-referential second person in the very same sentence would be surprisingly bold, although not impossible. But the hand which penned down *Drama tibi* appears nowhere in Cod. Sang. 245. It is, therefore, more likely, that Uto was another St Gall monk,

style, cf. Bischoff 1986, p. 161. However, as Von Scarpatetti 1999, p. 67, and Grotans 2020, p. 204, point out, the boundaries between them became increasingly fluid particularly after 950.

15 Cf. Grotans 2020, p. 210, Von Scarpatetti 1999, p. 57.

16 In the lines from the *Letter to the Laodecians*, both the left and the middle strokes of the m tend towards the left and the middle stroke is diagonal but not curved.

17 Cf. Grotans 2020, p. 210, Von Scarpatetti 1999, p. 57.

18 A well-known Uto in St Gall is the ninth-century librarian, who died a few years before the production of Add. MS 11852 and the other volumes of the Small Hartmut-Bible, cf. Schaab 2003, p. 75, n. 227, and p. 211.

19 Cf. Bruckner 1938, p. 86.

20 Cf. *Drama tibi*, p. 670, n. to v. 12.

whom the poet appreciated enough to commemorate in his verses. Moreover, Uto and his fellow scribes were not the only ones who left traces in Cod. Sang. 245. Some of the glosses in the manuscript are written in the characteristic hand of Ekkehard IV[21]. Of course, one must not jump to conclusions. That Ekkehard glossed a manuscript copied by (one of the) Uto(s) does not necessarily imply any further relation between them. But the temporal and local coincidence is remarkable, even more so if we take into account that scribal work was often entrusted to pupils[22]. While none of these observations are a definitive proof, they strongly hint at the possibility that the author of *Drama tibi* was connected with the school circle at the time of Notker III and Ekkehard IV. This assumption can be invigorated by a closer analysis of the poem's style and content.

The Poem's Style and the School of St Gall

Dating and locating the manuscript and its different textual elements within it is not enough to establish a closer connection between the *Drama tibi*-poet and St Gall's school milieu. In a large Benedictine abbey, one can easily imagine a learned monk writing Latin verse outside that institutional context. However, the style of *Drama tibi* resembles in several important aspects the works of Notker III and Ekkehard IV. It is unlikely that one of them is the actual author. The hand in which *Drama tibi* is written in Add. 11852 corresponds neither to Notker's, nor to Ekkehard's[23]. But even if one assumes that a professional scribe was involved, there are reasons which speak against the attribution to one of the two school masters. Notker is not known as a poet. Ekkehard, on the other hand, left a substantial body of poetry, mostly, though not exclusively, collected in the *Liber benedictionum*. Occasionally (e.g. in the second prologue to the *Liber benedictionum* and in *De lege dictamen ornandi*, a verse treatise composed for his brother Immo) he even meditates on poetics[24].

21 Cf. Eisenhut 2009, p. 421.

22 Ekkehard IV, *Casus S. Galli* 89, p. 396, reports that such tasks were usually given to less capable students: *Et quos ad literarum studia tardiores vidisset, ad scribendum occupaverat et lineandum*. Cf. Ochsenbach 1999b, p. 98.

23 There is no lack of evidence for Ekkehard's characteristic handwriting, beside the autograph of the *Liber beneditionum* (Cod. Sang. 393) one can find glosses and other notes in many manuscripts of the Stiftsbibliothek (for an overview, cf. Eisenhut 2009, pp. 419-424). Notker's hand, however, is much harder to identify – with one notable exception: two lines in Cod. Sang. 621, p. 321, to which Ekkehard remarks: *Has duas lineas amandas domnus Notkerus scripsit, vivat anima eius in Domino*. Cf. Hellgardt 2010, pp. 164sq.

24 On *De lege dictamen ornandi* and the resulting literary practice cf. Smolak 2015.

This combination of theory and practice invite comparison with *Drama tibi*. Both stylistic and palaeographic reasons speak against his authorship. Elegiac couplets as in *Drama tibi* were part of Ekkehard's metric repertoire but he employs them only very rarely[25]. In almost all cases, he resorts to hexameters. The leonine rhyme in *Drama tibi* is monosyllabic, Ekkehard, on the other hand, persistently uses its much more complex disyllabic form, which he describes in one of his glosses to the *Liber benedictionum* as *consonantia duplarum plerumque syllabarum* («consonance of mostly double syllables»)[26].

However, these differences are just one side of the coin. *Drama tibi* and Ekkehard's poetry (as well as, to a lesser degree, Notker's treatises) share several characteristic features, which when combined point to at least at the same scholarly milieu. The first similarity is the consistency with which leonine verse (despite the different forms) is used. Internal rhyme became popular in St Gall from c. 850 onwards[27]. In the early years it was not always applied though, and not in all cases throughout whole poems[28]. In *Drama tibi* on the other hand, in every verse the cesura rhymes with the end. This would have found the approval of the abbey's school around 1000: Ekkehard is equally rigorous in most of his poems.

The second palpable parallel between the two authors is their love of metaphors and learned vocabulary. In *De lege dictamen ornandi*, Ekkehard explains the underlying principle:

Dictamen verbis assuesce polire superbis,
Quę sibi cognata pare fonteque sint generata[29].

(«Get accustomed to make a poem shine with proud words, which are akin and stem from the same fountain.»)

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25 E.g. Ekkehard IV, *Liber benedictionum*, p. V, n. 1 (*Notker Theutonicus Domino finiter amicus / Gaudeat ille locis paradysiacis*), and the verses in Id., *Casus S. Galli* 27, p. 206 (*In cruce quęsitam pretioso sanguine vitam / Des cui, Christe, locis in paradysiacis*).

26 Cf. Ekkehard IV, *Liber benedictionum*, Prol. II, gloss to v. 95 (p. 9). Weber 2004, p. 69, stresses that Ekkehard IV composed his two-syllabic, leonine rhymes two or three generations before they became routine.

27 Cf. Strecker 1922, pp. 243-247.

28 As Strecker 1922, p. 245, states briefly, one example for a less consistent use of leonine and other forms of rhyme in the ninth century is Hartmann II of St Gall. A comparable example from the latter's pen, transmitted in the collection *Sylloga* 2, p. 318, comprises nine elegiac couples, of which six hexameters and three pentameters have a monosyllabic leonine rhyme.

