AUGUSTINE'S Inner Dialogue

The Philosophical Soliloquy in Late Antiquity

BRIAN STOCK

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Augustine's philosophy of life involves reviewing one's past and exercises for self-improvement. Centuries after Plato and before Freud he invented a "spiritual exercise" in which every man and woman is able, through memory, to reconstruct and reinterpret life's aims. Brian Stock examines Augustine's unique way of blending literary and philosophical themes. He proposes a new interpretation of Augustine's early writings, establishing how the philosophical soliloquy (*soliloquium*) has emerged as a mode of inquiry and how it relates to problems of self-existence and self-history. The book also provides clear analysis of inner dialogue and discourse and how, as inner dialogue complements and finally replaces outer dialogue, a style of thinking emerges, arising from ancient sources and a religious attitude indebted to Judeo-Christian tradition.

BRIAN STOCK is Emeritus Professor of History and Literature at the University of Toronto. His previous publications include *The Implications of Literacy* (1981) *Augustine the Reader* (1996) and *Bibliothèques intérieures* (2005).

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The Philosophical Soliloquy in Late Antiquity

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In memory of Pierre Hadot
and for Ilsetraut Hadot

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Preface and acknowledgements

In an earlier study entitled *Augustine the Reader* (1996) I attempted to trace the stages of development of Augustine's outlook as a reader and to situate this skill within his approach to meditation, interpretation, and the search for self-knowledge. My attention was chiefly devoted to the narrative books of the *Confessions* (books one to nine) in an effort to describe how Augustine's story of himself as a reader harmonized with what can be learned about his understanding of texts from his philosophical and theological writings in the period before and after the writing of his autobiography.

This book was initially conceived as a companion volume in which I intended to make a more detailed analysis of these problems within the writings known as "the dialogues" than was possible in *Augustine the Reader*. However, as the study progressed, this plan was gradually modified and eventually abandoned altogether. The topic of reading, with which my earlier book was concerned, is not absent from Augustine's early writings, as Catherine Conybeare has recently reminded us, but only emerges with clarity in *De Doctrina Christiana* (396) and the *Confessiones* (397–400). In the decade before these works were composed Augustine had other interests as well, and one of these is taken up in the pages that follow. I am referring to the use of inner dialogue as a "spiritual exercise" and to the rôle which such exercises play in the formation of a narrative philosophy and theology.

This book deals primarily with this question in the period 386–400, since it was during this time that Augustine composed most of his inner dialogues. However, in Chapters 2 and 4, I am obliged to go beyond these dates and examine works written later, such as *De Civitate Dei*, *De Trinitate*, and *De Genesi ad Litteram*. My chief reason for extending the study's chronological range is that in these writings Augustine completes his thinking on many of the topics taken up in his early writings, such as words, images, memory, time, and self-existence, which are

important topics in his soliloquies. In moving beyond his early years I am also acknowledging a feature of his writings as a whole, namely their "episodic" character. On many topics in his philosophy and theology Augustine does not develop his ideas in a systematic fashion, but, like an essayist in the Montaigne tradition, returns again and again to a few central concerns, on each occasion adopting a slightly different approach. It is often necessary to compare these statements in order to arrive at a consolidated view of his meaning.

The idea of writing this book first occurred to me during a Residency at the Bellagio Study and Conference Center of the Rockefeller Foundation, which is located not far from Cassiciacum, the country estate in the hills above Milan where Augustine's first dialogues are thought to have been conceived. I was subsequently invited to conduct seminars dealing with the volume's themes at the Collège de France, the University of California, Berkeley, and the Accademia dei Lincei, Rome. In bringing the study to completion I have been greatly assisted by the libraries of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, and the Institut des Études Augustiniennes, Paris. I am especially indebted to two librarians, Bill Edwards in Toronto and Claudine Croyère in Paris. I also thank Jean-Luc Lory, the director of the Maison Suger of the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, for his gracious hospitality.

I would like to express my gratitude to my gifted graduate students in Berkeley, Paris, and Toronto, as well as to the colleagues who have generously given me their advice at different stages of the project. These include Isabelle Bochet, Peter Brown, Nello Cipriani, François Dolbeau, Martine Dulaey, Brad Inwood, Aviad Kleinberg, Seth Lerer, Anthony Long, Donald Mastronarde, Virgilio Pacioni, Jean Pépin, John Rist, Richard Sorabji, and above all the late Goulven Madec, whose knowledge of Augustinian scholarship was possibly unrivalled in our time. I have profited greatly from conversations on the Augustinian heritage in later centuries with an eminent authority on medieval philosophy, l'abbé Édouard Jeauneau. Maruja Jackman carefully read the drafts of my commentaries on the dialogues, while Fred Unwalla and Lindsay Waters gave me the advice of experienced editors at a later stage of writing. Finally, I acknowledge the many benefits I derived from a long friendship with Pierre Hadot, whose work on ancient and late ancient philosophy has been a major source of inspiration: *Quae potui et sicut potui de tantis tantillus contuli* (*De Mus.*, 6.17.59).

Augustine of Hippo (354–430): dates in his early career

354	born 13 November at Thagaste, Numidia
366–369	school in Madauros
370	university in Carthage
373–375	teaching in Thagaste
373	Manichaean "auditor"
376	teaching in Carthage
383	teaching in Rome
384	professor in Milan
386	begins reading "Libri Platonicorum"
386	in July, conversion to religious life; in November, begins dialogues
386	autumn, discussions at Cassiciacum
387	baptism (at Easter) in Milan
387	Rome and Ostia
387	death of Monica
388	return to Thagaste
389	death of Adeodatus
391	ordination at Hippo
395–396	bishop of Hippo

Abbreviations

Acad.	Cicero, *Academica*
Ad Simp.	*Ad Simplicianum*
AG	*Augustinus*
AL	*Augustinus-Lexikon*
AM	*Augustinus Magister*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1954–1955)
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
ATA	*Augustine through the Ages. An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald, O.S.A., (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, 1989)
AUG	*Augustinianum*
BA	*Bibliothèque Augustinienne* (Paris, 1936–)
C. Acad.	*Contra Academicos*
C. Cresc. Donat.	*Contra Cresconium Grammaticum Donatistam*
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (Turnhout, 1954–)
C. Faust. Man.	*Contra Faustum Manichaeum*
C. Felicem Man.	*Contra Felicem Manichaeum*
C. Iul.	*Contra Iulianum*
Conf.	*Confessiones*
Cons. Phil.	Boethius, *Consolatio Philosophiae*
CQ	*Classical Quarterly*
C. Secund.	*Contra Secundinum Manichaeum*
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna, 1866–)
De Civ. Dei	*De Civitate Dei*
De Dial.	*De Dialectica*
De Div. Quaest.	*De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII*
De Doct. Christ.	*De Doctrina Christiana*
De Duob. An.	*De Duobus Animabus*

De Fin.	Cicero, *De Finibus*
De Gen. ad Litt.	*De Genesi ad Litteram*
De Gen. ad Man.	*De Genesi ad Manichaeos*
De Gramm.	*De Grammatica*
De Imm. An.	*De Immortalitate Animae*
De Lib. Arbit.	*De Libero Arbitrio*
De Mag.	*De Magistro*
De Mor. Eccls. Cath.	*De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae et de Moribus Manichaeorum*
De Mus.	*De Musica*
De Orat.	Cicero, *De Oratore*
De Ord.	*De Ordine*
De Praed. Sanct.	*De Praedestinatione Sanctorum*
De Quant. An.	*De Quantitate Animae*
De Serm. Dom. in Monte	*De Sermone Domini in Monte*
De Trin.	*De Trinitate*
De Util. Cred.	*De Utilitate Credendi*
De Vera Rel.	*De Vera Religione*
De Vid. Deo	*De Videndo Deo* (= *Ep.*, 147)
Ench.	*Enchiridion*
En. in Ps.	*Enarrationes in Psalmos*
Enn.	Plotinus, *Enneads*
Ep.	*Epistulae*
Hort.	Cicero, *Hortensius*
OSAP	*Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
RA	*Recherches Augustiniennes*
REA	*Revue des études augustiniennes*
Retr.	*Retractationes*
SE	*Sacris Erudiri*
Sol.	*Soliloquia*
SP	*Studia Patristica*
TLL	*Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*
Tusc. Disp.	Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes*

Introduction

The subject of this study is a literary and philosophical genre which is defined in the writings of Augustine of Hippo as the soliloquy (*soliloquium*). This is a type of rational dialogue (or dialogue with Reason) in which questions are asked and answers given within the mind of a single person.[1] In the pages that follow I examine Augustine's use of soliloquies in the works known as his "dialogues,"[2] as well as in the *Confessiones*, *De Civitate Dei*, and *De Trinitate*.

[1] *Sol.*, 2.1.1; cf. *Retr.*, 1.4.1, where Augustine speaks of an inner dialogue with Reason. For a discussion of types of soliloquies in his writings, see Chapter 2.

[2] The composition of the "dialogues" can be divided into two phases of Augustine's activity (omitting the lost *De Pulchro et Apto*, from 380–381):

(1) The period between 23 August 386, when Augustine departed from his teaching position in Milan, and 24/25 April 387 (Easter), the date of his baptism by Ambrose in Milan. Works of this period include *Contra Academicos*, *De Beata Vita*, *De Ordine*, and *Soliloquia*, to which he refers as a group at *Conf.*, 9.4.7 and *Retr.*, 1.1.1. During this period he probably also wrote *De Dialectica*, *De Grammatica* (possibly surviving as a fragment), and a first draft of *De Immortalitate Animae*.

(2) The period that begins with his sojourn in Rome in 387–388 and, following his return to Africa in 388, ends with his episcopal ordination in 395 or 396. Works of this period include *De Musica* (387–388/390), *De Quantitate Animae* (388), *De Magistro* (388–389), and *De Libero Arbitrio* (387–388; finished by 395); *De Vera Religione*, sent to Romanianus in 391; and *De Diversis Quaestionibus*, which resulted from conversations between 388 and 395 brought together in 395–396.

Cassiciacum, where Augustine and his students met, can possibly be identified with Cassago Brianza, which lies some 30–40 km northwest of Milan; see O. Perler, *Les voyages de saint Augustin* (Paris, 1969), pp. 138f., and 179–176; and his article, "Recherches sur les Dialogues et le site de Cassiciacum," *AG* 13 (1968), 344–352. The alternative site of Casciago, near Varese, is suggested by Luigi Beretta, "Rus Cassiciacum: Bilancio e aggiornamento della vexata questio," in *Agostino e la conversione cristiana*, ed. A. Caprioli and L. Vaccaro (Palermo, 1987), pp. 67–83, and by Silvano Colombo, "Ancora sul Rus Cassiciacum di Agostino," *ibid.*, pp. 85–92. On the friends assembled at Cassiciacum, the classic account remains Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 2nd edn (Berkeley, 2000), pp. 108–120; cf. Serge Lancel, *Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1999), pp. 146–162. For biographies on the participants, see *AL*, s.v.

For an outstanding introduction to the themes of Augustine's early writings, see Goulven Madec, *Saint Augustin et la philosophie*: *Notes critiques* (Paris, 1996), with bibliography, pp. 12–13. An important review of scholarship for the early period of Augustine's activity is found in Therese Fuhrer, *Augustin Contra Academicos* (Berlin, 1997), pp. 7–12. For the most recent authoritative dating of the dialogues, see *AL*, vol. 1, xxvi-xlii; on earlier chronologies, see Pierre Courcelle,

I am chiefly concerned with one use for soliloquies in these works. This is Augustine's development of a consistent philosophy of narrative between roughly 386 and 400 and the application of that philosophy to his conception of the self. The book's organization is intended to reflect this progressively developing concern with *soliloquium*, *narratio historica*, and personal identity. I begin in Chapter 1 with a review of the influences that shaped Augustine's conception of inner dialogue. Chapter 2 deals with an important example of this type of discourse in his early writings, namely his demonstration of the existence of the self. In Chapter 2 I also introduce the theme of the narrative self, toward which, I argue, he orients his reiterated uses of this demonstration in the years leading up to his conversion to the religious life. Chapter 3 discusses soliloquies and narratives in the dialogues devoted respectively to order and free will, namely *De Ordine* and *De Libero Arbitrio*. Chapter 4, which is theoretical in focus, takes up the topics of words, images, time, and memory as they pertain to the book's major themes.

In the Introduction I would like to touch on three topics which lie in the background of the works discussed in these chapters: the relationship of inner dialogue to Augustine's philosophy of language; his assumption that narrative is a basic feature of human thinking and behavior; and the reasons for his doubts concerning the possibility of progressive knowledge on theological issues concerned with the self.

LANGUAGE

I begin by reminding my readers that there has never been any question about the importance of the dialogues within Augustine's *oeuvre*.[3] These works provide an introduction to one of the enduring themes of his writings, namely the search for wisdom (*sapientia*) and the happy life (*beata vita*).[4] They also present thinking of acknowledged originality

Les Confessions de saint Augustin dans la tradition littéraire (Paris, 1963) and *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1968).

3 For a refreshing view of the dialogues with many insights, see Catherine Conybeare, *The Irrational Augustine* (Oxford, 2006).

4 On the question of continuity central to the thinking of Goulven Madec, see Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology* (Oxford, 2006). The terms *sapientia* and *beata vita* recur frequently in the following pages, and therefore some explanation of what I mean by them is appropriate at the outset. I normally render *beata vita* as "happy life," but there is no adequate translation for the expression in Augustine's writings. In the dialogues the noun *vita* refers both to the awareness of being alive and to the pattern of one's life as a whole, as contrasted with its constituent episodes, while the adjective *beata* makes an implicit distinction between pleasure as a sensory experience, giving rise to good feelings, and happiness or blessedness, which is

on topics that are of interest in the contemporary study of philosophy, psychology, theology, and literature. Among these are gesture, mimesis, and non-verbal communication; linguistic conventions and the theory of signs; secular and religious (or biblical) hermeneutics; the will, intentionality, and ethics; temporal and spiritual forces in history; and areas of inquiry linking ancient and modern philosophy, such as sensation, perception, imagination, memory, materialism, and the origin of the human soul.[5]

Despite the range and significance of these themes, the dialogues have been a source of problems in Augustinian scholarship for well over a hundred years. One of these concerns arises from the impression of intellectual disorderliness which they create in the minds of those who try to follow their arguments. The lack of disciplined thinking is evident in the content of these works, which sometimes moves from one topic to another without apparent reason, as well as in their literary form, which frequently abandons logical development in favor of dictated views. Although Augustine's model was doubtless Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, his dialogues do not present either pagan or Christian doctrines with the rigor with which Cicero outlines his philosophical positions. In view of their rickety construction, many students of the Augustinian dialogues have asked, as did H.-I. Marrou, whether these writings possess any recognizable principle of organization, or whether, despite their moments of brilliance, they merely reflect the eclectic reading habits of a *lettré de la décadence*.[6]

non-sensory and permanently unattainable in a lifetime. (On Augustine's notion of the *beata vita*, see the bibliography by J. Doignon in *AL*, vol. 1, pp. 623–624; on Stoic notions of "the wise man," with which his notion of happiness has much in common, see the summary in A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 455–456). As it pertains to the life that is lived, Augustine's use of *beata* likewise extends and transforms Plotinus's Εὐδαίμων, which does not mean "happy" but "being in a good state"; cf. A. H. Armstrong (trans.), *Plotinus*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA, 1966), 170n1; this may come about through divine beneficence; see A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*, 2nd edn (Berkeley, 1986), pp. 4–6, 61–69; 179–184; 196–209. In Plotinus, as in Augustine, this approach to ethics is not only envisaged for the sage but for all seekers of wisdom; see Alexandrine Schniewind, *L'Éthique du sage chez Plotin: Le paradigme du "spoudaios"* (Paris, 2003), pp. 171–197. The most important study of these themes in Augustine's writings remains Ragnar Holte, *Béatitude et sagesse. Saint Augustin et la fin de l'homme dans la philosophie ancienne*, trans. de Paillerets, Refoulé, and Sandby (Paris and Worcester, MA, 1962).

[5] On these themes, see the valuable synthesis of Gerald O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (London, 1987). For an assessment of Augustine's influence based on such philosophical insights, see Goulven Madec, "Saint Augustin est-il le malin génie de l'Europe," in *Imaginer l'Europe: Le marché européen, tâche culturelle et économique*, ed. Paul Kowslowski (Paris, 1992), pp. 279–290.

[6] H.-I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la culture antique*, 4th edn (Paris, 1958), p. 337; cf. Marrou, *Décadence romaine ou Antiquité tardive* (Paris, 1977). An excellent reassessment of the

In the pages that follow I argue that there are essentially two sources of disorderliness in Augustine's early writings. One of these results from failures of reasoning on the part of Augustine or his interlocutors, which have frequently been the subject of comment. The other is deliberately introduced by Augustine as a part of the dialogues' literary and philosophical design. The purpose of this calculated decentering is to illustrate the sorts of problems which arise when philosophical or theological questions are discussed in an open forum. Augustine proposes that these difficulties can be eliminated, at least in part, when the external dialogue is replaced by the soliloquy or inner dialogue. This thinking becomes clear if we follow his criticisms of the open dialogue through his early writings and take into account his extension of interior reasoning to an ever widening circle of issues.

The contrast between outer and inner dialogue provides Augustine with a way of dramatizing his attitude towards exterior and interior words, and this theme is presented more systematically in his philosophy of language. This philosophy is principally introduced into his early writings in *De Magistro*, and, after a series of restatements and modifications, is summarized in the later books of *De Trinitate*. In book nine of the latter work he observes that "we use the term 'word' in one sense when we speak of words which fill a determined space of time with their syllables, whether they are spoken or simply thought; in a different sense when everything that is known is called a word impressed on our mind, as long as it can be brought forth from memory and defined."[7] Speaking of the same subject in book fifteen Augustine further suggests that the unspoken words of thought are the intellectualized designs, even, one might suggest, the intentions, of spoken words, which issue forth in specific languages, such as Latin, Greek, or Punic.[8] On the nature of this functional interior speech he asks:

What is that which can be a word, and, therefore, is already worthy of the name of a word? What, I say, is this word formable and not yet formed, except something of our own mind which we cast this way and that by a kind of revolving

philosophical issues in such an evaluation is John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge, 1994).

[7] *De Trin.*, 9.10.15: "Aliter enim dicuntur uerba quae spatia temporum syllabis tenent siue pronuntientur siue cogitentur; aliter omne quod notum est uerbum dicitur animo impressum quamdiu de memoria proferri et definiri potest." For an outline of types of speech in Augustine, see Christopher Kirwan, "Augustine on the Nature of Speech," in *Companions to Ancient Thought 3: Language*, ed. Stephen Everson (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 188–211, from which this trans. is taken; cf. Christopher Kirwan, *Augustine* (London, 1989), pp. 55–59.

[8] *De Trin.*, 15.10.19.

motion, according as we think now of this and now of that thing, just as they are found, or as they occur to our mind? And it then becomes a true word when that which we cast, as I have said, by a revolving motion, arrives at that which we know … And, therefore … something of our own mind is already to be called a word which can be formed from our knowledge even before it is formed, because it is, so to say, already formable.[9]

It follows that there is a hierarchy of types of words leading from spoken words to the interior words of thought, and finally to the Word of God, as he observes later in the same discussion:

Hence, the word which sounds without is a sign of the word which shines within, to which the name of word more properly belongs. For that which is produced by the mouth of the flesh is the sound of the word, and is itself also called the word, because that inner word assumed it in order that it might appear outwardly. For just as our word in some way becomes a bodily sound by assuming that in which it may be manifested to the senses of men, so the Word of God was made flesh by assuming that in which He might also be manifested to the senses of men.[10]

In a philosophical context the lowest level in this scheme is occupied by the indiscriminate use of words in conversation, just as, in the dialogues, the lowest level of argumentation is represented by the students' verbal disputations in the presence of their master. In both cases what Augustine has in mind is the disorderliness that can be created by the unreflective use of language. His students move in an undisciplined manner from point to point, as long as their thoughts are carried forwards by their verbal exchanges, until at length they realize, as does Adeodatus in *De Magistro*, that interior instruction is the only way to get to the bottom of their problems. For Augustine, this admission is the beginning of wisdom, since the starting point of all self-understanding "is an inner knowledge by which we know that we live."[11]

THE SELF AND NARRATIVE

Augustine proposes, then, that the best way to do serious thinking is not by talking to others but by talking to oneself. As my last quotation suggests, the first thing that he learns when he is engaged in such inner conversation is that he exists.

[9] *Ibid.*, 15.15.25, trans. Stephen McKenna.
[10] *Ibid.*, 15.11.20.
[11] *Ibid.*, 15.1.2.21.

In one of his earliest compositions in dialogue form, the *Soliloquia*, he draws attention to the connection between the form of his discourse, which is carried on in the first person within himself, and the product of that interchange, which is the assertion of self-existence. On reading his statements on this theme, it is tempting to think of the bishop of Hippo as a precursor of Descartes, who, possibly echoing his views, more famously states "*Cogito, ergo sum*."[12] But, (as I point out in Chapter 2) this temptation must be resisted. For one thing, Augustine and Descartes have different attitudes towards Scepticism, which is what their statements concerning self-existence are intended to refute. Descartes' is a thorough rejection, without compromise, while Augustine refuses one part of the Sceptical position while accepting another. For Descartes the "proof" of the self's existence is the starting point for gaining certain knowledge about objects in the external world. Augustine is "proving" nothing: he is just saying that his self-existence is something of which he is undeniably aware but that the source of this awareness is not traceable to his formal knowledge. In a similar way, in book eleven of the *Confessiones* he argues that he has an awareness of time even though he cannot say that he knows what time is.

Another reason for distinguishing between these pivotal spokesmen on the problem of self-existence arises from their attitudes towards the connection between self-existence and narrative. Put simply, Descartes' view of the self, as defended by his "*cogito*," excludes narrative, while Augustine's version subtly incorporates it. In the three works in which Descartes' conception of the self is most clearly outlined, namely *Discours de la méthode* (1637), *Meditationes de prima philosophia* (1641), and *Les Passions de l'âme* (1649), there is no serious analysis of narrative (except, in the *Discours*, as the recapitulation of a failed education). By contrast, in the *Confessiones*, personal narrative plays an important rôle in defining the modalities of self-understanding, since the bishop of Hippo is convinced that almost everything we know about ourselves is derived from events recorded and reinterpreted in the memory. When Augustine utilizes soliloquies, therefore, in the context of self-knowledge, he is not only talking to himself about timeless philosophical questions, such as the nature of existence; he is also engaged in an internal conversation about the meaning to himself of the flow of events over time, which the passage of his spoken words illustrates.

[12] The classic statement of the principle is in *Discours de la méthode*, chapter 4 (ed. C. Adams and P. Tannery, (*Œuvres de Descartes*, Paris: Vrin, 1969), vol. 6.

Augustine's thinking on these issues has a great deal of novelty but his conclusions can nonetheless be situated within a venerable tradition of thinking on the topic of latent knowledge. In this tradition the highest truths are thought to be concealed in the literary, philosophical, and theological works of a remote period of time.[13] These can be accessed through the patient scholarly unraveling of the secrets contained in such writings, which involves a combination of philology, philosophy, and theology.

Following this line of thinking, many ancient commentators were convinced that Homer and Hesiod communicated the essence of their teachings under the integument of poetry.[14] Christian authors were similarly persuaded that the Bible presents ethical and cosmological doctrines through such literary genres as prayer, historical narrative, and prophecy. Augustine proposes that the Bible has been brought forth by God "like an epic song from an incomparably fine musician"[15] and awaits skilled exegesis.[16] In *De Vera Religione* he makes use of Plato's view that the form of sacred writings can tell us something about the design and composition of the universe.[17] The great Neoplatonic prayer with which the *Soliloquia* begins is a striking example of his belief that poetic prose can be used to describe inner and hidden cosmic harmonies. He is sympathetic to Socrates' view that "every discourse must be organized like a living creature … [in which the parts] are fitting in relation to each other and to the whole."[18] He illustrates this doctrine in his hermeneutics, in which the "parts" and "wholes" of biblical texts are understood to be mutually supportive. Like many ancient writers he is convinced that works of literature and philosophy can contribute to the mental and moral health of their readers, restoring and maintaining their emotional equilibrium.[19] The lengthy dialogue, *De Ordine*, may be a response to a poem by his

[13] For a review of earlier approaches to this question, see G. R. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenic Philosophy: A Study of its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 3–27; on its absence before Judaism, see Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), pp. 1–8; on composite notions of wisdom in ancient thought, see George B. Kerferd, "The Image of the Wise Man in Greece in the Period before Plato," in *Images of Man: Studia Gerardo Verbeke* (Louvain, 1976), pp. 17–28.

[14] On the early development of this method, see Glenn W. Most, "The Poetics of Early Greek Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. A. A. Long (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 342–359.

[15] *Ep.*, 138.5 (to Marcellinus in 412): "uelut magnum carmen cuiusdam ineffabilis modulatoris".

[16] *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.9.20.

[17] *Critias* 106a; cf. *Timaeus* 29a-30a; 56a-b. On this theme see Pierre Hadot, "Physique et poésie dans le *Timée* de Platon," in *Études de philosophie ancienne* (Paris, 1998), pp. 278–305.

[18] *Phaedrus* 264c, trans. H. N. Fowler (Loeb); cf. 265d.

[19] On the analogy between sight, insight, and healing, see *De Doct. Christ.*, 1.9.9; 1.14.13; 1.16.15; on the Platonic context, see Anthony Kenny, "Mental Health in Plato's Republic," in Kenny,

friend Zenobius on this very topic, suggesting a solution which combines asceticism and the liberal arts.[20]

It is within this tradition that Augustine evolves an original and influential view of narrative,[21] which develops in three directions in his early writings. One of these is outlined in book six of *De Musica*, where he talks about narrative at a microscopic level as it moves from the voice to the mind in a sequence of syllables. In his view, these sounds are lodged in the memory in the order in which they arrive and they can be retrieved in that order by the speaker as words, sentences, or larger units of discourse. Secondly, he speaks of narrative thinking within an interpretative (or exegetical) framework. This conception is well summed up in the term *enarrationes*, which is employed in the title of the lengthy commentary on the Psalms begun during his early priesthood. In its literal context an Augustinian *enarratio* is a description or explanation: a recounting of events, the exposition of a theme, or the interpretation of a text or author (the term *enarrator* in fact representing what we nowadays call a text's interpreter). Finally, Augustine has a conception of narrative which is autobiographical,[22] and this appears to be largely his own invention.

These types of narrative – auditory, expository, and creative – present particular difficulties which are addressed in the pages that follow. However, by way of introduction something has to be said about autobiographical narrative, since this is the source of the largest controversy in Augustinian studies over the past century and is directly linked to Augustine's notion of soliloquy through the *Confessiones*. The problem has arisen because he left differing accounts of the same events in his life, and it is unclear how these accounts reflect what actually took place. The debate on the question reached a turning point in 1950, when Pierre Courcelle published a rigorosly argued set of studies, which effectively distinguished between "historical" and "theological" motivations in Augustine's records of his intellectual pursuits down to the time of his conversion to the religious life. Courcelle challenged many statements

The Anatomy of the Soul. Historical Essays in the Philosophy of Mind (Oxford, 1973), pp. 23–24; on the Ciceronian background, see Stephen A. White, "Cicero and the Therapeutists" in *Cicero the Philosopher*, ed. and intro. J. G. F. Powell (Oxford, 1995), pp. 215–221, 226–233; for insights into Augustine's terminology for emotions and emotional experiences, see Philip Burton, *Language in the "Confessions of Augustine"* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 133–172.

[20] *De Ord.*, 1.7.20.

[21] See Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et récit*, vol. 1, ch. 1 (Paris, 1983 = *Time and Narrative*, trans. K. McLaughlin and D. Pellauer, Chicago, 1984).

[22] See Georg Misch, *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity*, trans. E. W. Dickes, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1951).

concerning events related in the *Confessiones* and proposed that a more accurate account of the formative years of the bishop of Hippo could be pieced together from letters, dialogues, and commentaries written before 397.[23]

On the whole historians have accepted his conclusions,[24] but the results of his research have been complemented from two directions. First, in the light of recent thinking on the nature of autobiography, it has become customary to look on Augustine's personal reflections on his life as revisions, rewritings, or reinterpretations, rather than to defend any one version of the story as a factual record.[25] After the Second Sophistic, such accounts frequently take the form of a "weaving" of events and their interpretation.[26] As a result, the view that a life is something in itself has been supplemented by the view that an autobiography consists largely "in the constructing, in the text, or the text making."[27]

Also, in the minds of many historians, it is questionable whether the term "autobiography" adequately characterizes the *Confessiones*. In recent years Augustine's masterpiece has been increasingly viewed as a Christian version of a mental, emotional, and spiritual discipline common to several schools of philosophy, whose earlier history has been patiently reconstructed by Pierre Hadot.[28] Previous work on these "exercises" has

[23] *Recherches sur les Confessions*, 1st edn (Paris, 1950); cf. with useful insights, Joanne McWilliam, "The Cassiciacum Autobiography," *SP* 18.4 (1990), 14–43.

[24] Two important discoveries have supplemented the evidence acccessible to Courcelle and his critics: (1) Johannes Divjak (ed.), *Epistolae ex duobus codicibus nuper in lucem prolatae* (*CSEL* 88 [1981]); on which see Goulven Madec, "Du nouveau dans la correspondence augustinienne," *REA* 27 (1981), 56–66; Henry Chadwick, "New Letters of St. Augustine," *J. of Theological Studies* 34.2 (1983), 425–452 (afterwards referred to as 1*, 2*, etc); and (2) *Vingt-six sermons au peuple d'Afrique: Retrouvés à Mayence, édités et commentés par François Dolbeau* (Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 147, Paris, 1996); on which see F. Dolbeau, *Vingt-six sermons au peuple d'Afrique (Augustin) : Mise à jour bibliographique 1996–2000* (Paris, 2001); cf. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, vii, pp. 501–502.

[25] See, for example, James Olney, *Memory and Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing* (Chicago, 1998).

[26] Richard Sorabji, "Soul and Self in Ancient Philosophy," in *From Soul to Self*, ed. James C. Crabbe (London, 1999), p. 17; on Augustine's notion of the contemplative self, as the development of Plato and Aristotle, pp. 21–22; on the Plotinian contribution, highly influential on Augustine, see E. R. Dodds, "Tradition and Personal Achievement in the Philosophy of Plotinus," in *The Ancient Concept of Progress and other Essays on Greek Literature and Belief* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 129–132, 135–139.

[27] Jerome Bruner, "Self-making and World-making," in *Narrative and Identity: Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 2001), p. 27.

[28] *Conf.*, 10.1.1–10.4.5; see Pierre Hadot, "Spiritual Exercises," in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. and intro. Arnold I. Davidson (Oxford, 1995), pp. 81–125; *What is Ancient Philosophy*, trans. M. Chase (Cambridge, MA, 2002), parts 1–2. An important study with comparable themes is Anthony Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford, 2002).

been concerned chiefly with their philosophical implications; however, in Augustine, they regularly unite philosophy and rhetoric and become in themselves a novel literary genre which effectively combines self-talk with self-narrative. In this respect, Augustine doubtless intended the *Confessiones* to stand beside, if not to rival, Vergil's *Aeneid*, the canonical text of Roman moral education which he and his students were studying together in Milan and at Cassiciacum.[29] His rhetorical talents are deployed in persuading the reader that such an exercise, involving a reinterpretation of one's life, can provide counsel on how to reach the ancient goals of wisdom and happiness.

In this book I attempt to show how Augustine engages in a traditional programme of spiritual exercises while at the same time writing about that program in a literary and narrative form which is clearly addressed to an audience. As a result of these experiments involving soliloquy and narrative, he becomes the first person in the ancient world to contrast the psychological and historical notions of the self (as illustrated in Chapters 2 and 3).[30] The psychological configuration, which is non-narrative, is built around the fact of self-consciousness, and this is defended by different versions of the anti-Sceptical statement, "*Si fallor, sum*."[31] The historical configuration, which is a narrative construct, derives ultimately from the story of the creation of man and woman "in God's image and likeness" in the book of Genesis. This notion is introduced into his thinking on the subject as early as 390 in *De Vera Religione*; it is subsequently elaborated in the *Confessiones* and *De Civitate Dei*, in the one through the history of the individual, in the other through the history of mankind.[32]

[29] For interesting reflections on Vergil's influence with an extensive review of the important contributions in German, see Sabine MacCormack, *The Shadow of Poetry: Vergil in the Mind of Augustine* (Berkeley, 1998).

[30] Like other Latin and Greek authors in the period, Augustine has no specific term for the self, frequently expressing what he has in mind through pronouns; e.g., *Sol.*, 1.1.1: "Volventi *mihi* … ac … quaerenti *memetipsum* …, ait *mihi* … sive *ego ipse* sive *alius quis*," my italics; cf. 7.1.2: "*ego* nec *mihimet ipse uel ipse* conspicuus." The discussion of the self at *Alcibiades* 129b, ff., which can be conceived as a precedent to late ancient thinking on the subject, is unknown to Augustine; however, he utilizes the analogy of the mirror image, which he may have acquired through Plotinus; on this topic, see below, Chapter 1. Another ancient theme with which Augustine is concerned is the relation between self-knowledge and self-care; cf. Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick Hutton (eds.), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst, MA, 1988), pp. 25–26; for a revised and more extensive statement, see *L'Herméneutique du sujet: Cours au Collège de France 1981–1982* (Paris, 2001).

[31] *De Civ. Dei*, 11.26.

[32] See *Conf.*, 4.12.29 and *De Civ. Dei*, 11.1.

PROGRESSIVE KNOWLEDGE

The appearance of a notion of the self arising from a theory of narrative coincides with Augustine's rethinking of another problem which is touched upon in the chapters that follow. This concerns the possibility of self-progress over time, and the rôle of acquired knowledge in such progress. For, if knowledge is hidden in philosophical works or the Bible, and this knowledge can be accessed through a combination of reason, traditional interpretive strategies, and faith, it is legitimate for the individual in search of such enlightenment to ask whether information acquired in this way has any part to play in reaching his or her ultimate goal, namely lasting happiness.

Augustine's thinking on this question undergoes a considerable evolution. He is initially optimistic about making progress on achieving happiness by means of philosophy, and a part of that optimism is reflected in the playfulness with which the topic is approached in his first four dialogues, beginning with *De Beata Vita*. However, as time passes, his views are considerably altered, and it is with a sense of disillusionment over his youthful enthusiasm that he attacks the issues in book ten of *De Trinitate*, where he asks himself what precisely was intended by the Delphic oracle's command for men and women to gain self-knowledge.[33] The turning point in his discussion of this theme is his conversion to the religious life, after which he distances himself from the gradational, hierarchical, and abstract schemes for personal betterment with which he is fascinated in Milan and at Cassiciacum.[34] As an aspect of this negativism he abandons the notion of the progressive development of human thought from first principles, which was advocated by his philosophical

[33] *De Trin.*, 10.5.7.

[34] On the introduction of such schemes based on the upward ascent of reason, see the discussion of *De Ord.*, below; on the later transformation, emphasizing the limits of hermeneutics within the constraints of sacred history, see *De Doct. Christ.*, 2.7.9–11. For good accounts of the issues, see R. A. Markus, "Alienatio. Philosophy and Eschatology in the Development of an Augustinian Idea," *SP* (Berlin, 1966), pp. 431–450; R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of Augustine* (Cambridge, 1970); cf. Basil Studer, "Geschichte und Glaube bei Origenes und Augustinus," *Cristianesimo nella storia* 25.1 (2004), 13–19. (Medieval schemes for spiritual advancement frequently traced their inspiration to Augustine, but a more powerful influence was Dionysius, the Pseudo-Areopagite, whose *Celestial Hierarchy* combined themes from Neoplatonism and Christianity in delineating the soul's ascent through stages of purgation, illumination, and union with God. A brilliant application of this scheme is found in Bonaventure, *Itinerium Mentis in Deum* 2.5, 2.10, 4.3, 4.4, and 5.11. The medieval adaptations of such ideas, on which some modern conceptions of "Augustinianism" were based, generally did not take account of the internal evolution of Augustine's thinking which took place in his dialogues and after his return to Africa; on the latter phase, see Dolbeau, *Vingt-six sermons*, from 397: *Sermo de bono nuptiarum*, pp. 77–84; *Sermo de verbis Evangelii impleta sunt tempora*, pp. 107–114; and *Sermo de versu Psalmi xvii*, pp. 168–171).

mentors such as Cicero and Plotinus, in favor of the non-progressive approach to knowledge shared by different religions in late antiquity[35] and strenuously promoted by the Psalms, prophetic books of the Bible, and letters of St. Paul. It is the last of these texts which he pictures himself poring over in book seven of the *Confessiones*, as he disengages with Manichaeism and, under the influence of Ambrose's sermons, recovers the ancient faith he was taught by his mother.