29 Ekkehard IV, *De lege* 1-2, p. 532.

In the following, Ekkehard lists numerous examples, like *gemini* for *bini*, or *remigium alarum* when talking about the wings of Icarus. The same semantic mechanism is applied in *Drama tibi*, e.g. when the Devil is referred to as demon or lemur. A comparable phenomenon is the use of Greek. In the twelve lines of *Drama tibi*, four Greek words are introduced: *drama*, here in the sense of «song» or «poem»; *usya*, «substance»; *spermilogus*, which changed its meaning from «babbler» to «someone who sows the word of God»; and finally *r(h)emmata*, «words, sayings»[30]. The nameless poet fits in with a Hellenism which began to flourish in St Gall in the mid-ninth century and came to an end with Ekkehard IV[31]. In his *De lege dictamen ornandi*, the same Ekkehard comments only on Germanic loan words, which he rejects emphatically[32]. However, as is evident from the *Liber benedictionum*, his attitude towards Greek was entirely different[33]. The respective vocabulary has an effect similar to metaphorical expressions: the verses sound more splendid than those in plain Latin school diction. Therefore, both *Drama tibi* and the graecising parts of Ekkehard's correspond to the latter's aesthetical program.

Drama tibi represents a distinctively Christian classicism, popular in St Gall's school milieu. The poem plays with Greek words and alludes to mythological creatures, the lemurs, but it does so while reflecting on (Ps.-)Paul's teachings. It is written in one of the most common meters of Roman poetry, the elegiac couplets, but decorated with the characteristically Christian leonine rhyme. This mixture of classical and Christian elements appears not only in other poetic works like the *Liber benedictionum* (e.g. in the ironical game of rejection and appropriation in the second prologue), but also in prose writings like Ekkehard's *Casus S. Galli* or Notker's *Rhetorica nova*, which knit a thick web of patristic and pagan authorities[34]. Notwithstanding all differences, the *Drama tibi*-poet and the two school masters seem to follow one and the same scholarly and aesthetic program. The similarities between them are not constrained to the literary surface, though. They agree in central philosophical and theological questions.

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[30] In part, these terms have specific philosophical meaning, but they are also simply a display of scholarship. The vocabulary of the poem belongs to the grey zone between terminological and ornamental Greek described by STOTZ 2011, p. 321. Strictly speaking, *daemon* too is of Greek origin, but since it was so common in Christian theology, one might doubt that the poet consciously used it as a foreign word.

[31] Cf. BERSCHIN 1980, pp. 175-180.

[32] Cf. EKKEHARD IV, *De lege* 14, p. 533: *Teutonicos mores caveas nova nullaque ponas*.

[33] For Greek vocabulary in the *Liber benedictionium* cf. Egli's introduction to his critical edition of that text, pp. XXXVI-XXXVIII.

[34] Cf. GROTANS 2006, p. 90, and ALBU - LOZOVSKY 2021, pp. XIXsq.

I. Poetic Augustinianism in Add. 11852

Drama tibi is not only elegantly written; it also comprises coherent theological positions which are heavily influenced by Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. Its main topic is the acquisition of religious knowledge, which is more than the multiplication of one's personal doctrinal inventory. A basic understanding of Christian teachings is the precondition for salvation. It enables one to see heaven (v. 6) and to defeat the Devil (v. 11). The poem's answer on where to find such salvific insights is clear: not in secular studies or philosophical speculation, but in Holy Scripture, most of all in the Pauline Epistles[35]. The reminder that Paul was *a caelo monitus* is a reference to the events leading to his conversion as described in the Acts of the Apostles[36]. But this phrase also hints at the heavenly origin of Paul's words.

He is a messenger of God, not a harbinger of worldly wisdom. Further, the interpreter of his Epistles is equally dependent on divine inspiration: only *duce te*, under your, God's, guidance, is he able to understand the sacred text (v. 3)[37]. However, he is not just a passive receiver of biblical revelation. What he learns during his exegetical attempts requires a double response, one external and one internal. The external response is obvious: we must live according to what we read by imitating St Paul's words, that means doing good and avoiding evil (v. 9).

But outside deeds are not everything. Religious knowledge is not just a guideline for ethical behavior, the process of its acquisition leaves an imprint on the souls of believers. When the poet, alluding to the *Epistle to the Laodiceans*, writes that we should engrave the words of St Paul in our heart, he has more in

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[35] Cf. AUGUSTINE, *De doctrina christiana* II 9,14: *In his omnibus libris timentes Deum et pietate mansueti quaerunt voluntatem Dei.*

[36] Cf. AUGUSTINE, *De doctrina christiana*, Proem. 6: *Caveamus tales temptationes superbissimas et periculosissimas magisque cogitemus et ipsum apostolum Paulum, licet divina et caelesti voce prostratum et instructum, ad hominem tamen missum esse, ut sacramenta perciperet atque copularetur ecclesiae.* The *Drama tibi*-poet was not the only one in St Gall to refer to this episode. In EKKEHARD IV, *Liber benedictionum* I 42,14 (p. 212), Paul is called *doctus et e cęlis* – there the phrase is used explicitly in opposition to worldly learning.

[37] While Augustine's main intention in *De doctrina christiana* was to demonstrate why and what we have to study as a preparation for biblical exegesis, he occasionally reminded his readers that, no matter how educated they were, they still depend on divine illumination, e.g. ibid. I 1,1: *Magnum onus et arduum, et si ad sustinendum difficile, vereor, ne ad suscipiendum temerarium. Ita sane si de nobis ipsis praesumeremus; nunc vero cum in illo sit spes peragendi huius operis, a quo nobis in cogitatione multa de hac re iam tradita tenemus, non est metuendum, ne dare desinat cetera, cum ea, quae data sunt, coeperimus impendere.*

mind than a florid phrase for memorizing[38]. He demands a change of heart, as the emotional frame indicates. In the first couplet, the poet speaks about the fearful heart with which he addresses God (v. 2); later, fear is replaced by love (v. 5)[39]. For the same reason, punishment is not only threatened to the one who commits actual sins, but also to the *ignarus Dei*, no matter his deeds, since he is unaware of the transformative process required for salvation. The love towards which human beings are led by correct understanding of Holy Scripture is first and foremost directed towards God, but it also extends to fellow human beings[40]. At the end of his work, the poet mentions his concern for the soul of Uto (v. 12)[41]. Probably he has more in mind than an individual expression of friendship. His reference to Uto and his postmortem fate is a reminder of the social and pastoral responsibility which goes along with such insights. Those with a proper under-standing of Holy Scripture must provide pastoral care for others[42].