In his initial statements on wisdom and happiness in the dialogues the salient questions are drawn from the Platonic, Neoplatonic, and Academic writings with which he became acquainted in Carthage, Rome, and Milan: chiefly, how to sift realities from appearances, how to ascend from the sensible to the intelligible by means of reason, and how to ascertain (or deny) the validity of mental impressions of existing things. In the *Confessiones* and even more emphatically in *De Civitate Dei* these preoccupations are superseded by an interest in the manner in which individuals fulfil their destinies within a divinely organized plan through a binding decision taken with free will. As a consequence, Augustine's interest in the theme of personal progress is largely replaced by a concern with the way in which men and women deal with situations in which they do not in any sense "progress." Following an initial, irreversible event, namely the fall, human existence is conceived as a journey in, through, and by means of time (as much later, in Heidegger, who benefits from Augustine's insights without agreeing with their metaphysical assumptions). Augustine is convinced that it is the temporal dimension of their lives that provides individuals with the ever-present evidence of mankind's initial moral error. Because of their inherent imperfections, and their latent, discoverable, and ineradicable knowledge of these flaws, mortals cannot entertain the possibility that a state of virtue is achievable through rational means alone.

Such considerations begin and end in Augustine's mature thinking with the dispiriting knowledge that whatever is done in the ethical sphere is foreknown and predestined. As Luther was to argue along Augustinian lines, the practice of good works has no predictive value in the overall calculation of a life's worth. The adoption of this austere outlook, which was revived and much admired in the seventeenth century at Port-Royal, accounts for Augustine's contrasting opinions on the purpose of his philosophical writings, which is initially positive but later tentative and

[35] Among them African Manichaeism, to which he adhered, at least as an "auditor," for some nine years.

circumspect. In his disillusionment with cumulative or progressive knowledge one can perceive the warning signs of a more general pessimism, which emerges in his doctrine of grace.

Augustine reaches his conclusions on these matters after an inquiry into the roots of personal and historical memories, which takes the form of a series of interpretive soliloquies. Just as the secrets of wisdom are preserved in the ancient writings of the Bible, so there is, he proposes, deeply lodged within each person, an instructive text, so to speak, imprinted on the human conscience,[36] which is hidden from view and contains the stamp of inviolable moral truth. Personal memories, when considered as narrative units, are comparable at a formal level to historical accounts in scripture, which provide coded instruction to informed readers concerning the forces shaping major phases of earlier civilizations. Also, in his view men and women carry a reminder of their inherent capacity for wrongfulness, as well as their potential for overcoming it, in their perishable bodies. Societies, too, retain the memory of what has come before, and by means of written records transmit to later generations the cumulative understanding that comes about as a result of a succession of transient historical experiences. Just as men and women are victims of original sin,[37] these shared memories are witnesses to history's errancy, which has resulted in recurrent cycles of war, tyranny, and lawlessness.

Within this project (to which I turn in Chapter 4), Augustine contrasts the permanence of the truths which the study of the Bible can unlock with the impermanence of personal and artificial memories, which no amount of interpretive ingenuity can fully overcome. Language, which conveys such memory images from one person to another, suffers from comparable constraints, owing to the imprecise relationship between realities, their configuration in the mind, and their expression in words. Given these epistemological limitations, he has little confidence in a scheme for improvement like that of Plato's *Republic*, which is based on education, or the plan attributed by Seneca to Posidonius, which relies on technical improvements and their scientific context.[38] On the contrary, near the end of *De Magistro*, he states categorically (if somewhat

[36] *Ibid.*, 1.18.29: "scripta conscientia." For the biblical parallel, see *Conf.*, 3.7.13.

[37] A phrase first used at *Conf.*, 5.9.16.

[38] Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 90.7–15; see Theodor Mommsen, "St. Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress: The Background of *The City of God*," in *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. E. F. Rice, Jr. (Ithaca, NY, 1959), pp. 265–298, and, more extensively, Gerhart B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (Cambridge, MA, 1959), pp. 153–283.

rhetorically) that we learn nothing from our instructors, past or present, that we are unable to teach ourselves by means of self-instructive soliloquies.[39]

In place of proposals for personal or social advancement, which he considers illusory, he offers the evidence of reiterated human errors documented by the Old Testament prophets, to which he adds his notion of the providential unfolding of history based on the interplay of reason and grace. It is in this context that we find much that is original in his writings on the biblical and Plotinian theme of the soul's exodus from an ideal state, which is transformed in *De Civitate Dei* into an earthly "pilgrimage" in the company of his fellow citizens.[40] A comparable motivation lies behind the writing of "autobiography," which is his way of distancing himself from progressive thinking and supplementing this approach with the search for permanent values enshrined in the preconscious past of the soul.[41] On this view, the unraveling of the self's history by means of conversations with oneself is a way of deciphering the self's meaning, as much later, in a different context, in Freud.

BROADER CONTEXTS

The connection between these themes is less evident to modern readers of Augustine than it was to those in the late ancient or medieval periods, owing to the fact that psychological and historical conceptions of the self have found their way into modern thought by different paths. As noted, the psychological notion has been reintroduced into thinking about the self chiefly through the writings of Descartes, and this appears in contemporary views of the issues, Cartesian and anti-Cartesian, in which historical factors do not play a large part.[42] The historical conception is developed by such writers as Dante, Petrarch, and Montaigne, and resurfaces much transformed in the writings of Giambattista Vico, an

[39] *De Mag.*, 14.45; a view that nonetheless owes a great deal to the Platonic notion of anamnesis.

[40] *Conf.*, 10.4.6.

[41] *Ibid.*, 1.7.11, where infants are guilty of original sin, even though they are not conscious of committing sins.

[42] E.g., Jean-Pierre Changeux, *Neuronal Man: The Biology of Mind* (New York, 1985), where Cartesian and Spinozan influences are at work, and for the opposed view see Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York, 1994). A recent review of ethical issues in the brain sciences is Michael Gazzaniga, *The Ethical Brain* (The Dana Foundation: New York, 2005), pp. 87–165. For a contemporary defence of the view, originating with Augustine, that all thinking is intentional, see John R. Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, 1983).

attentive student of *De Civitate Dei*,[43] who attempts to trace the manner in which successive mentalities take shape in the "primitive" or "archaic" modes of thought of the pre-Homeric period. In contrast to Descartes, who rejects history, Vico offers readers of *La Scienza Nuova* (published in different versions in 1725, 1730, and 1744) a tentative version of the social-scientific configuration of the self in which stages in collective self-consciousness inform the individual's identity by means of shared cultural memories. Augustine can be seen as the distant inspiration of both of these approaches to the self: the one leads in the direction of Descartes' "method," the other in the direction of Vico's "historicism."[44]

Needless to say, the positions adopted by these later writers on the progress of human understanding are more optimistic in their conclusions than the Augustinian originals on which they are based. The bishop of Hippo remained unconvinced that we are able to gain more than a partial understanding of our selves or our histories, in contrast to what many pre- and post-Enlightenment thinkers believed. The modes of explanation that appear most frequently in Augustine's early writings, namely causal principles and meaningful stories, do not in his view truly explain anything. The trouble with both "paradigmatic" and "narrative" methods, to employ Jerome Bruner's convenient terms,[45] is that they lack certainty, the one owing to the limits of reason, the other owing to our restricted understanding of the past and future. These unknowns do not arise because they cannot be known but because humans are incapable of knowing them: the fact that they are knowable, although not by us, is the real source of Augustine's anxiety, rather than the impossibility of humans attaining such knowledge.[46] By framing the issues in this manner Augustine adds a significant detail to the map of uncertainties inherited from ancient Scepticism. In the *Confessiones*, he creates an epic in which the hero is

[43] On 31st August, 1735, Vico recited verses dedicated to Augustine's memory in the Neapolitan Accademia degli Oziosi in which he claimed for his patron:
Altre maggior vittorie il nume eterno
a l'Africa serbò contro di Roma,
su le quali non val tempo né oblío.
Questa crebbe in immenso, e poi fu doma
del mio Agostino dal saper superno
che vi spiegò l'alma città di Dio.
Giambattista Vico, *Autobiografia seguita da una scelta di lettere, orazioni e rime*, ed. Mario Fubini (Turin, 1970), p. 213.

[44] See Erich Auerbach, "Vico und die Idee der Philologie," *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur romanischen Philologie* (Bern, 1967), pp. 233–241.

[45] See Jerome Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge, MA, 1986), pp. 11–43; cf. *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life* (New York, 2002), pp. 63–87.

[46] *Conf.*, 6.4.5; 6.5.7.

largely motivated by his own self-questioning. If doubt is the modern "crown of thorns," as T. E. Lawrence suggested, the thinker responsible for popularizing the theme in late ancient literature is the bishop of Hippo.

In Augustine's early writings, therefore, soliloquies are the most prominent example of forms of discourse that are used (*uti*) so that higher things can be enjoyed (*frui*).[47] The soliloquy may be superior to the external dialogue, as he proposes, but soliloquies, whatever their value, are just conversations. His conviction of the limited usefulness of all types of verbal exchange sounds a note of caution for historians who propose to interpret the works of his first decade of activity within an evolutionary scheme. His purpose in writing is not chiefly to acquaint his readers with episodes from his personal history, nor is it to present his views on a number of conceptual problems. As he sees matters, these types of inquiry, as important as they may be, are just academic way-stations: valuable, doubtless, for the potential light they shed on a person's life and thought, but diversions from what he sees as the main objective of philosophical investigations. This is the attainment of a contemplative and transcendent state of mind at the personal level through prayer and self-examination, and at a non-personal level through the unfolding of sacred history, which will eventually re-establish the ideal state that mankind lost through sin in Eden: a state, needless to say, beyond time, language, and human understanding.

From a contemporary standpoint, it is legitimate to think of Augustine's uses for the soliloquy as the beginning of a long tradition of first- person discourses in philosophy, which leads over the centuries to such diverse spokesmen for this approach as Anselm, Abelard, Kierkegaard, and Wittgenstein. However, in his view inner dialogues are a part of the ancient discussion of rationality and their purpose is to teach us to recognize the limits of personal rational thinking. This is above all a lesson in humility: for Augustine fears he may never truly become Paul's "new man"; worse, that his "old" self may reappear through force of habit and remake him in the likeness of the person he wants to leave behind. We can perhaps conquer ourselves, he suggests, through the application of philosophical strategies inherited from the past, such as the rational or interior dialogue, but without help from outside we cannot hope to remain victorious for long.

[47] The classic statement is *De Div. Quaest.*, 30; for a fine introduction to the subject, see Rudolf Lorenz, "Fruitio dei bei Augustin," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 63 (1950–51), 75–32, and Lorenz, "Die Herkunft des augustinischen frui deo," *ibid.*, 64 (1952–53), 34–60.

What was Augustine's reason for introducing such existential issues into discussions traditionally concerned with the fate of the soul, especially as he chose to do so in a manner that questioned venerable philosophical methods, some of which he inherited from Cicero and evidently respected? A complex answer is outlined in his early writings, chiefly through his analysis of the ancient dialogue, the sources of freedom and necessity, and the themes of time, memory, and narrative, which, accordingly, form the divisions of this study. In the final analysis his solution to the problem of wisdom and happiness may have to be viewed within the context of the patristic debate on the merits of Hellenism and Hebraism, phases of which were terminated in the late fourth century by Jerome and Augustine. By 386, when Augustine was beginning his dialogues, Jerome had opted for a historical and philological solution in the notion of *Hebraica ueritas*.[48] Augustine's proposal is also a version of *narratio historica*; however, in contrast to Jerome, he declares in *De Doctrina Christiana* that it is not whether we learn to speak Greek or Hebrew that matters in Christianity, but our recognition of the fundamental rôle of language in giving continuity to cultural tradition.[49] This statement effectively opens a new chapter in the Western consideration of the self and its history. The reorientation begins in works written before 400 and the philosophical soliloquy plays a major part in their evolution.

[48] See Megan Williams, *Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship* (Chicago, 2006).
[49] *De Doct. Christ.*, pro., 5.

CHAPTER 1

Toward inner dialogue

Noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi.

De Vera Rel., 39.72

INTRODUCTION

In Chapters 1 and 2 of this study I propose the view that Augustine's soliloquies were intended to be understood as "spiritual exercises." In Chapter 2, I outline the history of the soliloquy as a literary and philosophical genre in antiquity and discuss Augustine's use of soliloquies in handling one philosophical problem, namely the demonstration against Scepticism of the undeniability of the self's existence. In this chapter I am concerned with more general influences shaping Augustine's conception of such an exercise.

As a preface to the topic of general influences, I should like to return briefly to the question of Augustine's intellectual disorderliness in the dialogues. In the Introduction I tackled this question from the viewpoint of their disunifying features. I suggested that there are two sources of this apparent confusion, one of which, namely Augustine's implicit criticism of the external dialogue, is deftly introduced into the ongoing discussion of philosophical questions in order to create a favourable reception for his preferred alternative, the inner dialogue or soliloquy.

In general, the problem of the dialogues' disunity has been approached in one of two ways. The first was suggested by Pascal, who said that Augustine's sense of order includes even his digressions. In his view the non sequiturs break the flow of the discourse so frequently that they should be viewed as a principle of organization in themselves.[1] This

1 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. L. Brunschvicg, 5th edn (Paris, 1909), no. 283.; cf. Étienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine*, trans. L. E. M. Lynch (New York, 1960), pp. 236.

solution is acceptable if the source of the digressions is compositional rather than philosophical, for example, in the staging of the dialogues, when Augustine or one of his students simply changes the subject under consideration. But other weaknesses cannot be accounted for in this way, those for example in book two of *Contra Academicos*, which clearly result from failures in logic.

The other solution that frequently appears in Augustinian scholarship consists in eliminating the problems raised by the digressions by revising what Augustine himself has said. Here the answer involves completing or complementing his statements on a variety of questions as (it is thought) he might have done himself. If this approach is adopted, the personal remarks that are scattered through the dialogues can be sifted to yield a residue of facts and the views that he expressed on philosophical topics can be organized into a coherent statement of his ideas. To employ the vocabulary of editing, a "critical text" of his life and writings can be established, from which unneeded variants have been eliminated.

Although useful for exposition, this solution also has a serious limitation. It does not seem to be what Augustine had in mind. Within the dialogues themselves, he made no attempt to present what he had to say about his life or about the doctrines in which he was interested in a systematic manner.[2] Often, it appears, he thought as he wrote, and wrote as he thought.[3] Also, in considering this approach, we have to take into account that its ultimate source of inspiration is Augustine's *Retractationes*, written in 426–427. In this work the bishop of Hippo provides his future readers with an editorial (and autobiographical) survey of all that he has written. In doing so he inadvertently complicates the problem of sorting out his principles of organization in the dialogues themselves, since he overlooks inconsistencies which others have noted[4] and corrects errors of doctrine which were not apparent to him when he wrote.[5]

As a third possibility I suggest that the loose organization of the writings of this period may be deliberate, at least in part, both in Augustine's statements about his life and in the exposition of his ideas. This would explain why debate on a pertinent topic is sometimes left off, inexplicably,

[2] The only topics which were addressed in a systematic fashion in the writings before 400 concerned Augustine's opposition to Manichaeism and Donatism, and, in a less organized fashion, his Varronian conception of the liberal arts; however, on the latter subject he wrote nothing of importance after completing six of the twelve projected books of *De Mus.* in 387.

[3] *Ep.*, 43.2

[4] See G. Bardy *Retr.*, Intro., *BA* 12, 59–105.

[5] See Goulven Madec, *Introduction aux "Révisions" et à la lecture des œuvres de saint Augustin* (Paris, 1996), pp. 119–146.

while another is taken up, or why conversations are begun in one place and continued elsewhere, as in his inconclusive discussions of the soul's origin.[6] Augustine seems to be telling us that all the dialogues have to be read carefully if any one of them is to be understood correctly and completely. And we have to read as philologists, comparing different accounts of the same issues, if we are to understand what he is saying as a philosopher. These features of his early writings are understandable, I would argue, if his strategy is to question, or even to abandon, the classical dialogue, which develops logically, and to replace this form of reasoning with the soliloquy, which is the genre employed in many of his episodic, digressive, or decentering techniques.

This strategy can be clarified by examining his approach to the most basic issue in his various discussions of philosophical problems in the dialogues, namely what constitutes "truth." Augustine's usual way of tackling this question is to contrast the transitory and permanent, sensory and mental, or earthly and divine. He expresses these contrasts in one way in his debates with his students, in which the issues are addressed directly, and in another way in his literary presentations of himself, in which he approaches the same question indirectly, i.e., through contrasting portraits of his "self." His way of addressing the question of truth when talking about the latter subject is to suggest that we each have two sorts of selves: an outer mobile and malleable self, which corresponds to the transitory element in our makeup, and an inner, changeless, and true self, which corresponds to the permanence of God's "image and likeness."

The important point to realize is that in these two approaches to truth, namely the philosophical and the rhetorical, the solution proposed by Augustine is the same, namely to favour the permanent over the impermanent. A statement that touches on both dimensions of the problem is made by Reason in the *Soliloquia*, when she notes that an observed phenomenon, such as a mirror image, may appear to be "true" and yet fail to convey the "truth,"[7] inasmuch as it is just a representation of a real object. The metaphor of the mirror image, which originates in the *Alcibiades*,[8] may be inspired by Plotinus' echo of Plato's views,[9] and provides Augustine with his point of departure for talking about the self in the dialogue. However, in the course of the discussion Reason goes beyond these sources in two respects. She suggests that the notions in

[6] See Gerald O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (London, 1987), pp. 7–79.

[7] *Sol.*, 1.15.27–29. [8] *Alcibiades* 132d-133c.

[9] E.g., Plotinus, *Enn.*, 1.6.9, on beauty, a text Augustine had read.

question, namely "what appears to be" and "what in reality is," are compatible within our thinking, depending on whether we are talking about transitory or non-transitory things. Also, she points out that the decision to opt for one or the other, which is ours, has ethical implications.

In Augustine's presentations of himself in the dialogues there is a similar contrast between the impermanent and permanent. In the early non-staged dialogues, there is one "Augustine" who speaks to the dialoguers from within the work as a participant in the dramatic enactment, and this is his transitory configuration of himself. There is also a second Augustine who speaks to himself, to the reader, and occasionally to God in both the non-staged and staged dialogues, and this is his stable or permanent configuration of himself.[10] Just as "true" and "truth" are contrasted by Reason in the *Soliloquia*, these two *personae* are contrasted in the presentation of Augustine for and by himself. Behind the appearances created by images, therefore, there is the reality of things, and behind the words that Augustine speaks there is the reality of Augustine himself. Just as the changing Augustine is configured in one sort of language, i.e., in the words that are spoken, the unchanging Augustine is configured in another sort of language, i.e., the words of thought. As Augustine contrasts the true and truth, therefore, so he contrasts outer and inner words.

It is not difficult to understand why Augustine opposed the temporal and eternal within a Christian metaphysical scheme. But why did he create a similar divide between impermanent and permanent representations of himself, since he was well aware, one suspects, of the potential confusion about his notion of the self that such an approach might entail? The probable answer is that these configurations form part of a strategy of self-presentation in which the strength of the one mirror image, to use Plato's term, draws attention to the weakness of the other. The changelessness of Augustine's historical *persona*, which is constructed and maintained by means of a consistent authorial voice, draws attention to the transitory quality that is introduced into the various portraits of himself in his early works, which are sustained by nothing more than words.

The transitory portraits nonetheless have their purpose within Augustine's project, and in this respect they provide a convenient introduction to the subject of this chapter. They are the results of successive self-examinations, in which sketches of himself are taken up and rejected by him as he searches for an enduring expression of the divine image; that

[10] The unchanging Augustine plays the rôle of omniscient author, and it is he who effectively pulls the strings in the dialogues, inasmuch as he has in mind many of the answers he is looking for.

is, a permanent, unchanging self, for whose existence the human voice representing his reason is an important clue. Each ephemeral representation has its part to play in this self-questioning; each becomes a stage in an inquiry that leads to further scrutiny rather than to finality, certitude, or fixity. Augustine's speaking voice provides a framework for the differing renderings of himself, just as God's Word underpins the world's diversity. To employ his own metaphor, his voice, deriving from his inner being, seems to "encircle" his temporary self-images, in the way that the Word provides a boundless circumference for the universe.[11]

There is something of Augustine in each of these self-portraits, then, but the whole of him is in none of them, just as there is a dimension of his intellectual outlook in each of his accounts of ancient thought, although the totality of his viewpoint is not traceable to any single statement. His audience participates in this meandering investigation of his life and his ideas as a silent partner, and it is the audience, along with Augustine, which has an omniscient understanding of what is taking place as the dialogues proceed.[12] The other speakers attain this perspective only by becoming practitioners of this exercise themselves.

Augustine's awareness of this situation may be one of the reasons why he insists on having the transcript of the previous day's debate at Cassiciacum read aloud before the next discussion begins.[13] This ongoing conversation can thus form a part of his design for the philosophical life.[14] His aim is not to produce a single completed version of his person or his thinking, but instead, by offering his students and readers fragments of these entitities, to encourage them to produce unified lives and thinking of their own.[15] Like Marcus Aurelius, he utilizes *hypomnemata* as a "Trojan horse," which is intended to take "the citadel" of the individual's mind from inside.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES IN PHILOSOPHY

In my view, then, Augustine's adoption of this first-person technique amounts to a new type of "exercise", which has literary, spiritual, and philosophical dimensions.

[11] *De Ord.*, 1.2.1; cf. 2.5.14 [12] E.g., *De Ord.*, 1.6.16. [13] *Ibid.*, 1.2.5.

[14] For an exposition of this theme, see B. Stock, *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1996), pp. 75–121; more recently, see Catherine Conybeare, *The Irrational Augustine* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 27–35.

[15] Augustine's method bears some relationship to the late ancient practice of the *cento*, which is described at *De Civ. Dei*, 17.15; on his use (with the Psalms) see the prayers that begin *Conf.*, books 1, 5, and 10.

How are we to characterize this novel form? H.-I. Marrou, who was aware of its presence in Augustine's writings and of its possibilities within Platonic tradition, described this as an exercise of the mind or soul (*exercitatio animi*).[16] There are a number of mental operations in Augustine's writings which fit this description, including his occasional "thought experiments."[17] However, as a technical term, *exercitatio animi* is rather too intellectualist to encompass the wide variety of physical, emotional, and mental exercises outlined by Augustine in his early writings, in which soliloquies are frequently involved. These are better organized under the rubric of "spiritual exercises,"[18] in which, as defined by Pierre Hadot,

> each school … represents a form of life defined by an ideal of wisdom. The result is that each one has its corresponding fundamental inner attitude – for example tension for the Stoics or relaxation for the Epicureans – and its own manner of speaking … But above all every school practices exercises designed to ensure spiritual progress toward the ideal state of wisdom, exercises of reason that will

[16] H.-I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la culture antique*, 4th edn (Paris, 1958), pp. 297–327. Augustine's early practice recalls Alexandrian Christian *gnosis*, in which the mind is exercised philosophically in order to attain an intellectual comprehension of objects of faith; e.g., *De Ord*., 2.18.47. From 391, *exercitatio animi* refers both to a mental and exegetical technique; e.g., *De Vera Rel.* 17.33; cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 11.32, where Augustine speaks of *exercitatio legentium* which does not deviate from "the rule of faith" but allows for alternatives in interpretation. For a review of the notion, see Goulven Madec, "Exercitatio animi," *AL*, vol. 11, pp. 1182–1183; Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's "De Trinitate"* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 19–22; L. Ayres, "The Christological Context of Augustine's *De Trinitate* XIII," *Augustinian Studies* 29 (1998), 111–139 and Gioia, "The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine's Trinitarian Theology," in R. Dodaro and G. Lawless, eds., *Augustine and his Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner* (London, 2000), pp. 51–76; cf. Jean Doignon, "La 'praxis' de l'*admonitio* dans les Dialogues de Cassiciacum de saint Augustin," *Vetera Christianorum* 23 (1986), 21–37.

[17] E.g., *De Trin*., 8.2.3 (on visualizing the sun); 9.6.11 (on imagining a beautiful arch); 11.2.3–4; 11.4.7; 11.6.10; 11.8.13 (on images in sight); 14.5.7 (on infants' sight); *Conf*., 13.11.12, (on conceptualizing the Trinity).

[18] See the seminal discussion of Pierre Hadot, "Spiritual Exercises" and "Ancient Spiritual Exercises," in *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 79–144; Hadot, *The "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA, 1998), chs. 5–9; Hadot, *The Veil of Isis*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA, 2006). A comparable perspective is found in Paul Rabbow, *Seelenführung: Methodik des Exerzitien in der Antike* (Munich, 1954), esp. pp. 20–32 (on books) and pp. 189–214 (on oral psychological techniques). Other studies of this dimension of ancient thought include Ilsetraut Hadot, *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung* (Berlin, 1969); Heinz Gerd Ingenkamp, *Plutarchs Schriften über die Heilung der Seele* (Göttingen, 1971), pp. 99–124; R. B. Rutherford, *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius: A Study* (Oxford, 1989), esp. pp. 8–21; André-Jean Voelke, *La philosophie comme thérapie de l'âme* (Paris, 1993); and from a different viewpoint, Pedro Laín Entralgo, *The Therapy of the Word in Classical Antiquity*, trans. and ed. L. J. Rather and J. Sharp (New Haven, 1970). For a general statement on this theme, see also Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick Hutton (eds.), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst, MA, 1988), pp. 16–49, whose view has been corrected by Pierre Hadot, "Réflexions sur la notion de 'culture de soi,' " in *Michel Foucault philosophe: Rencontre internationale* (Paris, 1989), pp. 261–268 and by Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, "Caro salutis cardo: Shaping the Person in

be, for the soul, analogous to the athlete's training or to the application of a medical cure. Generally, they consist, above all, in self-control and meditation. Self-control is … being attentive to oneself … Meditation … is the "exercise" of reason: … a rational, imaginative, or intuitive exercise that can take extremely varied forms.[19]

Earlier works in this tradition include Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, Seneca's *Moral Epistles to Lucilius*, Plutarch's *On the Tranquility of the Soul*, Epictetus's *Manual* and *Discourses*, and Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations*. Among these works, Augustine was acquainted only with Cicero[20] and possibly with Seneca;[21] his other documented source was the translation by Marius Victorinus of some unspecified Platonic and Neoplatonic texts, which reached him in the spring of 386.[22]

Through his eclectic readings in philosophy Augustine nonetheless acquired an implicit understanding of a variety of ancient techniques in this field. These included (1) Socratic interrogation, which is used throughout the dialogues; (2) Stoic emphasis on self-control (e.g., *Conf.* 10.31.44–10.35.57); (3) teaching by correspondence, as illustrated by the letters from Nebridius to Augustine (*Epp*., 5, 6, 8) and by his responses (*Epp*., 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14), as well as by the lengthy didactic epistle to Paulina, *De Videndo Deo* (*Ep*., 147); and (4) Neoplatonic methods of mental elevation, which are applied to one person at *Confessions* 7.10.16 and 7.16.22 and to two (Augustine and Monica) at 9.10.23–26. The Augustinian canon of such procedures also includes those derived from the Bible, such as prayer (e.g., *Conf*., 1.1.1, 5.1.1–5.1.2, 10.1.1–10.6.8), conversion (3.4.7–3.4.8, 8.12.29), meditative writing (4.13.20) and reading (6.3.3, 7.9.13, 9.4.8, and book twelve), rules for living (6.14.24, 10.29.42–10.36.52),

Early Christian Thought," *History of Religions* 30 (1990), 25–50; cf. G. G. Stroumsa, *La fin du sacrifice: Les mutations religieuses de l'Antiquité tardive* (Paris, 2005), pp. 23–60; 189–214.

[19] Pierre Hadot, "Forms of Life and Forms of Discourse in Ancient Philosophy," in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 59.

[20] For Cicero, see *Tusc. Disp*., 1.19.4, on the soul's relaxation and ascent; cf. 1.22.50–51; 1.27.67; 1.30.73; 1.31.75; 4.2.3; 5.25.70. It is worth noting that Augustine was opposed to the technique of attaining a meditative state by means of mental painting in words (*uerbis pingere*; *De Civ. Dei*, 5.20). His disparaging account, based on Cicero, *De Fin*., 2.21.69 (after Cleanthes) pictures queen Pleasure enthroned and instructing personified virtues. Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 7.5, where, based on Varro, Augustine recalls an ancient meditative practice in which the eyes were fixed on images of deities (*animam mundi … id est deos ueros, animo uidere*).

[21] There are no direct quotations or stylistic echoes of Seneca's *Epistulae Morales*; nonetheless Nebridius, Augustine's student, alludes to a Senecan letter (*Ep*., 6.1), possibly aware that his master will recognize his cleverness, and Augustine, in criticizing the classical education of Faustus the Manichaean, includes Seneca among the authors for whom he makes a display of inadequate knowledge (*Conf*., 5.3.8–10).

[22] On this question see Pierre Hadot, *Marius Victorinus: Recherches sur sa vie et ses œuvres* (Paris, 1971), pp. 201–210.

and imitation of Christ's life (7.19.25). In addition, as I hope to show in the following pages, the Augustinian spiritual exercise combines two features that were not previously brought together in ancient and late ancient applications of this technique. These consist in soliloquy and narrative.

The traditional theme that is most often reiterated in Augustine's use of these techniques is mental ascent, which takes place in his writings through the practice of virtue, studies in the liberal arts,[23] the seven days of creation, or, as a Neoplatonic purificatory exercise, through the progress of reason itself.[24] The ascent through reason, and the implied abandonment of the senses, is a frequent theme in his early writings, appearing as early as letter 2, which was written in 386 to the civil servant and poet Zenobius (the recipient of *De Ordine*). There Augustine observes that "while the body takes part in its own activity, the mind should be removed and desire what is changeless," and thus detached from material things, proceed upwards. Later, however, his Christian reservations about the success of such procedures are evident, as in book ten of the *Confessions*, where his attempts at ascent are accompanied by a sense of redescent and personal disillusionment:

> Sometimes, [God], you cause me to enter into an extraordinary depth of feeling marked by a strange sweetness. If it were brought to perfection in me, it would be an experience quite beyond anything in this life. But I fall back into my usual ways under my miserable burdens … I weep profusely, but I am still held.[25]

Throughout his career Augustine reiterated statements such as this within the broader norms of Christian spiritual experience.[26] The best-known episode of this type is the "vision at Ostia," (*Conf.*, 9.10.23–26), in which detachment, high emotion, mental elevation, and redescent are combined in a passage of extraordinary literary power. The themes of ascent and descent are also found in less frequently cited texts, and they are a feature of his late writings as well as his early philosophical reflections. According to his biographer, Possidius, he was still mulling over an adage on the transitoriness of worldly things, possibly acquired from Plotinus, and the

[23] E.g., *De Quant. An.*, 15.25; cf. *Ep.*, 4.2, 4.9, 4.10, and 148.38.

[24] The usual assumption among scholars is that the major source of Augustine's notion of ascent was Plotinus; e.g., *Enn.*, 6.9.11.24, 6.9.11.45–51. For a schematic review of this possible influence (not without speculations), see the notes in Henry Chadwick (trans.), *Saint Augustine: Confessions* (Oxford, 1991). For a more detailed analysis of Plotinian influences, see Olivier du Roy, *L'intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon saint Augustin: Génèse de sa théologie trinitaire jusqu'en 391* (Paris, 1966).

[25] *Conf.*, 10.40.65, trans. Chadwick.

[26] Cf. Marrou, *Saint Augustin*, 330; Goulven Madec, *Saint Augustin et la philosophie. Notes critiques* (Paris, 1996), pp. 15–29.

human potential for rising above them, during the Vandal invasion that took place shortly before his death.[27]

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

The turning point in Augustine's attitude toward the possibility of mental ascent was his conversion and entry into the priesthood. After taking these decisions, he increasingly expressed a lack of conviction in the value of philosophical or psychological exercises for achieving a lasting experience of God.

He related the transition in his thinking in books one to nine of the *Confessions*, where he told the story of his passage from the *praesumptio* implied in his notion of self-sufficiency to the *confessio* in which it was replaced by the workings of grace. The *logos* of the ancients, detached from purely philosophical speculation, was thus reconnected to the values of Christianity through a life of practical piety, in which emphasis was placed on the teachings of the Old Testament on pride and humility.[28] Later, in *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine spoke of this reorientation as an "obligation" to God, *latreia* or *servitus*.[29] He summed up his thinking in another way by means of the seven-stage scheme which he proposed at *De Doctrina Christiana* 2.7.9–11, in which the psychological hierarchies of his earlier writings were transformed into a historical program relating biblical theology to practical guidelines for the individual's moral life.

[27] *Vita Aug.*, c. 28 (*PL* 32.58): "Non erit magnum putans quod cadunt lilia et lapides, et moriuntur mortales." On the attribution to Plotinus, see Pierre Courcelle, "Sur les dernières paroles de saint Augustin," *Revue des études anciennes* 46 (1944), 205–206.

[28] *Conf.*, 7.9.13; 7.20.26.

[29] *De Civ. Dei*, 10.1: "λατρεία … dicitur seruitus, quae pertinet ad colendum Deum." Alternatives include *cultus*, *religio* (θρησκεία), *pietas* (εὐσέβεια or preferably θεοσέβεια, neither of which can precisely be expressed in Latin). We owe God this service "siue in … sacramentis siue in nobis ipsis;" *ibid.*,10.3; cf. 19.17. At *De Civ. Dei* 7.32, Augustine argues that the mystery of eternal life was made known from the beginning of the human race through the ministry of angels: it was revealed to those to whom it pertained by means of *signa et sacramenta* suited to times and places. These "signs and sacraments" were chiefly for the benefit of the Jews: God united the *populus Hebraeus* in a single commonwealth (*unam quandam rem publicam*) to bring about the communication of such mystery (*sacramentum*). This, he is convinced, is discoverable through biblical texts, although scripture does not contain the *praecepta uitae* needed for Christian morals and piety: on this point, the Bible has to be supplemented by consecrated objects, the priesthood, the tabernacle or temple, altars, sacrifices, ceremonies, and holy days – by everything, in short, that is concerned with service and homage (*seruitutem*) owed to God (here and at 10.1 again called *latreia*). These texts provide a clear statement of Augustine's view that Judaism contains a combination of prophecy and philosophy; cf. 10.3, and 10.6 where comparable reasoning takes account of cultural history and is applied to the transition from Platonism to Christianity.

In the light of his reading of Paul, which is vividly recorded in book seven of the *Confessions*, as well as his re-acquaintance with the gospel, Genesis, and the prophetic books of the Bible, which he was poring over in the late 380s, he reorganized his thinking about philosophical and spiritual exercises around the contrast between knowledge (*scientia*) and wisdom *(sapientia)*.[30] On this view the person who pursues this goal (*sapiens*) is superior to someone who merely acquires rational knowledge *(philosophus)*.[31] Philosophy can lead to happiness,[32] if the thinker desires or loves God: *uerus philosophus amator Dei*.[33] Augustine never doubts that philosophers have uttered important truths, as he tells Jerome,[34] or that Christ's statements can be put into a philosophical form,[35] leading to the contemplation of truth and bringing tranquility to the whole person: *sapientia, id est contemplatio veritatis, pacificans totum hominis* [36] But this *uera et diuina philosophia*[37] asks the individual to direct his mind towards itself and towards God,[38] who is sought in the knowledge that he is more inward than the most interior part of himself: *interior intimo meo*.[39]

The type of person envisaged in these statements is a philosopher, theologian, and even a cultural historian, inasmuch as earlier teachings on the subject of spiritual progress are placed in a comparative setting.[40] By the time Augustine wrote on these themes the term *philosophia* had evolved for some three centuries in Christian thought and the boundaries between the relevant disciplines had become indistinct.[41] His use of the term *philosophia* changed somewhat over time, moving between poles of

[30] *Ibid*., 8.10, where Augustine comments on Paul's statements concerning philosophy at Col. 2:8, Rom. 1:19f., and (as reported) at Acts 18:18, arguing that it is possible for a Christian to be a philosopher without having been acquainted with the ancients; see Goulven Madec, "Christus, scientia et sapientia nostra. Le principe de cohérence de la doctrine augustinienne," *RA* 10 (1975), 78–82.

[31] Philosophy is acceptable, provided that it incorporates asceticism; Augustine's favorite example is Pythagoras, e.g., *De Ord*., 2.20.53 (cf. Cicero, *Tusc. Disp*., 4.12). At *De Trin*., 14.1.2 Pythagoras is called *philosophus, id est, amatorem sapientiae*.

[32] *De Civ. Dei* 9.14; but philosophers cannot mediate between the wretched and the blessed, which requires Christ; *ibid*., 9.15.

[33] *Ibid*., 8.1; see Goulven Madec, " 'Verus philosophus est amator Dei.' S. Ambroise, S. Augustin et la philosophie," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 61 (1977), 549–566.