As short as it is, the poem outlines a consistent epistemology. It explains the origin and function of religious knowledge, its effects on the individual human being in this world, and the afterlife and its social implications. One might wonder, though, how such austere epistemological thoughts are reconcilable with the learned style of the poem. The key to the almost dialectical relationship between form and content is, again, to be found in *De doctrina christiana*. Augustine attempted to find a middle ground between an extreme anti-intellectualism which rejects all learning and teaching, and scholarly hubris in which the acquisition of knowledge becomes an end in itself. In his eyes, a certain education in the liberal arts was necessary to understand a complex text like the Bible, but such an education has no value beyond exegesis and homiletics, nor is it sufficient without additional divine inspiration[43]. The

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38 While this phrase mirrors the *Letter to the Laodiceans*, as mentioned above, it is worth noting that metaphors of hearing for the acquisition and internalisation of religious knowledge are widespread, too, in Augustine's writings, among others *auris/aures cordis*.

39 Augustine describes a seven-storey ascent from fear to wisdom in *De doctrina christiana* II 7,9-11; in addition, he uses metaphors like *purgatio* (ibid. I 10,10) and *curatio* (ibid. I 14,13) in the context of the acquisition of religious knowledge.

40 It is not easy to understand, though, how Augustine's claim that the law of love extends to God, the neighbour and oneself can be reconciled with his concept of *uti* and *frui*, cf. Dupont 2004.

41 The fact that the poet introduces Uto as an addressee of the author's spiritual guidance does not necessarily hint at a hierarchy between them: there were cases of «horizontal learning» within one peer group in St Gall, cf. D'Acunto 2019.

42 Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, prooem. 5: *Immo vero et quod per hominem discendum est, sine superbia discat, et per quem docetur alius, sine superbia et sine invidia tradat quod accipit.*

43 Cf. particularly the second book of *De doctrina christiana*, where Augustine discusses secular learning from basic language training to disciplines like logic and mathematics.

poem is, thus, a literary staging of such programmatic consideration, for it encourages readers to turn to Holy Scripture in search of truth and reminds them that their understanding of the biblical texts is in the end always and only granted by God. At the same time, it signals the value of secular learning: We need divine guidance on our path. But we still have to walk it[44].

1. The Status of the liberal arts

It is tempting to shrug off the Augustinianism of *Drama tibi* as a typical medieval mindset (even more so in the centuries before the reintroduction of the whole *Corpus Aristotelicum*). The reality of intellectual life in that period was more complex. Augustine's work was as copious as it was rich in ideas. While almost every medieval scholar relied on his authority, the motifs chosen (and those ignored) differed significantly from case to case. Epistemology is a good example of this selective reception. As a matter of fact, the influence of *De doctrina christiana* was surprisingly limited. Scholars like Alcuin of York and John Scottus Eriugena opted for much more inclusive concepts of knowledge. They stressed the inherent value of the liberal arts (although within a religious framework) instead of reducing them to mere exegetical tools[45]. Augustine's early works like *De ordine*, not *De doctrina christiana*, were the preferred reference in this specific context[46]. One would expect the same philosophical attitudes in St Gall given the effort the abbey's school put into secular learning. Notker dedicated a significant part of his life to teaching and writing about the liberal arts. Ekkehard followed in the footsteps of his teacher. His works as an historian, poet and glossator was, in one way or another, tied to the school[47]. Thus, one would expect the two school masters to show a clear preference for a

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44 Cf. AUGUSTINE, *De doctrina christiana*, prooem. 8, where he scoffed at those who still feel obliged to teach, despite their claim that all knowledge comes directly from God.

45 On Alcuin cf. DREYER 2006, DREYER 2010, as well as ALBERI 2001 and WERNER 1998; on Eriugena CONTRENI 2020. It should be noted that epistemological discussions in St Gall and elsewhere in early medieval Europe were not occupied solely with the relationship between religious and secular knowledge. Another much-discussed topic was the internal organisation of philosphy, cf. GROTANS 2023.

46 Cf. CONTRENI 2020, pp. 31-33, and DREYER 2010, p. 74.

47 The *Liber benedictionum* shows Ekkehard IV as both a pupil and a teacher. Some of the poems originated as homework composed under the aegis of Notker III and the whole anthology was compiled, among other reasons, for didactic purposes, cf. STOTZ 1981, pp. 2-5. In a marginal note on *Liber benedictionum* I 59 (p. 279), Ekkehard recalled how he found some of his school poems among the residue of his late teacher: *Hoc et cetera quę scripsi, ipse scribi iussit in cartis suis, in quibus ea post inveniens in hac sceda pro locis ascripsi, ut iuvenes nostros in id ipsum adortarer.*

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concept of knowledge in which more space is granted to unguided reason and the disciplines based thereupon. But the opposite is true: Notker was a staunch Augustinian. In a letter to Bishop Hugo of Sitten (978-1017), he wrote:

> *Artibus autem illis, quibus me onustare vultis, ego renunciavi neque fas mihi est eis aliter quam sicut instrumentis frui. Sunt enim ecclesiastici libri et praecipue quidem in scolis legendi, quos impossibile est sine illis praelibatis ad intellectum integrum duci*[48].

(«But I have renounced those arts, with which you want to burden me, and I am not allowed to enjoy them in any other way except as tools. For there are ecclesiastical books and particularly those which must be read in school, which cannot be understood fully without having tasted those (arts) in advance.»)

The liberal arts are devoid of any inherent value or pleasure; they serve solely as a hermeneutic tool for the interpretation of authoritative texts[49]. In his Old High German version of the *Consolatio philosophiae* Notker is even more outspoken. He states that rational methods apply only to the created world but are unable to open an alternative route to God without Holy Scripture[50]. However, such remarks on secular learning are balanced by the rest of the letter to Hugo. Immediately after subordinating the arts to exegesis, he elaborated at length and not without pride about his work as a translator and writer, including his Old High German versions of classical texts[51]. Evidently, the amount of secular knowledge required for the interpretation of the ecclesiastical books was quite extensive. This is fully in line with Augustine, who even has a biblical explanation for his educational program. Just as the Israelites took gold and silver from the Egyptians, Christians can use pagan knowledge for the sake of their faith[52]. But one might wonder then how it can

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48 NOTKER III, *Epistola ad Hugonem*, p. 348. Cf. HELLGARDT 1979, KING - TAX 2003, pp. 195-200, KÖSSINGER 2024, NIEVERGELT 2022, pp. 20-22, SCHRÖBLER 1948.