[34] *Ep*., 82. [35] *Ep*., 233. [36] *De Serm. Dom. in Monte*, 1.3.

[37] *Ep*., 2; cf. Plotinus, *Enn*., 1.18.13. [38] *C. Acad*., 1.8.23. [39] *Conf*., 3.6.11.

[40] As a technical term, *theologia* occurs at *De Civ. Dei*, 6.5, where it is derived from Varro's *Antiquities* to describe the three types of Greek worship, mythical, natural, and civil. Cf. *De Civ. Dei* 6.12, 7.6, 7.10, 8.5, and 8.29. On the Varronian division, see Jean Pépin, "La 'théologie tripartite' de Varron. Essai de reconstitution et recherche des sources," *REA* 2 (1956), 265–294.

[41] See Gustave Bardy, "Philosophie" et "philosophe" dans le vocabulaire chrétien des premières siècles, *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 25 (1949), 97–108.

theory and practice,[42] but he mostly spoke of philosophy in a historical context in which Christianity appeared at the end of a lengthy development involving the distillation of the ancient schools into a single, all-encompassing discipline: *una uerissimae philosophiae disciplina*.[43]

This perspective was complemented by his philological inquiries. He believed that the closer these brought him to the source of ancient views, the more effectively he could reflect the clarity of vision associated with their ultimately divine origin.[44] This program first appears in his reconstruction of the New Academy in *Contra Academicos*, where philosophy and religion become mutually supporting methods for bringing about personal purification and moral progress. The teacher of a philosophical way of life, such as Augustine himself, is someone who can handle abstract ideas as well as the rôle of interpreter of the Bible.

The growth in Augustine's interest in these themes took place under the guidance of Ambrose, who acted as his teacher and mentor from spring, 386. The bishop of Milan played a part similar to the tutors of earlier thinkers, for example Rusticus, whom Marcus Aurelius thanked for comparable services in the introduction to the *Meditations*.[45] Stoic and Neoplatonic notions of the sage, which Augustine could have gleaned respectively from the writings of Cicero or Plotinus, may have been in the back of his mind as he presented Ambrose as their Christian embodiment in books five and six of the *Confessions*.

The portrait of Ambrose was designed to present a contrast with the other (potential) spiritual guide of his youth, the Manichaean Faustus. Ambrose's sermons, as reflected in Augustine's account, combine themes from Plotinus with the Jewish (and later Christian) conception of spiritual direction based on the wisdom literature in the Bible. Ambrose is pictured as rehabilitating the study of the Old Testament, which was discredited during Augustine's nine years as a Manichaean "auditor." He thus provides an introduction to the theme of eternal biblical wisdom, which is one of the rare legacies of Judaism in Augustine's early works.

[42] E.g., *De Beata Vita* 1.4; *De Ord.*, 1.2.5; 1.6.15; 1.8.24; 1.11.31; cf. *De Vera Rel.*, 5.8. As time goes on, he is increasingly conscious of Paul's negative attitude at Col. 2:8; e.g., *De Mor. Eccl. Cath.*, 1.21.38.

[43] *C. Acad.*, 3.19.42; designating either the teachings of Plotinus according to Olivier du Roy, *L'intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon saint Augustin*, pp. 114–118, or the gospels according to Ragnar Holte, *Béatitude et sagesse: Saint Augustin et la fin de l'homme dans la philosophie ancienne*, trans. de Paillerets, Refoulé, and Sandby (Paris and Worcester, MA, 1962), pp. 87–109.

[44] His view is summed up by Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, 1.12.26: "in omnibus causis et debet et solet valere plurimum, et primum quidem omni antiquitate, quae quo proprius aberat ab ortu et divina progenie."

[45] *Meditations*, 1.7.

Above all, the Ambrose of the *Confessions* is a model for the sort of teacher that Augustine wants to become, who combines faith, philosophy, and biblical erudition.[46]

In this respect Ambrose and Augustine are figures in a long tradition of reconsideration of Jewish thought, which enters a new phase in the generation of Jerome and Augustine, the one guided by philology, the other by philosophy. Many previous writers were convinced that the fundamentals of Jewish learning antedated Greek culture.[47] Theophrastus, Aristotle's student, had asserted that the Jews were a race of philosophers who fasted during the intervals that separated their sacrifices, conversing with God and speculating on the heavens.[48] True, the Septuagint, which was completed by 246 B.C., failed to attract significant interest among Greek authors.[49] Nonetheless Aristobulus argued that important themes in ancient philosophy were derived from the Bible, and toward the end of the Hellenistic period there was an increasing amount of interchange between Greek and Jewish intellectuals. This co-operation is already at an advanced stage in Philo's *De Vita Contemplativa*; it can also be felt in less well-known works such as the *Fourth Book of Maccabees*, which was written in Greek by a Jewish author around A.D. 70, and portrayed the martyred Eleazar, who had refused to eat swine, as the model of a Jewish Stoic and ascetic thinker.[50] For his part, Augustine initially supported the view that Plato had heard the preaching of Jeremiah but later abandoned the hypothesis on chronological grounds.[51] Yet he remained attached to the conception of Old Testament prophets as philosophical sages, envisaging himself in book eleven of the *Confessions* in debate with Moses on the world's creation.[52]

[46] For a review of ancient traditions on this theme, see Ilsetraut Hadot, "The Spiritual Guide," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (New York, 1986), pp. 436–459; also, Stroumsa, *La fin du sacrifice*, pp. 189–214.

[47] *De Civ. Dei*, 11.21, arguing for Plato's access to scripture; cf. Clement, *Stromata* 1.23.153; 5.14.97; for a review, see Salvatore R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 9–59.

[48] *Stromata* 5.14.97; Theophrastus, *De Pietate*, cited by Porphyry, *De Abstinentia* 2.26.

[49] Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*: *The Limits of Hellenization* (Cambridge, 1971), p. 92.

[50] On the connections between Judaism and philosophic asceticism see Aviad Kleinberg, *Histoire des saints: Leur rôle dans la formation de l'Occident* (Paris, 2005), pp. 108–133.

[51] *De Civ. Dei*, 8.11; for the earlier view, *De Doct. Christ*., 2.28.43; for the definitive rejection, *Retr*., 2.4.2. However, Augustine remained convinced that Plato anticipated Christian monotheism; *De Civ. Dei*, 8.9; cf. *ibid*., 18.37. In his view, Egyptian sages and poets, namely Orpheus, Linus, and Musaeus, antedated the prophets. On the prehistory of this discussion, see Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982), pp. 1–19.

[52] *Conf*., 11.3.5: "Nam si esset [Moyses], tenerem eum et rogarem eum." The questions and answers of the dialogue are thus transformed into an interrogation of God by means of scripture. Augustine

Later contributions were made by patristic writers. Although the word *philosophia* occurs rarely in the New Testament,[53] the term was made familiar to Christian theology by Justin Martyr, who converted from Platonism around 132–135, founded a school of Christian philosophy in Rome shortly before 150, and was martyred during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, possibly between 165 and 167. His *Dialogue with Trypho* recreates his conversion within the dramatic setting of a Platonically inspired dialogue[54] and looks forward to Augustine's conversion, even though it differs significantly in detail and clearly was not its inspiration.[55] Among early Christian writers, Tatian, Hippolytus, and Tertullian spoke against the ethical claims of philosophy,[56] while Justin argued that philosophical inquiry could lead Christians to a better appreciation of divine truth.[57] Clement of Alexandria frequently referred to philosophy as a means of discovering "the way" of Christ, which involved "wisdom of soul, rectitude of judgement, and purity of life."[58] Origen, much utilized by Augustine,[59] combined a number of philosophical influences with the doctrines of Philo, thus associating the wisdom of the ancients with the teachings of the Hebrew Bible:[60] his commentary on the Song of Songs

was convinced that Hebrew was not only an oral language, which was passed on to Abraham, but also an early form of literate instruction, which Moses organized for the teaching of the law by means of what he called "inducers or introducers of written discourse;" *De Civ. Dei* 18.39.

[53] Φιλοσοφία is found only at Colos. 2:8; but see 4 Macc. 5:11. Φιλόσοφος occurs at Acts 17:18 in a pejorative sense to describe Epicureans and Stoics. However, at Acts 7:22, Moses is said to have been taught "all the wisdom of the Egyptians." Numenius refers to Plato as "the Moses of the Greek language;" Clement, *Stromata* 1.22.150.

[54] For a commentary on the Introduction to the *Dialogue*, see Niels Hyldahl, *Philosophie und Christentum: Eine Interpretation der Einleitung zum Dialog Justins* (Copenhagen, 1966), pp. 88–255; cf. J. C. M. Van Winden, *An Early Christian Philosopher: Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho Chapters One to Nine: Introduction, Text and Commentary* (Leiden, 1971), pp. 1–4. For a recent review of interpretations, see S. J. G. Sanchez, "Justyn Martyr: un homme de son temps," *SE* 41 (2002), 6–11.

[55] In Justin, a conversation with an unidentified elderly man destroys his confidence in Plato and persuades him of the superiority of Christianity, whereas in Augustine the decision is based on a comparative reading of the *libri Platonicorum* and the Epistles of Paul. Also, in Justin, the adoption of a Christian viewpoint is brought about largely through the Old Testament prophets, to whom his spiritual guide defers in his account of "the beginnings and ends" of things. In Augustine's conversion, prophecy is not a major factor: the easily recognizable source of spiritual direction is the sermons of Ambrose, which counter Manichaean propaganda and give him renewed confidence in the typological and philosophical significance of the Hebrew Bible.

[56] See Jean-Claude Fredouille, *Tertullien et la conversion de la culture antique* (Paris, 1972), pp. 301–357.

[57] E.g., *Dialogue*, 3.4. [58] Clement, *Stromata* 33 and 35.

[59] On Augustine's use of Origen, see György Heidl, *Origen's Influence on the Young Augustine: A Chapter in the History of Origenism* (Notre Dame, 2003), pp. 1–74.

[60] G. R. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenic Philosophy: A Study of its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 93–94.

proposes that Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs correspond to the traditional divisions of *philosophia* as *moralis*, *naturalis*, and *inspectiva*.[61] Although less obsessively ascetic in his deployment of spiritual exercises, Augustine adopted Origen's monastic and scholarly tendencies, and, under the influence of Ambrose, abandoned popular forms of prognostication.[62] The connection between Clement, Origen, and Augustine consists in the ascetic and meditative reading of scripture, which is recommended by the elderly figure in Justin's *Dialogue* as the true source of wisdom and happiness.

It is difficult to find a single definition of philosophy which fits all of these situations, or to delimit the ancient notion of philosophy in a manner which fully does justice to the anti-philosophical tendencies of many Christian writers. However, there is no doubt that many early Christian authors saw Christianity as a type of philosophy and described their faith in terms that would have been easily recognizable by ancient pagan thinkers through the use of internal exercises for the achievement of self-control and self-awareness. The chief difference between Christians and their predecessors in this regard did not arise from a priori defin itions of "philosophy" but from the Christian view that Christianity was not one philosophy among others but the *only* philosophy. Believing in a "Christian philosophy" therefore involved the rewriting of the history of the subject so that Christianity emerged as the unifying doctrine among the scattered teachings of the ancient schools and their late ancient offshoots. Augustine was convinced, as were Justyn Martyr, Origen, and the Cappadocian fathers, that each Greek philosopher had discovered a part of the truth and that this could be transmitted as a dimension of the Christian intellectual heritage; however, only Christians were in possession of the *logos* itself, which was identified with the incarnated Christ.

GRAMMAR AND RHETORIC

Augustine shares some of these ideas with other church fathers; however, with the exception of Jerome, he differs in the degree to which his

[61] *Origenes Werke*, vol. VIII (Leipzig, 1925), p. 76. On Origen's immense output, which helped to establish his reputation in late antiquity, see Jerome, *Ep.*, 33 and for a discussion, Mark Vessey, "Jerome's Origen: The Making of a Christian Literary *Persona*," *SP* 28 (1993), 135–145.

[62] In particular, Augustine rejected popular Neoplatonism, which employed magic; see the portrait of Apuleius, *Ep.*, 138; cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 10.9. Vindicianus, an elderly physician, dissuaded him from astrology; *Conf.*, 4.3.5–6 and 7.6.8; but he continued to ask why astrological predictions are occasionally correct; *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.13.27; 12.17.34–38; 12.22.45–48.

notion of a spiritual exercise is influenced by his training in grammar and rhetoric.[63]

The effects of this training are particularly noticeable in his philosophy of language, which analyzes parts of speech,[64] and in his approach to biblical texts, where he employs the ancient divisions of *lectio*, *emendatio*, *enarratio*, and *judicium* (oral reading, textual and stylistic criticism, literal and literary commentary, and aesthetic judgement).[65] Following Paul, he is convinced that truths presented "in figures" in scripture are intended to arouse our love;[66] charity is thus made a major goal of interpretation. Moreover, unlike the desert fathers, who were frequently suspicious of book culture, he views reading and writing as legitimate forms of meditative engagement.[67] A letter from his friend Volusianus in 410 recalls literary gatherings from his days as a student of rhetoric in which there were discussions of such terms as *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *translatio* (invention, arrangement, and metaphor).[68] His only regret, as expressed in books one and three of the *Confessions*, was that such conversations did not rise above literary appreciation to higher spiritual levels.

One of the by-products of his training in rhetoric was a literary interest in emotions, which fed into his notion of a spiritual exercise from several directions and in this respect differed from the views which he found in his chief source on the subject, Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*. In contrast to Cicero who studied emotions chiefly to control them, Augustine does not believe that they can ever be fully controlled, since they are inseparable from the imaginative settings in which they occur in the mind. This view greatly aided him in bridging the spiritual and literary dimensions of the soliloquy, as he did brilliantly in the narrative books of the *Confessions*.

[63] The enduring account of Augustine's education remains Marrou, *Saint Augustin*, pp. 3–157, despite minor imprecisions and the underrating of Augustine's understanding of science. On the rôle of grammar in Augustine's literary design, see Sabine MacCormack, *The Shadow of Poetry: Vergil in the Mind of Augustine* (Berkeley, 1998), pp. 45–88; on the social function of grammar in Roman education, see Robert Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1988).

[64] E.g., *De Dial.*, 6; *De Mag.*, 2.3–4; on this aspect of Augustine's linguistic background and its reappearance in the *Confessions*, see the valuable remarks of Philip Burton, *Language in the "Confessions" of Augustine* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 95–111.

[65] Cf. Marrou, *Saint Augustin*, pp. 20–21.

[66] E.g., *Ep.*, 55.11.21.

[67] He may have acquired the notion of writing as a meditative activity from the Manichaeans; at *Conf.*, 3.12.21, he mentions a Catholic bishop, who, during the period in which he belonged to the sect, engaged in both devotional reading and the related monastic activity of copying of dualist texts.

[68] *Ep.*, 135.

He likewise inquired into the force of second-order emotions, i.e., emotions which are the by-products of former emotions (such as the guilt experienced after committing a murder out of fear).[69] This theme appears in the *Confessions* in the context of his youthful literary training, in which he was frequently asked to express emotions that he did not actually feel. One example is found at 1.17.27, where he speaks of his rhetorical imitation of Juno in the *Aeneid*, (when, frustrated and angered at Aeneas's steady progress, she finds herself at length "impotent … to foil the Trojan lord from Italy");[70] another is evoked at the beginning of book three, where he is concerned with genuinely felt but falsely inspired emotions in a theater audience. Yet, despite his retrospective intolerance, Augustine is to some degree the victim of his own theory of the irresistibility of emotional appeals in literature. This comes out whenever he describes his own reaction to the *Confessions*. He tells us that he experienced strong emotions when writing his autobiography, as when he reread it in old age.[71] Just a year before death he advised his friend Darius to pay close attention to his self-portrait in the *Confessions*, in which, he says, the latter will also be able to see himself through himself.[72]

In view of his rhetorical interests, scholars have associated Augustine with a tradition of thinking beginning with Plato, in which philosophical analysis is presented in dialogues of considerable literary skill.[73] As widely acknowledged, Augustine reflects Plato's thinking on this aspect of the dialogue as it was adapted by Cicero, in which verbal repartee prefaces lengthy speeches that both outline Cicero's doctrines and act as a commentary on philosophical statements he has heard or read.[74] Augustine relaxes the rules governing these personal interventions, introducing details from his own life and from the lives of the participants which are

[69] For a discussion of such emotions, see the analysis of book one of *De Lib. Arbit.*, in Chapter 3.

[70] *Aeneid* 1.38, trans. C. Day Lewis.

[71] *Retr.*, 2.6.1: "Confessionum … libri tredecim … in eum [= Deum] excitant humanum intellectum et affectum; interim quod ad me attinet, hoc in me egerunt cum scriberentur et agunt cum leguntur."

[72] *Ep.*, 231.6: "Sume … libros … Confessionum mearum: ibi me inspice …; ibi me attende, et vide quid fuerim in meipso, per meipsum."

[73] A view Augustine may have acquired through Cicero; see *Tusc. Disp.*, 1.11.24. For a review of the issues, see Harold Cherniss, "Ancient Forms of Philosophic Discourse," in *Selected Papers*, ed. Leonardo Tarán (Leiden, 1977), pp. 14–35.

[74] *Ep.*, 1.2, where the achievements of the ancient philosophical schools are situated in the distant past; cf. *Ep.*, 4, to Nebridius in 387; for the context, see David Sedley, "Philosophical Allegiance in the Greco-Roman World," *Philosophia Togata*, ed. Miriam Griffin and Jonathan Barnes (Oxford, 1989), pp. 96–119, and Sedley, "Plato's *Auctoritas* and the Rebirth of the Commentary Tradition," *Philosophia Togata II* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 111–129. Closer to Augustine's time is Epictetus, whose use of the question and answer technique is excellently summarized by

not relevant to his arguments. The presence of such extraneous material may reflect the influence of Horace's *Satires* and *Epistles*, which he knew, or indirectly, the influence of Lucian, whose satirical dialogues contain a mixture of three types of discourse that one finds in his early writings, namely dialogue, monologue, and narrative.[75] There are a number of parallels between Augustine's playful techniques and the Lucianic tradition; these could have been transmitted through a variety of intermediaries, including his fellow African, Apuleius. (For example, Lucian and Augustine are both expert in the rhetorical presentation of conversions; and in both authors digressions abound, often to the detriment of arguments). In these and other rhetorical tendencies, Augustine does not adhere to the more dogmatic model of the dialogue that is found in Christian writers;[76] instead, he takes part in the movement within the Second Sophistic which effectively transforms the dialogue into an "art of conversation."[77] The banquet setting of *De Beata Vita*, in which he leads a discussion with a small group of friends and relatives, is typical of this development, in which poets, philosophers, and grammarians are invited to gatherings at which the entertainment consists in both unserious and erudite discourse.

Along with Boethius, Augustine was the most forceful influence on this type of self-examination in the medieval centuries that followed. His views were popularized in the twelfth century by proto- humanists like John of Salisbury, Hugh of St. Victor, and the gifted teachers at the cathedral school at Chartres, Bernard and Thierry.[78] Later authors, who benefited from a more complete library of classical thought than was accessible during the Middle Ages, nonetheless looked back to Augustine in their consolidation of the rôle of philosophy within the Christian literary life. Dante combines Augustinian and Boethian models for the

Anthony Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 67–94. In his youthful writings Augustine had resort to the already established metaphor of the teacher as a Christian Socrates; on the prehistory of this association, see Paul W. Gooch, *Reflections on Jesus and Socrates: Word and Silence* (New Haven, 1996), pp. 19–108.

[75] Cf. for a very general survey, see Christopher Robinson, *Lucian and his Influence in Europe* (Chapel Hill, 1979), p. 10.

[76] On the Christian-Latin dialogue, see Bernd Reiner Voss, *Der Dialog in der frühchristlichen Literatur* (Munich, 1970); less satisfactory is Manfred Hoffmann, *Der Dialog bei den christlichen Schriftstellern der ersten vier Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1966). On *C. Acad.*, see especially Therese Fuhrer, *Augustin Contra Academicos* (Berlin, 1997), pp. 19–27.

[77] See Cherniss, "Ancient Forms," 26–34 and, on the later development of dialogue as an art of conversation, see Marc Fumaroli, *Le genre des genres littéraires français: La conversation* (Oxford, 1992).

[78] See the full review of the subject in Edouard Jeauneau, *Lectio philosophorum: Recherches sur l'Ecole de Chartres* (Amsterdam, 1973).

spiritual exercise in *La Vita Nuova*, written in 1295, whereas Petrarch adopts the Augustinian form in his *Rime sparse*, which were composed between 1327 and 1368. Petrarch likewise speaks in Augustinian fashion of the monks at the Carthusian monastery near Montrieux, which his brother, Gherardo, entered in 1343, as enjoying the leisure of reflective thought (*otium cogitationis*).[79] Some two centuries later, Erasmus, who considered himself indebted to Augustine as well as Jerome, proposes that the gospels can be interpreted as *philosophia Christi*.[80]

THE RÔLE OF CONVERSION

Some light is thrown on the inspiration for spiritual exercises in Augustine's writings by the story of his conversion to philosophy at *Confessions* 3.2.4. This episode, in turn, can serve as an introduction to the larger problem of his reinterpretation of ancient thought, to which I next turn.

It was fashionable in antiquity and late antiquity for young people to renounce society by means of a sudden, irrevocable, and unforeseen decision and to take up what was described as "the philosophical life," as had celebrated teachers like Epictetus, Plotinus, and Porphyry.[81] At the time of this experience, Augustine was an intelligent but impoverished young man, who had come from a provincial town, Thagaste, in order to attend university in his country's metropolis, Carthage.[82] Despite the financial support of Romanianus, a rich landowner from his region who supplemented the meagre income of his widowed mother, he was having a difficult time making friends and finding an appropriate social milieu. In this state of mind he recalls his discovery of philosophy:

At this untried age I had been poring over books on the subject of eloquence. I was eager to surpass others in that art for an unworthy and selfish reason – the pleasure of human vanity. Following the usual cycle of instruction I had come upon the book of a certain Cicero, who was admired by almost everyone for his style, if not for his sentiments. The volume in question, called *Hortensius*,

[79] *De Otio Religioso*, ed. G. Rotundi (Vatican City, 1958), 6, quoting Augustine, *De Vera Rel.*, 35.65, discussed in Chapter 2. On this topic see Gur Zak, *Petrarch's Humanism and the Care of the Self* (Cambridge, 2010).

[80] *Paraclesis*, in *Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus: Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. Hajo Holborn (Munich, 1933), pp. 139, 140.

[81] See A. D. Nock, *Conversion* (Oxford, 1933), pp. 164–186, and on Augustine's sense of *conversio*, see Goulven Madec, *AL*, vol. 1, pp. 1282–1293. For a scholarly view of Nock's perspective on conversion, which is not universally applicable to post-classical texts, see Fausto Parente, "L'idea di conversione da Nock ad oggi," *AUG* 27 (1987), 7–25.

[82] Recalled at *De Ord.*, 2.17.45. In *Ep.*, 17, written to his countryman, Maximus, Augustine speaks as "an African writing for Africans," and expresses admiration for Punic erudition.

contains an exhortation by this thinker on behalf of philosophy. The book altered my feelings completely, as well as my prayers to you, Lord, and gave rise to other commitments and goals on my part. It rid me suddenly of all vain hope. I now longed for the immortality of wisdom. With an incredible passion in my heart I directed myself toward loftier matters with the purpose of finding my way back to you. I did not read that book to sharpen my tongue – the skill, it seemed to me, that I was buying with my mother's scarce resources, now that I was eighteen and my father had been dead for two years. No, I was not reading that book to improve what I said: it was persuading me by what it said.

We learn a number of important details about Augustine's early interest in philosophy from this account, despite the fact that it was written more than two decades later and has given rise to notorious problems of interpretation (in particular with respect to Augustine's relationship to Cicero).[83] First of all, he did not acquire his initial acquaintance with the discipline by doing philosophy along with others but by studying philosophy by himself. We do not come upon him engaged in a dialogue, working out problems by means of reason. Nor is he a victim of the type of wrangling among students of philosophy that he often criticizes in his early writings. He is alone with the text of Cicero's *Hortensius*. He tells us about his first acquaintance with philosophy and vividly describes the solitude that accompanied the experience. His discovery of the *Hortensius* is both a means of acquiring knowledge about a discipline and a way of demarcating a stage in his spiritual progress by means of interior dialogue.

However, if we look closely at the episode, it becomes clear that Augustine's conversion to philosophy is the retelling of an old story, which goes back at least to the early Platonist, Polemon.[84] By the time Augustine wrote the *Confessions* the scene had acquired iconic status: it casts a long shadow through the autobiography, and its critical moment, conversion by means of a book, is reenacted at the time of Augustine's conversion to the religious life. It is notable that the conversion scene in the garden in Milan in book eight is not concerned with his baptism, which is the

[83] The most detailed and balanced review of the issues remains Maurice Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1958), pp. 21–39, 96–113, and 131–154. The problems in interpretation have to do with the discrepancies between this late account, which stresses the importance of Cicero, and earlier descriptions of conversion, which note other possible sources; the usual comparison is with *C. Acad.*, 2.2.5, where the Pauline element predominates, and *De Beata Vita* 1.4, in which unnamed but certainly Neoplatonist influences are presented in an allegorical sea voyage in which, buffeted by storms and tempests, Augustine envisages himself reaching his desired port of call after overcoming the "mountain" of his own intellectual pride.

[84] On Augustine's knowledge of Polemon's conversion, see *Ep.*, 118.16; 144.2; *C. Jul.*, 1.4.2.

central event in his becoming a Catholic, but with his renunciation of wealth, worldly pleasures, and honors – the false gods described in the *Hortensius*, which are on his mind at *Confessions* 3.2.4. Despite his reservations about Cicero's teachings,[85] his transition to the religious life can be considered a restatement of this thinker's ideal in a Christian context.[86]

Another traditional feature of the description has to do with the use of the ancient "protreptic." A. A. Long remarks that "the term *protreptic* can scarcely be translated by a single English word. It refers to a type of exhortative or admonitory discourse, either in monologue or in question-and-answer form, designed to make persons rethink their ethical beliefs and convert to a fundamental change of outlook and behaviour."[87] Augustine did not know earlier examples of the protreptic such as Plato's *Apology* or *Euthydemus* directly, but as in those works he associates the form with the questioning method of Socrates, on whose dialogues and formal speeches he appears to base the literary style of much of what he has to say to his students in his own dialogues. Cicero's *Hortensius*, which was his model for the genre, is also indebted to Aristotelian and Stoic influences (and one Augustinian dialogue, *De Ordine*, employs Stoic stratagems to that end).[88]

One of the features of the protreptic is the engagement of the emotions of the potential convert in the search for the philosophical life.[89] However, as Augustine fits this technique into the literary pattern of the *Confessions*, the emotions expressed in 373 are intended to contrast with those that he will feel in 386, when he converts to religion.[90] In the earlier scene he is pictured as an enthusiastic disciple of Cicero who needs no

[85] See Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron*, *passim*, Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, pp. 37–42, and, on related texts, Goulven Madec, "L'*Hortensius* de Cicéron dans livres XIII-XIV du *De Trinitate*," *REA* 15 (1969), 167–173. The phrase "cuiusdam Ciceronis" (*Conf.*, 3.4.7) echoes the description of Plato, as Socrates' "scribe," at *De Vera Rel.*, 2.2: "suauius ad legendum quam potentius ad persuadendum."

[86] On this theme see Pierre Boyancé, "Cicéron et la vie contemplative," in *Études sur l'humanisme cicéronien* (Brussels, 1970), 89–113.

[87] Long, *Epictetus*, p. 54.

[88] Virgilio Pacioni, *L'Unità teoretica del "De ordine" de S. Agostino* (Rome, 1996), pp. 120–162.

[89] Cf. Cicero, *De Orat.*, 1.47.

[90] This, too, is predetermined in a sense, since in Augustine's view emotion depends on grace, as does true devotion. Platonism, lacking this notion, is unaware of the source of the *confessionis lacrimae*; *Conf.*, 7.21.27. For a tentative review of Augustine's approach to emotion, see Richard Sorabji, *Emotions and Peace of Mind. From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 400–417; for the Stoic antecedents, see Tad Brennan, *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties, and Fate* (Oxford, 2005) and Margaret R. Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion* (Chicago, 2007), esp. chaps. 6 and 7. On the literary dimension of the Stoic approach to emotion, which Augustine knowledgeably or unknowledgeably extended through his notion of the literary imagination,

other encouragement than the *Hortensius*; in the final transformation he sees himself as a reluctant initiate into the disciplines of continence and chastity, who only realizes after a succession of failures that he is unable to reach a binding decision about his future without the aid of God. Also, in contrast to the quoted passage from book three, where his strong emotion is a direct reaction to what he reads, his emotion in book eight is described as the outward expression of the inner action of grace, through which, he recalls, "all shadow of doubt was suddenly banished and certainty established, so to speak, through an influx of light."[91]

Unlike his later conversion, moreover, his turn toward philosophy is not anticipated by anything in his previous educational experience, about which he speaks in largely negative and rhetorical terms in book one.[92] The absence of context reinforces the reader's impression that the forces bringing about this transformation arise outside him: they act arbitrarily, like the God of the Old Testament. In referring to such influences, Augustine may even have in mind a "typological" structure in which philosophy takes the place of Hebrew prophecy as a forerunner of Christianity.[93] He tells us little about the contents of the *Hortensius*, and this paucity of detail contrasts with his limited but specific recapitulation of the themes of Aristotle's *Categories* at the end of book four, where he notes that his instructor was unable to tell him any more about the work than he "gained by his own private reading."[94] We cannot know fully what the *Hortensius* contained, since only fragments of the text survive,

see Martha Nussbaum, "Poetry and the Passions: Two Stoic Views," in J. Brunschwig and M. Nussbaum, eds., *Passions and Perceptions* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 97–149. On the connection to the imagination through the Stoic notion of *phantasia*, see Gerard Watson, "Discovering the Imagination: Platonists and Stoics on *phantasia*," in *The Question of Eclecticism: Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*, ed. John M. Dillon and A. A. Long (Berkeley, 1988), pp. 208–233; cf. G. Watson, *Phantasia in Classical Thought* (Galway, 1988).

[91] *Conf.*, 8.12.29: "quasi luce securitatis infusa cordi meo omnes dubititationis tenebrae diffugerunt."

[92] Although *pace* Augustine similar language accompanies his discovery of Celsus, *De Haeresibus*; *C. Acad.*, 2.2.5; *Sol.*, 1.12.21.

[93] Confirmation for the biblical context of Augustine's conversion story is found in the first thirty-three *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, which were composed about the same time as the *Confessions*. For a detailed study of these parallels, see Isabelle Bochet, *"Le firmament de l'Écriture:" L'Herméneutique augustinienne* (Paris, 2004), ch. 3: "L'expérience de la conversion à la lumière de l'Écriture," pp. 159–264, esp. pp. 160–186.

[94] *Conf.*, 4.16.28. The statement has perhaps not received the attention it merits within the formation of Augustine's philosophical outlook, from which the influence of Aristotle is usually excluded. A close examination of his language suggests that he may have combined two major interpretations of a "category," namely as a classification that pertains to grammatical distinctions (as illustrated by *De Mag.*, 2.3–4) and as a classification that indicates objects as contrasted with signs or symbols (as *De Mag.*, 11.36–37). Just as Aristotle used the second notion to criticize Plato's doctrine of forms, Augustine may have utilized the realistic view of a category to criticize

largely in his quotations.[95] What stands out in his mind as he remembers his initial acquaintance with the work is the widespread ancient definition of philosophy on which Cicero drew: *amor sapientiae*.[96] This too, within the narrative, is an emotion which impels him, not to master a body of doctrine, but to adopt a new set of values and to commit himself to a new lifestyle.

To reiterate: it is a literary experience which separates Augustine's conversion to philosophy from those that came before,[97] just as it is an act of reading that galvanizes the action of grace by which he eventually converts to religion. In this respect his two conversions differ in form from those of earlier pagan thinkers as well as from Christian converts such as Justin Martyr and Arnobius.[98] Nonetheless, the young Augustine reflects a theme that is common to both traditions, namely the search for an exercise that will provide him with adequate spiritual direction. The emphasis throughout the description at *Confessions* 3.2.4 is on the solution to this problem by means of contemplative ascent: from the senses to the mind, from the mortal to the immortal, and from involvement in the world to the detachment that permits him to find his way to God. The *Hortensius* was appropriate reading for this purpose, or so he thought, and he was in the right frame of mind to hear its message. He quoted Cicero's protreptic throughout his career, even in works whose purpose was to provide a Christian alternative to philosophical doctrines. Its influence on his thinking has been judged to be as important as that of the *libri Platonicorum*.[99]

RETHINKING TRADITIONS

Augustine's story of his conversion represents a chapter in his acquaintance with ancient teachings on ways of living and thinking, to which I now turn. The question that has bedeviled historians for the past century

the idea that meaning can be conveyed by words in the absence of a prior knowledge of the objects for which they stand.

95 See Madec, "L'*Hortensius* de Cicéron," 167–173.

96 On the stages of Augustine's incorporation of this notion into his Christian outlook in his early works, see Olivier du Roy, *L'intelligence de la foi*, pp. 209–267.

97 Cf. Nock, *Conversion*, p. 179.

98 On the philosophical context, cf. R. B. Rutherford, *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, pp. 256–258.

99 E.g., *Ep.*, 2*, 12.1 (*CSEL* 88, 19–20). For an assessment of the rôle of Cicero's notion of political virtue on Augustine's outlook, see Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 6–26; on Cicero's rôle in the dialogues, see Michael P. Foley, "Cicero, Augustine, and the Philosophical Roots of the Cassiciacum Dialogues," *REA* 45 (1999), 51–77.

is what weight to give each of these traditions in the formation of his outlook. There are moments in his later career when he sheds some light on the issues, for example in letter 118, which was written to his friend Dioscorus around 410, where he displays his erudition in philosophy to an educated proponent of ancient literate values.[100] However, this type of reflection is rare in his writings after he becomes bishop of Hippo, and most of the story has had to be reconstructed from a bewildering variety of sources.

Beginnings. The earliest of these concerns African dualism. In 373, when he read the *Hortensius* in Carthage, Augustine was well on his way to becoming a Manichaean "auditor." It is possible to think of this sectarian movement as one of the philosophies of life with which he contended in his youth, although dualism as he knew it did not constitute a formal school of thought. Yet Manichaeism contributed important elements to Augustine's notion of a spiritual exercise by whetting his interest in the field of biblical interpretation and by acquainting him with the advantages of an otherworldly outlook. It is through a combination of rational and religious interests that he recalls his initial encounter with the dualist community at *De Utilitate Credendi* 1.2: there, he reminds his school friend, Honoratus (still a Manichaean) "that for no other reason did we fall in with such men than that they kept saying that by pure and simple reason (*mera et simplici ratione*), quite apart from any sort of authority, they would guide their willing listeners to God and free them from every sort of error."

As a literary man, Augustine was initially attracted by the Manichaeans' dexterity in dealing with texts. They were adept at a type of "hermeneutics"[101] in which troublesome passages in the Old Testament were explained, or explained away, as needless Jewish additions. It took him some time to see through the flaws in this approach to criticism as well as to deal with the dualists' cosmological "fables."[102] Their notion of spiritual companionship stayed with him longer. Despite his rejection of dualist doctrines he remained in contact with his Manichaean friends after leaving Carthage, regularly attending

[100] Christine Mohrmann, "Saint Augustine écrivain," *RA* 1 (1958), 66.

[101] See *De Mor. Eccl. Cath.*, 2.10.36–37; in general see Michel Tardieu, "Principes de l'exégèse manichéenne du Nouveau Testament," in *Les règles de l'interprétation* (Paris, 1987), 123–146. It would be possible to reconstruct African Manichaean interpretive methods from Augustine's point-by-point refutation in *C. Faust. Man.*, and from the public debate with Felix recorded in *C. Felicem Man*.

[102] E.g., *De Lib. Arbit.*, 1.2.4; *Conf.*, 5.3.6.

their gatherings during the period of his professorship in Milan. His aesthetic side responded to the vividness of Manichaean imagery, the beauty of their manuscripts, and the Miltonic dramatization of light and darkness in the creation story. Also, he was attracted to their ethical viewpoint, which, as long as he was an auditor, asked him to change only one part of his life. He was thus able to acquire a reputation for otherworldliness among his friends while retaining his interest in a variety of mundane pursuits.

However, as in his account of his conversion to philosophy, there is much that is rhetorical in his tale of his years as a dualist. As a literary effort, the story can be read as an episode in the exemplary narrative of a Christian intellectual who passes from malevolent to benevolent influences, as did numerous medieval and early modern self-reformers down to John Donne. After his abandonment of unpromising dualist doctrines (and his rejection, as a trained rhetorician, of their amateur analyses of texts), the next episode deals with the alleged shift in his interests from literary to philosophical studies and the growth in his understanding of the interior life.