49 The expression *libri ecclesiastici* is used inconsistently in medieval sources. According to HEHLE 2002, pp. 60sq., Notker refers to the Bible and exegetical literature, while KING - TAX 2003, pp. 197sq., also includes texts like the *Consolatio philosophiae*).

50 NOTKER III, *Consolatio*, vol. 3, p. 216: *Sô uuír éin fóne ánderên errâten . álso aristotiles lêrta . dáz íst raciocinatio. Humana sapientia hábet tíe modos fúnden. Díe uuérdent tánne euacuati . sô ménniskôn óugen hímelisko indân uuérdent . únde íro sín ûf kezúcchet uuírt . tíu ze bechénnenne . díu nehéin ratio philosophica nebechénnet.* Cf. GROTANS 2023, pp. 80sq.

51 On the (only partly surviving) works mentioned there cf. DE RIJK 1963, pp. 50sq.; HELLGARDT 1979, pp. 184-191; KING - TAX 2003, pp. 198-200, MÜLLER 2000, pp. 335sq. As KING - TAX 1996, p. CXXIX states, the fact that Notker does not refer to some of his known works is important for the dating of the letter.

52 Cf. AUGUSTINE, *De doctrina christiana* II 40,60.

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be that understanding the word of God depends to such a high degree on the acquisition of pagan knowledge? For that, *De doctrina christiana* offers another loophole in the form of a theological argument, with which Augustine supported his interpretation of the *spoliatio Aegyptorum*. All truth, he claims, originates from God: *Immo vero quisquis bonus verusque Christianus est, Domini sui esse intellegat, ubicumque invenerit veritatem, quam conferens et agnoscens etiam in litteris sacris superstitiosa figmenta repudiet* («But whoever is a good and true Christian understands, that truth belongs to his Lord, wherever he finds it; while he gathers and acknowledges that [truth] even in [pagan] sacred writings, he rejects superstitious figments.»)[53]. The laws of rhetoric and logic, for example, were not created by pagan writers, but merely discovered by them[54]. Even more, they can also be found in the biblical text[55]. Therefore, the arts are not entirely foreign to divine revelation. Whoever relies on them while exposing Holy Scripture expands only a common exegetical method beyond the biblical texts; explaining part of the word of God by referring to another. Notker clearly understood the advantage of such ideas for his own exegetical education program. He utters similar thoughts in his Old High German *Consolatio*, where he suggests a divine origin for ethics and physics («logic», as a generic term for the trivium, is not mentioned here, probably because it was rather perceived as a method than as a content). The secular disciplines and theology are (albeit clearly different) branches of one and the same comprehensive philosophy[56]. The latter is not understood as the product of human intellectual activity, but equated to the *sapientia Dei*, that is Christ[57]. In this context, Notker does not elaborate on how secular learning can be a route to divine wisdom. But at least a clue appears in one of his Latin school treatises, *De arte rhetorica*, where Notker distinguished between *eloquentia naturalis*

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53 Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* II 18,28.

54 Cf. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* II 27,41: *Iam vero illa quae non instituendo, sed aut transacta temporibus aut divinitus instituta investigando homines prodiderunt, ubicumque discantur, non sunt hominum instituta existimanda*. He considers logic and rhetoric not as human institutions, cf. ibid. II 32,50 and II 34,54.

55 It is probably not surprising that Augustine recognized the rhetorical quality of the biblical text (*De doctrina christiana* IV 6,9), but he attempts, too, to discover syllogisms in Holy Scripture (ibid. II 32,50).

56 Notker III, *Consolatio*, vol. 1, p. 87: *Philosophia téilet síh in diuina et humana. Diuina lêrtôn . dîe úns in bûochen gótes sélbes naturam . únde dîa ueritatem trinitatis scríben. Dîe héizent theologi. Téro uuás iohannes euangelista ter fórderôsto. Humana lêrent únsih physici únde ęthici . táz chît de naturis et moribus. Ter áltesto physicus uuás phitagoras . apud grecos*. Cf. Grotans 2023, pp. 78-80.

57 Cf. Bolender 1980, Hehle 2002, pp. 210-214.

and its *filia artificialis*, rhetoric[58]. Only the former is flourishing again and might turn into a proper *ars*, that is, a discipline which can be taught based on rules taken from practical observation[59]. In other words, the Christians do not follow a pagan tradition when they study rhetoric, but undergo a normal process in which the observation of natural talent becomes the basis for a rule-based discipline that can be taught and learned. Notker only hinted that the same principle is applied elsewhere: *ergo omnis ars inmitatio est naturę* («therefore every art is an imitation of nature») – of a nature, one might add, which is, together with all its laws, created by God[60]. A similar tendency to blur the line between the secular and the divine is also apparent in his hermeneutic practise. While explaining Boethius and Martianus Capella, he aims to ease the tensions between his faith and his sources[61]. Such *interpretationes christianae* were not uncommon in the Middle Ages (after all, Notker himself build upon the work of earlier commentators like Remigius of Auxerre)[62]. But they were not a given: around 900, Bovo II of Corvey openly questioned the religious credentials of the *Consolatio*[63]. Therefore, one can assume that Notker's harmonizing approach was a conscious decision, in line with his acknowledgement that all learning has to be focussed on exegesis, while reintegrating as much secular knowledge as possible into that agenda.

Ekkehard shared his teacher's only seemingly ambivalent attitude. While many of his writings bear witness to his dedication to the liberal arts, his most elaborate statements on that issue are three *Confutationes*, poetic rejections of rhetoric, logic, and grammar (in that order)[64]. But both his praise and his

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58 Notker III, *De arte rhetorica*, pp. 107+109: *Naturalis eloquentia viguit quousque ei per doctrinam filia successit artificialis, quę deinde rethorica dicta est.*

59 Notker III, *De arte rhetorica*, p. 109: *Hęc postquam antiquitate temporis extincta est, illa iterum revixit. Unde hodięque plurimos cernimus, qui in causis solo naturali instinctu ita sermone callent ut quę velint quibuslibet facilę suadeant, nec tamen regulam doctrinę ullam requirant. Similes isti sunt his qui ab initio plurimum poterunt eloquio, quos deinde alii admirati et emulari conantes, dum observant eos loquentes, temptaverunt quendam huius rationis modum rapere et scripto legare, qui sibi et posteris pro magisterio reservaretur?*