Instruction. He subsequently applied his literary skills to a meditative or reflective reading of select philosophical works, among them Aristotle's *Categories* and the *libri Platonicorum*, i.e., texts of Plato and/or Plotinus, both, it would appear, accompanied by translations. (He may have begun this phase of his education as early as 380–381, since the description of his earliest dialogue, *De Pulchro et Apto*, although too brief for the recognition of specific sources, suggests that he had been studying Stoic and Neoplatonist aesthetics). Later scenes in this narrative account include his refusal to take part in literary competitions or to attend theatrical performances. Nor should we forget, as an aspect of the life-reforming programme, his determined but unsuccessful resistance to womanizing, which is conceived in the autobiography as a step toward fulfilling the ancient Roman ideal of high values within the simple life.

It was toward the end of his Manichaean period, during renunciations of his ingrained habits and inevitable relapses, that Augustine began a serious, long-term reassessment of ancient thought. His accounts of his studies in philosophy have largely been perused by scholars in order to trace the sources of his doctrines. However, like his retrospective view of dualism, they are equally important from a rhetorical viewpoint in preparing the way for the introduction into his life and writings of a distinctive style of spiritual exercise.

His search for an alternative to the standard education in philosophy is evident from his first statements on the subject. He complains that there are no true philosophers left,[103] since instruction takes place largely through handbooks.[104] Open debate is rare; instead, a master familiar with the teachings of a specific school of thought elicits from his pupils a correct interpretation of a number of canonical texts. Augustine is both a victim of the system and an unwitting proponent of its defects. The Cassiciacum dialogues do not draw a firm boundary between active debate and passive commentary. Teaching even takes place through correspondence: Augustine's young friend, Nebridius, has left us an idealistic description of his country retreat, where he claims that his master's letters permitted him to become acquainted with the literary remains of Plato, Plotinus, and Christ.[105]

One of the themes that Augustine stresses in his accounts of his studies in philosophy with his students and friends at Cassiciacum concerns the manner in which their discussions prepared the way for his advocacy of interior dialogue. Each member of his study group engaged in inner reflection, and the results, when shared with the others, formed an integral part of the oral debates. Encounters between Augustine and his students sometimes produced advances in thought (as in the case of the debate with Adeodatus on language)[106] but most often they offered training in soliloquizing as a spiritual discipline. Augustine's expression of dissatisfaction with superficialities in the study of philosophy – the absence of fundamental questions and endless quibbling over words – is both a serious conviction on his part and a rhetorical strategy, by which he tries to persuade his students to abandon external concerns and to pursue interior goals.[107] In a word, he encourages them to become their own spiritual directors and to test themselves daily by means of introspective dialogues, as he has himself. He warns them that progress will be slow. But they can move forward by means of *docta ignorantia*, that is, by an understanding of their ignorance based on the knowledge that there are things they will

[103] *Ep.*, 1.1.

[104] A. Solignac, "Doxographies et manuels dans la formation philosophique de S. Augustin," *RA* 1 (1958), 113–148; on the earlier developments, see Pier Luigi Donini, "Testi e commenti, manuali e insegnamento: La forma sistematica e i metodi della filosofia in età postellenica," *ANRW* 2, 36.7, 5027–5100.

[105] *Ep.*, 6.1; cf. *Ep.*, 5.

[106] See Michele Malatesta, "St. Augustine's Dialectic from the Modern Logical Standpoint. Logical Analysis of *Contra Academicos* III, 10, 22–13, 29," *Metalogicon* 8 (1995), 91–120; Malatesta, "La problematica linguistica del *Contra Academicos* alla luce della filosofia del linguaggio contemporanea," *ibid.*, 10 (1997), 46–63.

[107] E.g., *De Imm. An.*, 10.17; *Ep.*, 4.2; *C. Acad.*, 3.9.18.

never know.[108] For, in his view truth is not found in books or authors but in the exercise of purified minds.[109]

Scepticism. It is in the light of this development that one has to assess Augustine's appropriation of methods associated with Scepticism. He has both a positive and negative attitude toward Sceptical doctrines. On the positive side, he exhibits an intuitive scepticism, which is a recurring feature of his outlook and has no sources as such. On the negative side, he shows an interest in traditional Scepticism as outlined in Cicero's *Academica*,[110] on which he comments directly, frequently disagreeing with its views.

Cicero's Academic Scepticism was content with criticizing other positions and made little attempt to establish an alternative outlook.[111] By contrast, Augustine responds in an original manner to two Sceptical positions. He challenges the notion that we know nothing for certain by means of the argument of the *cogito*.[112] Also, he adopts in a modified form the view that what we know is often based on probability rather than certainty. Here he reflects (indirectly) the thinking of Aristotle, who proposed that our moral judgements are often determined by available evidence rather than by means of a complete understanding of the facts in a given situation. In adopting a flexible position on this question Augustine was doubtless influenced from a different direction by Paul, who believed that our knowledge of the future is imperfect and incomplete owing to

[108] *Ep.*, 130.15.28: "Et ergo in nobis quaedam, ut ita dicam, docta ignorantia, sed docta spiritu dei qui adjuvat infirmitatem nostram." The origin of the idea may be Pauline; cf. Rom. 8: 25–27, where Paul speaks of the spirit aiding us in our weakness as we try to put our prayers into words; Augustine voices similar concerns, *De Mag.*, 1.2.

[109] *Ep.*, 19.

[110] It is not clear which version of Cicero's *Academici Libri* was used; Fuhrer, *Augustin Contra Academicos*, p. 38. For an argument in favour of *Acad. Post.* alone, see Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, p. 501f. In addition to the *Academici Priores* and *Posteriores*, possible sources for Scepticism include the *Hortensius* (*C. Acad.*, 3.14.31) and Varro; on the latter, see J. J. O'Donnell, "Augustine's Classical Readings," *RA* 15 (1980), 153–154; also, Nello Cipriani, "L'influsso di Varrone sul pensiero antropologico et morale nei primi scritti di S. Agostino," in *L'etica christiana nei secoli III e IV* (Rome, 1996), 370–374; 378–388; and Cipriani, "Il rifiuto del pessimismo porfiriano nei primi scritti de S. Agostino," *AUG* 37 (1997), 114–122. For a judicious review of recent scholarship on the question, see Ilsetraut Hadot, "La question varronienne vingt ans plus tard," in the re-edition of *Arts libéraux et philosophie dans la pensée antique* (Paris, 2005), pp. 332–373.

[111] On Augustine's understanding of the term "Academic," see the articles of M. Baltes and B. R. Voss in *AL*, vol. 1, pp. 40–51.

[112] On this question see Chapter 2. Augustine likewise argued that we sometimes know things by not knowing them; e.g., *De Civ. Dei* 12.7, where he proposes that we know some things, such as darkness and silence, not *efficientes* but *deficientes*. On the originality and influence of Augustine's Scepticism as a rethinking of Cicero and anticipation of Descartes, see J.-P. Dumont, *Le Scepticisme et le phénomène: Essai sur la signification et les origines du pyrrhonisme*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1985), pp. 29–32.

the limitations of the human condition.[113] In view of such imponderables, it is tempting to see the Augustine of the dialogues as a Christian version of a "sceptical Socrates,"[114] who repeatedly questions the assumptions of his students in Milan, Cassiciacum, and Rome on such issues as the sources of happiness and the origin of evil.

His position on Scepticism is summed up in the aphorism, *Praesentia videntur, creduntur absentia*.[115] He doubts the value of perceptual and cognitive impressions as sources of sure knowledge.[116] He is convinced that we take for granted many things on trust that we cannot verify through the senses or reason, for example, the daily rising of the sun.[117] We likewise rely on our confidence in the reports of others when we make moral decisions based on beliefs, customs, or laws, none of which are subject to verification.[118] We cannot give a rational explanation in the present for events that have taken place in the past; nor can we account for natural phenomena which have been observed but not understood.[119] At *Soliloquia* 1.3.8, he notes that we believe everything that we know, but we do not know

[113] For Aristotle, see *Metaphysics* 1008b, 26–27; for Paul, 1 Cor. 13:9 and *De Civ. Dei*, 19.18. In *Ep.*, 1.1, to Hermogenianus in 386, Augustine acknowledges the *auctoritas* of the Academic method of argumentation: "Quare potius eos imitatus sum quantum valui." But it is not clear how faithfully he followed his own dictum, nor does he indicate which thinkers were his models. He knew something about Pyrrhonism from Cicero, although he did not have access to Sextus Empiricus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. (Nor was he aware that Pyrrhonism, as presented by these authors, may have differed markedly from the views of Pyrrho himself). While he does not use Pyrrhonist vocabulary, his method of argument has a number of points in common with this approach: (1) the sides in an argument exhibit "equality of strength" (*isotheneia*); (2) no conclusions are reached and matters are frequently left in "unresolvable disagreement"(*anapikritos disphonia*); (3) the result is "suspension of judgement" (*epoche*) and the attainment of "freedom from disturbance" (*ataraxia*), as in book one of *De Ord*. This is temporary freedom, since the human mind, according to Augustine, is incessantly "unquiet" (*Conf.*, 1.1.1) and, owing to original sin, unable to achieve lasting tranquility. See Richart Bett, *Pyrrho, his Antecedents, and his Legacy* (Oxford, 2000), p. 3; cf.; A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy. Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*, 2nd edn (Berkeley, 1986), pp. 76–77; 82–83; 90–91; 123–131. For a logical assessment of Augustine's response to Sceptical doctrines, see Theodor G. Bucher, "Augustinus und der Skeptizismus. Zur Widerlegung in *Contra Academicos*," in *Congresso Internazionale su S. Agostino*, vol. 11 (Rome, 1987), pp. 381–392.

[114] I draw this term from A. A. Long, "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy," *CQ* 38 (1988), 151, who refers to the "witty, sometimes caustic and ironical Socrates – Plato's Socrates," even though Augustine, differing here from his Ciceronian model, appears to have framed this rôle independently, since he had no direct acquaintance with the Platonic dialogues in which this picture of Socrates emerges.

[115] *Ep.*, 142.2.7.

[116] On the Stoic and Academic sides of this argument drawn from the *Acad*. of Cicero, on which Augustine chiefly drew, see the excellent summary of J. Allen, "Academic Probabilism and Stoic Epistemology," *CQ* n.s. 44 (1994), 85–89.

[117] *C. Acad.*, 2.11.26. [118] *De Civ. Dei*, 11.3; cf. 11.7.

[119] *Ibid.*, 21.5.

everything that we believe.[120] A decade later, at *Confessions* 6.5.7, he offers a more detailed statement of this view, stating:

> I considered the innumerable things I believed which I had not seen, events which occurred when I was not present, such as many incidents in the history of nations, many facts concerning places and cities which I had never seen, many things accepted on the word of friends, many from physicians, many from other people. Unless we believed what we were told, we would do nothing at all in this life.[121]

At *De Civitate Dei* 11.27, he attributes our understanding of such occurrences to "the sense of the inner man," which is capable of reaching conclusions based on a wide range of non-observed phenomena such as the hidden laws of nature and concepts like justice, goodness, and beauty. He finds biblical support for his reflections on this topic in the statement at Isaiah 7:9 (in the Septuagint), to which he frequently refers: "Unless you believe, you will not know."[122]

In his diverse interpretations of this aphorism he recasts much of his thinking about the classical challenge of achieving a better life. He asks those assembled at Cassiciacum how happiness can be defined,[123] and utilizes paradoxical thinking in finding a solution. He is convinced that the desire for happiness is shared by everyone and he reiterates on several occasions the ancient maxim, *Beati … esse uolumus*.[124] The starting point

[120] For a variant, see *En. in Ps.*, 118, s. 18.3, where Augustine proposes that there are many things which, not being understood, are not believed, while there are other things which, if not believed, are not understood; cf. *De Mag.*, 11.37; *De Util. Cred.*, 11.25; and, on this notion as a source of indecisiveness, *Conf.*, 6.4.6.

[121] Trans. Henry Chadwick; cf. *Conf.*, 1.7.12, where, concerning his infancy, Augustine notes that he is obliged to believe what others have told him concerning his first stages of life.

[122] The text is mentioned at *De Civ. Dei*, 11.3 in connection with the authority of the canonical scriptures and silently transferred to 11.27, where its scope is expanded to include many natural, experiential, and metaphysical events about which knowledge is partial, incomplete, or unprovable. On Augustine's early interpretation of Isaiah 7:9, see Martin Dulaey, "L'apprentissage de l'exégèse biblique par Augustin. Première partie. Dans les années 386–389," *REA* 48 (2002), 269–272.

[123] The question reappears in letter 118.3 to Dioscorus; for a discussion, see Isabelle Bochet, "Le statut de l'histoire de la philosophie selon la *Lettre* 118 d'Augustin à Dioscore," *REA* 44 (1998), 46–76. On the possible Stoic roots of Augustine's conceptions of wisdom, happiness, and truth, see Gérard Verbeke, "Augustin et le stoïcisme," *RA* 1 (1958), 67–89; on Stoic influences on Augustine more generally, see Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, vol. II: *Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century* (Leiden, 1985), pp. 142–238 with a review of previous research, pp. 145–150; for the suggestion that Stoicism influenced Augustine's literary theory, see ch. 4. Much work remains to be done; see A. A. Long, "Stoicism in the Philosophical Tradition: Spinoza, Lipsius, Butler," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Brad Inwood (Cambridge, 2003), p. 367, where it is noted that "Stoicism is a part, but a largely unacknowledged part, of the Christian tradition."

[124] *C. Acad.*, 1.2.5; cf. *De Trin.*, 13.4.7, where the source is revealed; Cicero, *Hort.*, frag. 58 in *M. Tulli Ciceronis Hortensius*, ed. A. Grilli (Milan, 1962). Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 10.1.

for his analysis of happiness is thus the certainty that each of us has of the desire for happiness. Like our awareness of self-existence, this is never the subject of doubt. But it is not something that we truly know. Lodged in our being but hidden from us in its origins, this conception is presumably there for us to discover, like a past experience that we have forgotten. However, we must make this discovery from the inside. Through rehabilitation, or as he might prefer, recollection, we learn that happiness is something that we have always possessed but have overlooked, until we are reawakened to the desire to know what it is.[125] This re-acquaintance is a transitory experience,[126] but by means of the experience we recognize the permanence of the desire itself, which is evidence of our inherent longing to return to God.

As a development out of such views, he is convinced that sceptical reductionism leads those in search of a better life to certain, irrefutable truths, and that these can be expressed in aphorisms (e.g., Isaiah 7:9), which are quite easy to remember and to recall, when needed. This is not the logical or mathematical paradox common in some forms of classical Scepticism, in which two contradictory but defensible propositions are set side by side, but a series of two-edged literary statements, in which a pithy or proverbial quality arises from purely verbal antithesis. By means of such maxims Augustine expresses some of his most concentrated thinking on philosophical and theological topics.[127]

An extended example of this approach is found in the prayer that begins the *Confessions*, where a series of statements move through three stages: these treat in order communication between God and man, the fact that God is everywhere and nowhere at once, and the nature of human memory, which, like mind, acts as a container for all things except itself. The deity is first implored in antithetical phrases:

> "Grant me Lord to know and understand" (Ps. 118: 34, 73, 144) which comes first – to call upon you or to praise you, and whether knowing you precedes calling on you. But who calls upon you who does not know you? … Yet "how shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed?" … (Rom. 10:14).

However, in "calling upon God," Augustine is made aware of the deity's presence and absence:[128]

[125] *Conf.*, 10.21.30–31. [126] *C. Acad.*, 2.9.26.

[127] For a demonstration of the use of antinomy in Augustine's theology, see Rowan Williams, "The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in the *De trinitate*," in J. T. Lienhard *et al.*, eds., *Collectanea Augustiniana: Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum* (New York, 1993), pp. 121–134.

[128] On God's presence and absence, cf. Plotinus, *Enn.*, 5.5.9.

But what place is there in me where my God can enter into me? … Is there any room in me which can contain you? Can heaven and earth, which you have made and in which you have made me, contain you? … I also have being. So why do I request you to come into me, when, unless you were within me, I would have no being at all?[129]

Finally, what he can remember becomes the boundary between what he knows and does not know.[130]

There are numerous antinomies scattered throughout Augustine's writings. His infancy is long "dead," but he is still "alive":[131] earlier phases of his life are in the past, which no longer exists, and yet his memory of the past exists in the present.[132] He is asleep but his soul is awake.[133] He knows what memory records, because he remembers, but he does not know what memory is.[134] He can feel things that he is incapable of putting into words, but he can say nothing of what he is incapable of feeling.[135] He is unknown to others, just as he is unknown to himself.[136] It is marvelous that the soul sees within itself what it sees nowhere else.[137] Nothing is taught without signs, but that nothing is learned from signs alone. Truth is conveyed by words but not located in words, since words move between tongues and ears, while truth moves between souls or minds.[138] One mind cannot know another if it does not know itself,[139] for mind is only seen by mind.[140] So great is the power of thought that not even the mind itself may place itself, so to speak, in its own sight, except when it thinks of itself.[141] If asked what time is, he cannot say, but, if not asked, he knows.[142] God is "unspeakable," but to refer to him is "to speak" of him.[143] It is better to find that the deity is beyond discovery than to fail to find him by presuming that he can be discovered.[144] We "walk by faith, not by sight" (1 Cor. 13:12), but unless we love God we will not see him: for something that is not known cannot be loved.[145]

Platonism and Neoplatonism. The conceptual framework for such assertions in Augustine's early thought was largely provided by an eclectic type of Platonism, in which doctrines from Platonism, Middle Platonism,

[129] *Conf.*, 1.1.1; trans. H. Chadwick. [130] *Ibid.*, 1.6.9–11; 10.5.7; 10.17.26; 10.20.29.
[131] E.g., *ibid.*, 1.6.9. [132] *Ibid.*, 11.18.23. [133] *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.2.3.
[134] *De Lib. Arbit.*, 2.19.51; *Conf.*, 10.17.26. [135] *En. in Ps.*, 99.5.
[136] *Ep.*, 130.4. [137] *De Trin.*, 8.6.9.
[138] *De Mag.*, 11.36. Cf. *Conf.*, 11.6.8, where he proposes that words convey meaning, but that God's word is conveyed by silence; cf. 8.10.
[139] *De Trin.*, 9.3.3. [140] *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.10.21. [141] *De Trin.*, 14.6.8.
[142] *Conf.*, 11.25.32. [143] *De Doct. Christ.*, 1.6.6. [144] *Conf.*, 1.6.10.
[145] *De Trin.*, 8.4.6; cf. 9.2.2; 9.3.3; 10.2.2.

and Neoplatonism were interwoven into his personal conception of a Christian philosophy.