60 Notker III, *De arte rhetorica*, p. 109.

61 In addition to the studies mentioned in n. 57, cf. Schröbler 1953, Glauch 2000, vol. 1, pp. 226-277.

62 Cf. Glauch 2000, vol. 1, pp. 87-98.

63 Cf. Bovo (II) of Corvey, *Commentarius* 1, p. 99: *Terrebat insuper ipsa materia officio meo propositoque contraria, quia de Platonicorum magis dogmatum vanitate quam de doctrinae evangelicae veritate necessario erant aliquanta dicenda.*

64 Ekkehard IV, *Liber benedictionum* I 40-42 (pp. 206-217). Stotz 1981, p. 4, and Id. 2015, pp. 394sq., reminds of Notker's school lessons as the background of the *Confutationes*.

criticism are two sides of the same coin since the latter is not directed against the liberal arts as such. On the contrary, Ekkehard attempted to define their place within Christian learning. In the beginning of the *Confutatio rhetoricae* he states that *tres rhetorum causas fidei tenet actio clausas* («the agency of faith restrains the three cases of the rhetoricians»). But immediately he commented *rhetoricum verbum est actio, a quo tamen ecclesia sumpsit infra actionem* («Rhetorical speech is an agency, from which the church nevertheless makes use in liturgy»)[65]. The danger of the arts is not in their inherent fallacy, but in their potential for abuse, as indicated in the *Confutatio dialecticae* which concludes: *Iam loyci cędant nullique sophisticę lędant* («the logicians should cede immediately and hurt no one with their sophisms»)[66]. The very same thought also appears in a theological context in *De sancta trinitate*, where the poet warned against sophistic priests who use Aristotelian logic in order to trick people into heresy[67]. Thus, Christians should actually study the arts, as Ekkehard claims in his *Confutatio dialecticae*, in order to beat their opponents with their own weapons[68]. This redeployment of ancient logic is possible because there is no inherent conflict with Christian teachings. Instead, he characterised its misleading use by pagans and heretics as «sophistical», that is, fallacious and deceptive[69]. Here the personal dimension which we have observed in *Drama tibi* comes into play again. The correct application of logic in exegesis and theology does not only depend on one's intellectual capabilities, but also on the right ethical habit. True believers are guided by love when drawing logical conclusions, not by pride as the pagans (the superscript words are Ekkehard's glosses to his own poetry):

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65 Ekkehard IV, *Liber benedictionum* I 40,3 (p. 206). *Infra actionem* is a play on words: one could translate this phrase literally as «in [the church's] agency»; however, it is also a common expression for «in the (Roman) canon». Ekkehard hints in this verse at the rhetorical dimension of liturgy.

66 Ekkehard IV, *Liber benedictionum* I 41,44 (p. 210).

67 Cf. Ekkehard IV, *Liber benedictionum* I 41,37-40 (p. 273): *Ergo ratione pati imponunt deitati, / Qui sophię vanis brachiis [per sophisticam] luctantur inanis / Personis trinum deitate negantibus [i.e. brachiis] unum / Et per Aristotilem [artem Aristotilis] populum fallendo fidelem.*

68 Ekkehard IV, *Liber benedictionum* I 42,57-60 (pp. 215sq.): *Tempore quo ecclesia se grandinat inter oborta [vera cum semivera rixando] / Pernocuit [valde nocuit] fidei hereses [hereticos] trina arte [grammatica, dialectica, rhetorica] potiri. / Quis contra standum [a fidelibus] fuit artibus atque [eisdem tribus] studendum, / Ut fidei prestes [heretici] per eas [-dem artes] frangantur et hostes [multimodi].* Here, Augustine's interpretation of the *spoliatio Aegyptorum* shines through, even though Ekkehard does not mention it explicitly in that context.

69 In medieval Latin, *sophisma* can have a variety of meanings, not all of them negative; Ekkehard IV, however, used the word in a narrow sense like e.g. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 2,28,1, who speaks about an *error decipiendi adversarium per sophismata falsarum conclusionum*.

Talia dum discunt$^{\text{virique fideles et heretici}}$ *et acumina dupla*$^{\text{loycę verę et sophisticę}}$ *renoscunt*
Hos$^{\text{fideles}}$ *amor*$^{\text{caritas}}$ *ędificat,*$^{\text{in loyca}}$ *hos*$^{\text{hereticos}}$ *ampla scientia*$^{\text{in sophistica}}$ *difflat.*$^{\text{elevat}}$ [70]

(«While they [believers and heretics] learn such things and recognize two kinds of acumen [of true and of sophistical logic], love [charity] improves [in logic] these [the believers] and ample knowledge [in sophistry] inflates [puffs up] those [the heretics].»)

As long as they follow the right motifs and accept the superiority of faith, Christians can and should study the liberal arts:

Nos$^{\text{postumi illorum}}$ *hodieque pari satagentes*$^{\text{studentes}}$ *more doceri*$^{\text{artibus his}}$
Plurima temptamus, quę sunt rationis$^{\text{verę loycę}}$ *amamus*
Amplius$^{\text{quam artes eloquii periculosi}}$ *et gratam veneramur simplicitatem,*$^{\text{in qua periculum nullum}}$
Quam Paulus non erubuit, Petrus ipse probavit[71].

(«While we [their descendants] are striving [struggling] towards being educated [in these arts] in the same way today, we investigate a lot of things, we love what belongs to reason [to true logic], and we adore more [than the arts of dangerous eloquence] the pleasant simplicity [in which no danger lies], for which Paul was not ashamed and Peter himself approved.»)

However, Ekkekard connected logic even closer with faith. According to him, guided by the Holy Spirit, Christians have a more profound understanding of classical logic than the ancient philosophers did[72]. Not only that – their repertoire of conclusions is larger since they have an additional *raciocinacio fidei* at their disposal to explain biblical teachings which otherwise might seem contradictory:

Circulus$^{\text{de sophisticis, sed verum}}$ *egreditur fidei, qua cęptus initur.*
Quod pater,$^{\text{ingreditur}}$ *id natus, id utrique par est quoque flatus.*
Quod flatus$^{\text{egreditur}}$ *sacer, id natus, pater id quoque sanctus*[73].

(«The circular conclusion [sophistically, but true] of faith comes to an end at the starting point of the undertaking. What the Father is [starting point], that is the Son and that is, too, with both identical, the Holy Spirit. What the Holy Spirit is [result], that is the Son, that is also the holy Father.»)

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70 Ekkehard IV, *Liber benedictionum* I 42,66sq. (p. 216).

71 Ekkehard IV, *Liber benedictionum* I 42,68-71 (p. 216), on the third verse cf. Stotz 2015, p. 359, n. 11.

72 Cf. Ekkehard IV, *Liber benedictionum* I 41,1-3 (p. 208): *Axioma [acumen loycum] flatus hic [spiritus in ecclesia] pręstruit ipse sacratus [lege Martianum], / Hic [spiritus] melius quinas [genus, speciem, accidens, differentiam, individuum] tranversat agens ysagogas [introductiones], / Porphirius [Platonicus] mage [melius] quas norat [nosset], si se duce [doctore spiritu sancto] quęrat [Porphirius, hic quamvis baptizatus, hostis erat fidei atrocissimus et nemo umquam fidelibus acumine suo gravior in heresi fuit.].*

73 Ekkehard IV, *Liber benedictionum* I 41,28-30 (p. 210).

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One might wonder how convincing such circular conclusions are, but the underlying idea follows and develops the Augustinian-Notkerian line of thought outlined above. The arts are applied in exegesis not as something originally external to Holy Scripture, but on the contrary pagans managed to grasp by reason some fragments of skills and knowledge in the arts which are genuinely and more perfectly Christian[74]. This attempt to anchor secular learning in revelation is put into practice in Cod. Sang. 830, a collection of Boethian and Ps.-Boethian treatises on logic, rhetoric and mathematics. On p. 488, Ekkehard added a panegyrical colophon, according to which Boethius was divinely inspired also when teaching the liberal arts[75]. He enforces this thought in an iconographic sketch on p. 490, in which seven biblical women become allegories each for one of the arts and one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit[76].

Thus, Notker and Ekkehard shared the same Augustinian epistemology which we encounter in *Drama tibi*. All three authors embraced the liberal arts but left no doubt that they are subordinated to and directed at the study of Holy Scripture. If they occasionally seem to disagree with each other, or as in the case of Ekkehard even to contradict themselves, it is due to genre, context, and audience of each specific text, not to actual dissent[77]. They stress different facets of the same philosophical core. Epistemology is, however, not the only point of agreement. In the poem and other relevant sources, one can find a common concept of God's nature.

[74] Similar thoughts will play an important role in the fourteenth century, more precisely in Wyclif's *De veritate sacrae scripturae*, cf. Ghosh 2001, pp. 47-54.

[75] The poem was first printed in Canisius, *Antiquae lectiones*, vol. 5, p. 788, although only partly: the poem is written in two alternating hands, with only every second verse doubtlessly added by Ekkehard IV. Danisius dropped the ekkehardian lines, seemingly considering them as an expansion of an older poem and indeed his short version still makes sense. However, the characteristic rhyme technique suggests that the whole text is a palaeographic and stylistic experiment by Ekkehard IV. The complete poem was published in Dümmler 1869, pp. 72sq. A direct hint at divine inspiration appears in vv. 5sq.*: Non pede Pegaseo satur aut de sangue Thebeo, / Sed rivum clausit, qui fontem pneumatis hausit*. Aptly, he describes Boethius's death as martyrdom in the final verse: *Tandem pro Christi nec amore pati [vel necem] timuisti*.

[76] Cf. Wirth 1994.

[77] Glauch 2000, vol. 1, pp. 54sq., states a contradiction between Ekkehard IV (whom she attests a «antiwissenschaftliche Einstellung») and Notker III (described as «Liebhaber der *artes*»). This assumption, however, ignores both the heterogenous nature of the sources and the fact that some of Ekkehard's relevant works stem directly from Notker's classroom.

2. Divine being: substance, essence, nothingness

Although the poem is mainly concerned with the question of knowledge, it opens with a strong theological statement when in the first line it addressed God as *prima usya*, first substance. Other than in Aristotle's *Categories*, this expression does not refer to individual things in contrast to the genera and species (the «second substances»). Instead, it underlines the status of God as the first being, which precedes all creatures[78]. The poet was not the first to use this classical ontological concept in Christian theology. Already in late antiquity, both Greek and Latin theologians referred to God as substance, mainly while discussing the Trinity. The Nicene and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creeds bear witness that the Son is *consubstantialis patri* and *unius substantiae cum patris*. Sadly, no major treatise on divine being and the Trinity written in St Gall around the year 1000 survives. But the library holdings speak a clear language. The poet could have read about God as substance while studying *De doctrina christiana* in Cod. Sang. 174, where Augustine claimed: *Ita pater et filius et spiritus sanctus et singulus quisque horum Deus et simul omnes unus Deus, et singulus quisque horum plena substantia et simul omnes una substantia* («In this way, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each single one of them God and at the same time all of them one God, and they are each single one of them a complete substance and at the same time all of them one substance»)[79]. For a more profound study of Trinitarian theology, he could have relied on key texts available in the library such as Augustine's *De trinitate* in Cod. Sang. 175 and Boethius's *Opuscula sacra* together with the commentary attributed to Eriugena in Cod. Sang. 768. If the poet needed a more elementary introduction to the topic, he could have resorted to Alcuin's *De fide sanctae et individuae trinitatis* (Cod. Sang. 276). In this short treatise, based mostly on patristic sources, the relationship among the divine persons is described in words similar to the Augustinian formula quoted above. According to Alcuin, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are *et singulus quisque horum plena et perfecta et aeterna substantia et simul omnes una substantia* («and each single one of them a complete and perfect and eternal substance and at the same time all one substance»)[80]. Alcuin's *De fide* is today known only to a few experts. In the Middle Ages and

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78 Cf. ARISTOTELES, *Categories (transl. Boethii)* 2a: *Substantia autem est, quae proprie et principaliter et maxime dicitur, quae neque de subiecto praedicatur, neque in subiecto est, ut aliqui homo vel aliqui equus. Secundae autem substantiae dicuntur, in quibus speciebus illae quae principaliter substantiae dicuntur, insunt.*

79 AUGUSTINE, *De doctrina christiana* I 5,5.

80 ALCUIN, *De fide* I,4.

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the early modern period, though, it was a bestseller as ca. 100 manuscripts and several early printed editions confirm[81]. One of its readers was none other than Ekkehard IV, whose poem *De sancta trinitate* closes with the lines:

> *Sic Karolum docet Alcwinus symmista polinus.*
> *Katholicus trinum sobrie veneratur et unum*[82].

(«So Alcuin, the heavenly priest, teaches Charles. A Catholic worships soberly the three-fold and the one.»)

Theological literature in a narrow sense was probably not the only source from which Ekkehard drew. The monks of St Gall came across similar ideas while occupying themselves with the liberal arts. In the *Consolatio philosophiae*, Boethius mentioned several times that God is substance, although only in the passing[83]. The text was studied enthusiastically, as is illustrated by the copy in Cod. Sang. 844 with Latin and Old High German glosses and the equally bilingual, lemmatized commentary in Cod. Sang. 845 («Anonymus Sangallensis»), in which divine substance is a recurring topic[84]. Notker's Old High German translation made sure that his pupils read (and most likely heard) both in their mother and father tongues about *tíu natura der gótes substantię*[85]. These remarks on the library holdings and their use support the assumption that «substance theology» was known and common in St Gall.

However, one might ask if this was not a matter of course, given that this position was held by highly revered authorities like Augustine and Boethius (not to mention the Nicene and Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creeds). But late antique and early medieval views on God's nature were more pluralistic. It did not go unnoticed that the attempt to describe God with concepts taken from an ontology of worldly things runs the danger of imagining the difference between creator and creation only as gradual, not as absolute. Consequently, some theologians were more reluctant to use classical philosophical concepts

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81 On the transmission of *De fide* cf. Cavadini 1991, pp. 124sq.

82 Ekkehard IV, *Liber benedictionum* I 56,51sq. (p. 274).

83 In addition to the passage referred to below, cf. e.g. *De consolatione philosophiae* 3, pr. 10,16; 3, pr. 10,42; 5, pr. 6,1. The *divinae substantiae* mentioned ibid. 5, pr. 2,7, on the other hand, are spiritual creatures between man and God. Notker III, *Consolatio*, vol. 3, p. 237, identifies them with the *angeli*, as Hehle 2002, p. 222, explains.

84 E.g. Cod. Sang. 845, p. 148 (*[Divinitas] multis nuncupetur nominibus, ipsa tamen substantia individua est.*) and p. 184 (*substantia Dei*).

85 Notker III., *Consolatio*, vol. 2, p. 179. On Notker's translations in and outside the school context cf. Grotans 2006, pp. 91-109.

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in order to explore the divine. One of them was John Scottus Eriugena, who developed his own form of negative theology based on Greek sources. He did not deny the possibility of calling God a substance outright – after all, he could not contradict the creeds – but he considered it only as figurative speech. In the literal sense, divine being is ineffable[86].

Such thoughts were not unheard of in St Gall during the tenth and early eleventh centuries. Whoever was studying in the abbey's library at the time of Notker and Ekkehard was reminded of Eriugena's refusal to allow categorical thought into Christian theology, while he was reading exactly the text from which he learned his basic ontological concepts, the *Categoriae decem*, a late antique paraphrase of Aristotle's *Categories*. The *Categoriae decem* served as a standard school text in the first half of the Middle Ages – also in St Gall at least until the time of Notker, who chose the Boethian translation of Aristotle's text for his Old High German *Categories*[87]. In Cod. Sang. 274 the *Categoriae decem* are preceded by two shorter texts, a paragraph from Eriugena's *Periphyseon* and a poem of Alcuin. The quotation serves as a hermeneutic paradigm, in as far as it explains the subject of the *Categoriae decem*:

> *Aristoteles, acutissimus apud Grecos, ut aiunt, naturalium rerum discretionis repertor, omnium rerum quae apud Deum sunt et ab eo creata innumerabiles varietates in decem universalibus generibus conclusit, quae decem cathegorias (id est predicamenta) vocavit*[88].

(«Aristotle, the shrewdest among the Greeks, as they say, in discovering the way of distinguishing natural things, included the innumerable varieties of all things which are by God and are created by Him in ten universal genera which he called the ten categories, that is, predicaments.»)

The categories, including substance, refer only to the *res naturales*, to created being, not to God himself. At least one gloss in the manuscript – a variation derived from a standard set – follows that hint, while explaining the meaning of *permanens usia* in the *Categoriae decem* as:

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86 Cf. Eriugena, *Periphyseon* I, vol. I, p. 33: *Non enim tam facile ac fere absque ullo labore ad hanc kategoriarum disputationem pervenire valuissemus, non posse scilicet proprie de Deo praedicari, nisi prius de primordialibus causis ab una omnium causa praeconditis, essentiam dico, bonitatem, virtutem, veritatem, sapientiam caeterasque huiusmodi ad purum conficeremus non aliter nisi translative Deum significare.*

87 With the choice of the Boethian translation, Notker was ahead of his time; before the late eleventh century, scholars usually turned to the *Categoriae decem*, cf. Marenbon 2000, p. 25 and Hehle 2002, p. 193.

88 Cod. Sang. 274, p. 4 / Eriugena, *Periphyseon* I, vol. I, p. 32; in the manuscript one can read *apud Deum* instead of *post Deum* as in the critical edition. The passage quoted there continues with a remark that everything created falls under the categories and a list with their Greek names.

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id est quę permanent, dum mutantur eius accidentia. Sed melius permanentem usiam illam debemus advertere omnium ab esse Dei venire. Illud enim quod ab esse Dei venit, sine corruptione durat et est semper[89].

(«that is what endures while its accidents change. But we must better grasp that this permanent substance of all [creatures] comes from God's being, since that, what comes from God's being, lasts without corruption and is always.»)

The gloss ties in with Eriugena's words in the beginning of the manuscript, in as far as God is no longer counted among the *ousiai* but considered as pure *esse* outside the categories. Yet there is little, if any, evidence that such radical positions found many followers in St Gall. The only notable exception is a short philosophical text with the title *De natura, quid sit*, in which God is described as a nothingness above being[90]. It is part of a twelfth-century collection of some of Notker III's Latin works (including the only copy of his letter to Hugo of Sitten)[91]. More recent research is sceptical about its actual origin[92]. Indeed, writings safely attributed to St Gall point in a different direction. While the medieval scholars realized that the abyss between creature and creator might be missed if the same term is used for them, they did not turn to Eriugena and his negative theology. Instead, they relied on Augustine and Boethius, the authors who provided them with the idea of God as substance in the first place and who both insisted that God can be called substance only in a specific sense distinct from created being[93]. In *De trinitate*, Augustine con-

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89   Cod. Sang. 274, p. 16; the gloss explains *Categoriae decem* 140,2-3, on its variants in other manuscripts, cf. Marenbon 1981, pp. 187sq.

90   Cf. Piper 1882/1883, vol. 1, p. XLIX: *Naturam duobus modis dicimus, vel Dei essentiam per quam cuncta procreantur vel procreationem hominum et cęterorum animalium que gignunt et gignuntur, id est usia et eius accidentia que sunt novem.* Shortly after this clear juxtaposition of God and the substances, he adds: *Deus nihilum dicitur, non quod aliquid non sit, sed propter excellentiam ultra quam nihil est.* On God as nothingness in the *Periphyseon* cf. Duclow 1977. In Piper's edition, the passage is tied with the following text, but it actually ends on p. XLX, after *quia terra est*, cf. De Rijk 1963, p. 74.

91   Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, MS 10.615-729, fols. 58ʳ-65ᵛ, written in twelfth-century Trier, cf. De Rijk 1963, pp. 64-81, Kaffarnik 2011, pp. 327-330+333). The history of the collection is uncertain, cf. Glauch 2000, vol. 1, pp. 52sq.

92   While Piper 1882-1983 included *De natura quid sit* (vol. 1, pp. XLIX), it did find its way neither into the authoritative critical edition King/Tax 1996, nor in the recent bilingual edition Ammer - Nievergelt 2024 – for very good reasons, cf. Gauch 2015, p. 188.

93   Boethius went as far as to speak of God as a *substantia ultra substantiam* in *De trinitate* 4; the allusion to Plato, *Politeia* 509b8, where the idea of good is described as *epekeina tês ousias*, comes close to the *via eminentiae* of negative theology. Eriugena, *In Boethii Opuscula*, pp. 40sq., elaborates on God as *ultra substantiam*, but without following through with this idea in the rest of the text. On other places (e.g. ibid., p. 35, p. 46, or pp. 47sq.), God is referred to as substance.

templated the proper Latin equivalent for *ousia*. He prefered *essentia* since it does not imply being subject to accidents. But finally, he yielded to the already established terminology and accepted *substantia* as the more common term[94]. Notker faced similar challenges while translating from Latin to Old High German. He suggested a variety of vernacular pendants to *substantia* – «wíst», «êht», «wíht», «taz ist» and «dázter íst» – only to stick with the original term in this version of the *Consolatio philosophiae*[95]. It is not surprising that his pupil Ekkehard adopted Augustinian thinking on *ousia*, *essentia* and *substantia* in his theological poem *De duobus esse longe dissimilibus* («On two profoundly different kinds of being»). As the title suggests, a central motif is the opposition of *esse formis substans* and God as the *esse formas quasque superstans*. As a consequence, Ekkehard did not refer to God as *substantia*, although he spoke about his *summa essentia*[96]. Since no larger treatise on the Trinity penned by him has survived (and as far as we know he never wrote one), it is hard to judge if his insistence on the distinction between *substantia* and *essentia* is limited to the specific context of this poem, or if he generally decided to be more Augustinian than Augustine himself. But Ekkehard clearly signalled that he understood the problems which came with the introduction of Aristotle's ontology into Christian theology. His solution was, however, not apophatic speech, but a more considerate use of classical philosophical terminology.

But how does the poem in London, British Library, Add. MS 11852 fit into this picture? Obviously, each assessment is highly speculative since it is based only on two words in a single verse[97]. The use of the term *usya* clearly indicates that the unknown author placed himself in an Augustinian-Boethian theological tradition. Given the historical context in which the poem was written, it is not too bold to assume that he chose the Greek instead of the Latin word not only on account of metrical constraints. His vocabulary corresponds to a linguistic caution which, as we have seen, was typical for St Gall's school milieu in that time.

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94 Cf. Augustine, *De trinitate* 5,8: *Dicunt quidem et illi ὑπόστασιν, sed nescio quid volunt interesse inter οὐσίαν et ὑπόστασιν ita ut plerique nostri qui haec graeco tractant eloquio dicere consuerint μίαν οὐσίαν τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις, quod est latine, unam essentiam tres substantias. Sed quia nostra loquendi consuetudo iam obtinuit ut hoc intellegatur cum dicimus essentiam quod intellegitur cum dicimus substantiam, non audemus dicere unam essentiam, tres substantias, sed unam essentiam uel substantiam.* He touched on that topic several times in *De trinitate*, e.g. when he stated that it would be *melius* to use *essentia* instead of *substantia* (ibid., p. 3,10 and 5,2).

95 Cf. Jaehrling 1969, pp. 28-35.

96 Cf. Ekkehard IV, *Liber benedictionum* I 57, 4+12 (p. 274).

97 It was, however, not unusual at St Gall to use single terms to invoke a much broader theoretical background, as Wirth 1994, p. 114-117, explains regarding the expression *musa*.

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III. Conclusion

The evidence collected in the present investigation is hopefully enough to support the claim that *Drama tibi* is a product of the school of St Gall under Notker III and Ekkehard IV. Yet this is not the only conclusion that can be drawn from the foregoing observations. If put into context, the poem offers much richer insights into contemporary intellectual life. Medieval education was centered around the study of authoritative texts, both secular and religious. However, reading and interpreting these difficult texts required careful preparation. The pupils in St Gall and other monastic houses were provided with the necessary education both by oral instruction and by an ever-growing body of written material that can be divided roughly into two groups: treatises, which convey the necessary background knowledge in a coherent way, and commentaries, which apply the respective knowledge to specific hermeneutic problems. Glosses, into which Ekkehard put much effort, were a very common form of commentary, Notker's explanatory translations another, more exotic, one. Occasionally, poetic dedications, colophons and similar texts also fall into that category. *Drama tibi* is more than a decorative element. Its six couplets remind the readers of Add. 11852 of the discursive context of biblical studies by locating the Pauline Epistles in a more comprehensive epistemological and theological framework. But in order to fully understand the words of the anonymous poet, one has to be aware of the thought of the two famous school masters. While his couplets help to make sense of Holy Scripture, they fulfill this function only in as far as they are embedded in a larger, multimedia classroom environment that included copies of patristic and early medieval works like Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*, treatises, translations, glosses and poems from the school of St Gall as well as Notker's and Ekkehard's own lessons. In such a complex constellation of written and oral instruction, *Drama tibi* serves as a link between one individual manuscript and the surrounding cosmos of learning. This functional side makes the poem a particularly interesting source. It does not offer much in terms of philosophical originality. The author simply follows the Augustinianism prevalent in his monastery. But his verses and their transmission throw light on the mechanism of knowledge production and transmission in a large Benedictine house around the year 1000. They illustrate how local scholars and teachers established a highly interconnected space of knowledge, in which their pupils (as well as senior monks when consulting the same codices), were subject to constant guidance.

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