In general, his summary of Plato's thought is schematic;[146] the ultimate source is Plato, but Plato as known through intermediaries. Augustine may have been acquainted with the Greek text of the *Phaedrus* and the *Phaedo* (in part) through Porphyry, and he certainly knew the translation of the *Meno* through Cicero;[147] however, the other major sources of his knowledge of Plato were Varro, Apuleius, Ambrose, and Celsus.[148] He did not reflect the disunified thinking of the various Platonic schools that is typical of Latin thinkers in the Roman Empire but the synthetic view of Plato's teachings that is found in Plotinus.[149] His approach was guided by the Platonic distinction between what is perceptible to the senses and what is apprehensible to the mind; his originality arose from the diversity of his applications of the dichotomy, not all of which were foreseen in earlier tradition. On some topics in the philosophy of mind, such as memory, he was a serious critic of Plato. Yet he viewed Platonism as a

[146] An inquiry into these branches of his philosophical education has to begin with an assessment of his knowledge of Greek. This improved over his lifetime, but possibly remained below the level necessary for serious, independent inquiries using Greek texts. Yet, in contrast to other late ancient writers with a partial knowledge of the language, e.g., the encyclopedists, Augustine is never antiquarian in approach; see David Pingree, "The Mathematical Disciplines in Augustine," *AL*, vol. 1, pp. 481–484. In his biblical commentaries Augustine sometimes compares Greek and Latin phrases and makes remarks that even a more accomplished Hellenist like Jerome finds worthy of notice. In the *Confessions*, Augustine tells us that he learned Greek as a written language, *non loquentibus, sed docentibus* (1.14.23). On his knowledge of the Greek fathers, the articles of Berthold Altaner remain fundamental: "Augustinus und die griechische Patristik. Ein Einführung und Nachlass zu den quellenkritischen Untersuchungen," *Revue bénédictine* 62 (1952), 201–215; "Augustins Methode der Quellenbenützung. Sein Studium der Väterliteratur," *SE* 4 (1952), 5–17; and "Die Benützung von original griechischen Väterliteratur durch Augustinus," in Altaner, *Kleine patristische Schriften*, ed. G. Glockmann (Berlin, 1967), pp. 129–153.

[147] *Tusc. Disp.*, 1.57–58. For a brief comparison between Plotinus and Porphyry on presence before self and before God, see the note of A. Solignac, *Conf.* (*BA* 13, 1962), 679–681. For a critical review of theses regarding the use of Porphyry by Augustine, see G. Madec, "Augustin, disciple et adversaire de Porphyre," *REA* 10 (1964), 365–369; cf. Pierre Courcelle, "Verissima philosophia," in *Epektasis: Mélanges … Jean Daniélou*, 653–659; Pier Franco Beatrice, "Quosdam Platonicorum Libros. The Platonic Readings of Augustine in Milan," *Vigiliae Christianae* 43 (1989), 248–281.

[148] Or Celsinus or both; on the distinction, see Pierre Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques en Occident de Macrobe à Cassiodore*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1948), pp. 179–181. Augustine's knowledge of philosophy in Greek can be compared to his access to original texts in theology; see Berthold Altaner, "Augustinus und di griechische Sprache," *Kleine Patristische Schriften*, 129–153.

[149] On the divisions of the Platonic schools, see Donini, "Testi e commenti," *ANRW* 2, 36.7, 5027–5035; 5056–5065. I contrast the small group of specific Platonic theses found in Augustine's writings with the vaguer notion of his Platonism; on this topic see Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenic Philosophy*, pp. 99–105.

powerful argument against Stoic and Epicurean materialism,[150] and after his reading of Plotinus, as a pathway toward a universal discipline that incorporated the highest philosophical truth.[151]

In evaluating his debts to the Platonic tradition, the greatest problem facing scholars who have grappled with the relevant texts arises from trying to discover where his eclectic Platonism finishes and his doctrinally oriented Christianity begins. Early historians of this question, such as Adolph von Harnack and Prosper Alfaric, were convinced that it was possible to isolate the respective influences of Platonic and Christian doctrines, and as a consequence to speculate on the nature, timing, and importance of his two "conversions," namely to philosophy and religion. However, a philological examination of Augustine's dialogues has shown that he sees little or no incompatibility in his writings between these sources.[152] A clear separation cannot be maintained on historical grounds, since he was reading the *libri Platonicorum*, which influenced his growing Catholic spirituality, while attending the sermons of Ambrose, in which there were quotations from Plotinus and Porphyry in support of Christian views.[153] From the 390s Paul emerges as a potent force in his thinking, both reinforcing some and contradicting other Platonic doctrines.

Also, this early phase of the discussion overlooked a prominent feature of Augustine's adaptation of Platonism. This consists in grounding the search for happiness within a cultural reconstruction of the roots of ancient wisdom, and this involves a rewriting of the history of ancient thought. This revised history is a distinctive Augustinian contribution to the subject, which, despite omissions, inaccuracies, and obvious polemics, is comparable to the lives of celebrated philosophers written in the first half of the third century by Diogenes Laertius. Whereas Diogenes concentrates on individuals and schools, assuming that ideas have no wider context than their makers, Augustine suggests that traditions of thought also reflect the moral conditions of the periods in which they were written. In particular, Augustine is convinced that the causes bringing about major shifts in thinking – such as the rise of Christianity – are both

[150] *C. Acad.*, 3.11.26–3.12.27; nowhere echoing the subtlety of Seneca, *Ep.*, 90, or Posidonius's view that primitive man was rendered happy by the progress of the technical arts, which also led to the vice of avarice. However, Augustine shares Seneca's belief that the first humans lived in prephilosophical happiness.

[151] *C. Acad.*, 3.19.42.

[152] Cf. Holte, *Béatitude et sagesse*, p. 82; and with a magisterial review of recent literature, Madec, *Saint Augustin et la philosophie*, pp. 15–52.

[153] Pierre Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1968), p. 252.

historical and theological: moreover, they are *experienced* historically, i.e., in time, but they are *explained* theologically, i.e., outside time. The view that temporal considerations can play a part, not only as Plato suggested, in the creation of the universe, but in the intellectual constructions by which the belief in its coherence is maintained, requires a cultural perspective on the development of the relevant beliefs themselves, which Augustine locates in Judeo-Christianity. And through the assimilation of Jewish wisdom into the Christian position, he overcomes the argument of Celsus, which proposes that Christianity is too recent an arrival on the scene of philosophy to have participated in the original evolution of the concept of wisdom.

In sorting out these issues, Plato's writing has dogmatic authority in Augustine, while Plotinus is considered his synthesizer and interpreter,[154] whose guidance is followed on many specific problems. Plotinus' influence may occasionally be complemented by that of Porphyry, whom Augustine mentions in 400 in *De Consensu Evangelistarum* and discusses at length in *De Civitate Dei*. Despite Porphyry's unwavering opposition to Christianity, Augustine found in his writings confirmation for his interest in the pursuit of wisdom, self-knowledge, and self-renunciation, as well as a series of commentaries on ascetic or spiritual practices.[155] It is possible that Augustine only came to know Porphyry's works later in his career, whereas he was clearly reading Plotinus before and during the composition of the *Confessions*; however this assumption overlooks one of the features of Augustine's quotations from pagan thinkers, namely his habit of paraphrasing. Certainly both Plotinus and Porphyry were actively studied in "the Milanese circle" over which Augustine presided about the time of his conversion in the spring of 386, and scholars such as Theiler, O'Meara, Courcelle, and Pierre and Ilsetraut Hadot have argued persuasively in favor of a Porphyrian influence on the early Augustine.[156] Owing to the disappearance of the writings of Porphyry with which Augustine

[154] *C. Acad.*, 3.18.41.

[155] Heinrich Dörrie, "Porphyrios als Mittler zwischen Plotin und Augustin," in *Platonismus in der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, ed. W. Beierwaltes (Darmstadt, 1969), p. 418, and, for a critique of this approach, see Goulven Madec, "Augustin, disciple et adversaire de Porphyre," 365–369; cf. Pierre Courcelle, "Verissima philosophia," 653–659. Needless speculation on Augustine's utilization of Porphyry is deflated by Goulven Madec, "Augustin et Porphyre. Ébauche d'un bilan des recherches et des conjectures," in *ΣΟΦΙΗΣ ΜΑΙΗΤΟΡΕΣ: "Chercheurs de Sagesse "Hommage à Jean Pépin* (Paris, 1992), pp. 366–382.

[156] See W. Theiler, *Porphyrios und Augustin* (Halle, 1933); J. O'Meara, *"Philosophy from Oracles" in Augustine* (Paris, 1959), revised in " 'Philosophy from Oracles' in Eusebius of Caesarea and Augustine's Cassiciacum Dialogues," *RA* 6 (1969), 105–138; and Pierre Hadot, "Citations de Porphyre à propos d'une recent ouvrage," *REA* 2 (1960), 204–244.

may have been acquainted, a decisive answer to the question has eluded those who have worked on the sources of Augustine's thought.

By the time he began *De Trinitate* in 399, therefore, Augustine may have had at his disposal both the Greek texts and Latin translations of a number of Neoplatonist writings, including those of Plotinus and Porphyry. However, it is necessary to distinguish between his deepening acquaintance with such works and his growing tendency to reject their doctrines within a personalized approach to problems of interiority. It is in his interpretation of the interior life of the mind and its limitations that he most evidently differs from his Platonist sources rather than in his rejection of standard Platonist doctrines such as polytheism, world cycles, transmigration of souls, and the origin of evil. In working out his position he employs some Plotinian distinctions,[157] but he does so in an un-Plotininian fashion, frequently using them to buttress his own views. Also, in considering Augustine's debt to "Platonism," it should be kept in mind that his adoption of a narrative philosophy in his dialogues implies a rejection of the atemporal schemes for progress developed in Platonic thinking between Plato and Plotinus.

As a result of this composite tradition, the résumés of Platonic doctrines in Augustine's writings have a number of features in common, and these shed light on the original manner in which he viewed the relationship between Platonism and Christianity as a source of inner dialogue.[158] He presents Platonic philosophy in a Stoic schematization consisting of physics, logic, and ethics, the immediate source of which is Varro.[159] In *Contra Academicos* he proposes a straightforward analogy in which the sensible resembles the intelligible world as an image or likeness resembles a physical object. In *Soliloquia*, book two, he distinguishes between truth (*ueritas*) and opinion (*opinio*), which provides only probable or approximate knowledge (*scientia*).[160] Opinion is lodged in the soul as a result of sense impressions, as he affirms in *De Musica*, book six: these give rise to

[157] Aimé Solignac, from *La genèse au sens litéral* (*BA* 48), 664. Among the numerous reviews of the issues, see Goulven Madec, "Si Plato viveret … (Augustin, *De vera religione*, 3.3) in *Néoplatonisme: Mélanges … Jean Trouillard* (Fontenay, 1981), pp. 231–247.

[158] Pierre Hadot, "La Présentation du Platonisme par Augustin," in *Kerygma und Logos … Festschrift für Karl Andresen*, ed. Martin Ritter (Göttingen, 1979), pp. 272–279, provides an authoritative summary. For a readable account of Platonic and Plotinian influences on Augustine's notion of inwardness, see Philip Cary, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 3–60.

[159] On this topic, see Michele Cuttino, "Filosofia tripartita e trinità cristiana ne *Dialogi* di Agostino," *REA* 44 (1998), 77–100.

[160] *C. Acad.*, 3.17.37.

either *phantasiae* or *phantasmata*, which are types of memory images,[161] whereas truth is discovered within the soul by means of personal purification and illumination.

Augustine completes the parallel between Platonism and Christianity in *Contra Academicos*, book three, and in *De Vera Religione*.[162] In these works he states that it is with difficulty that humans free themselves from dependence on sense perceptions. Logic and physical theory agree that the major source of error in the soul arises from the senses, since the eyes, ears, and other organs only reflect what comes into being and passes away. It is necessary for the soul to reject these fluctuating impressions and by an act of will to fix its attention on their source, which is the principle of beauty and harmony lying behind all created things. The summary of Platonic doctrines in book eight of *The City of God* and in letter 118 to Dioscorus identifies this source of beauty with the supreme wisdom, which is God. One is led to this insight through the liberal arts, and above all through the ascent of reason, which involves both rational purification, as in Plato, and moral purification, as in Plotinus. The deity emerges as the culminating point of the three classical divisions of the Platonic universe, permitting Augustine to unite Platonism with the message of Christianity.

BODY AND MIND

As a complement to his interest in the Platonic heritage, Augustine drew inspiration for his notion of the interior dialogue from the Pauline conception of relations between body and mind.

His approach to this subject anticipates by centuries the introspective techniques of investigation utilized by Maine de Biran, the British associationists, and Wilhelm Wundt.[163] His method consists in experiments in which he observes conscious states and activities

[161] *De Mus.*, 6.11.32. For the third type of memory image, dealing with number, see ch. 4.

[162] *Ibid.*, 3.20.43, where he insists, as in *De Vera Religione*, that nothing he writes contradicts the *auctoritas Christi* and suggests that his interest in the philosophers chiefly concerns statements that harmonize with Scripture, in which *auctoritas* is guided by *subtilissima ratio*, i.e., dialectic.

[163] See E. G. Boring, "A History of Introspection," *Psychological Bulletin* 50 (1953), 169–186. For a review of the topic in Augustine, see O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, pp. 1–4, and John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 85–91. On the different view of Marius Victorinus on this issue, see Pierre Hadot, "L'image de la Trinité de l'âme chez Victorinus et chez saint Augustin," *SP* 6 (Berlin, 1962), 409–442. It is possible that Augustine developed introspective methods through autodidacticism; e.g., *Conf.*, 4.16.28 and 4.16.30: "per me ipsum legi et intellexi."

in the body and mind in order to describe their immanent character. These investigations begin with the focusing of attention[164] and follow with observations on the effect of timing and presence on psychological functions. In describing his results he makes use of psychological terminology such as as *intuitus* (seeing within), *illuminatio* (enlightenment), and *affectiones* (inner emotions or dispositions of mind). He is convinced that there is an interior component of all ethical decisions, whence the emphasis throughout his writings on *voluntas* and *intentio* (will and attention or intention).[165]

Yet, despite affiliations with modern notions of introspection, it is important not to separate Augustine's conception of the inner life of the mind from its Christian theological background. His inquiries into the depths of the heart and mind form an integral part of his religious outlook and are perhaps better viewed in this context than as direct predecessors of the statements of introspective psychologists in the experimental tradition. Like the experimentalists, he begins almost all his reflections on interiority with the close examination of a specific situation. In this way he reminds his readers that the human mind cannot be separated either from its own activities or from those which involve the individual in the world. In this sense his inquiries into his thoughts and emotions have a practical rather than a theoretical motivation, as do his generalizations concerning the rôles of will, memory, and consciousness. However, in the last analysis he seeks intimacy within himself so that he can know God through himself and he does this in the conviction that he will not discover truth in those inner regions without divine assistance.

His interest in introspection within his spiritual life entered a decisive phase in the months preceding his baptism at Easter, 386, when he reached his first conclusions on sensation, perception, imagination, memory, and the rôle of language in the acquisition of knowledge. He engaged in a series of personal self-interrogations as he made one particularly difficult decision after another, renouncing his mistress, abandoning his academic ambitions, and repeatedly considering but invariably postponing entry into the religious life. As he vacillated between an unsatisfactory past and

[164] For a brief statement of Augustine's view of attention, see *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.12.25–26; cf. 12.20.42. On the problem of attention in late ancient and medieval thought, see the review of Peter von Moos, "Attentio est quaedam sollicitudo. Die religiöse, ethische und politische Dimension der Aufmerksamkeit im Mittelalter," in *Aufermarksamkeiten: Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation VII*, ed. A. Assmann and J. Assmann (Munich, 2001), pp. 92–105.

[165] *Sol.*, 1.6–7. On the connection between introspection and will, see O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, pp. 207–211.

uncertain future, he encountered an ally who enabled him to take the first step in bringing together the different dimensions of these inquiries. This was Paul, in whom he discovered an aspect of the problems he was tackling that he did not find in his pagan philosophical writings. This concerned the part played by the body in the process of inward self-transformation.[166]

Augustine's approach to the body is divided between his desire for renunciation, which is inspired by his reading of philosophical and ascetic writings, and his admiration for the body's beauty, as one of the crowning glories of God's creation.[167] He resolves this contrast by means of his conception of the incarnation, which brings together the physical and immaterial, the temporal and eternal, in *ineffabilis permixtio*.[168] He thinks that bodies are necessary, just as it was necessary for Christ to appear on earth; but he is convinced that bodies, like the incarnation, point to higher realities, which are imperceptible to the senses, despite the moral and aesthetic qualities revealed by the senses. In other words, the body is not something to be left behind, as an obstacle to spiritual progress, as in Plotinus, but something to be transformed, as in Paul. In his retrospective assessment of Cicero in the *Confessions*, it is the absence of this relationship that stands out in his mind.[169] He brings a similar argument somewhat later against Porphyry, who accused Christians of debasing the ideals of ancient ethics by taking as their model of virtue a person's physical existence.[170]

It was through Paul that he found a way of linking the body to problems of time and memory. In Augustine, as in Paul, the entire self, consisting of body, soul, and spirit, is formed in the image of the risen Christ. In this respect Paul is heir to a Jewish tradition of thinking about the self in which mind and body are not considered separate entities, as in Platonist thought, but form a single, indissoluble unity. Augustine's interest in the connection was strengthened when he became acquainted with the world-

[166] He was reluctant to limit the term "flesh" (*carnis*) in the New Testament to a single signification; *De Civ. Dei*, 14.2; 14.4. For a recent assessment of Augustine's debts to Paul in his early writings, see Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 115–127; see also Paula Frederiksen, *Augustine's Early Interpretation of Paul*, diss., Princeton, 1979 and Frederiksen, "Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self," *Journal of Theological Studies* 37 (1986), 3–34.

[167] E.g., *De Beata Vita*, 2.2; *De Quant. An.*, 33.73.

[168] *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 3.16.25; cf. *Ep.*, 137.1.11: "Nam sicut in unitate personae anima unitur corpori, ut homo sit; ita in unitate personae Deus unitur homini, ut Christus sit. In illa ergo persona mixtura est animae et corporis; in hac persona mixtura est Dei et hominis."

[169] *Conf.*, 3.4.8. [170] *De Civ. Dei*, 10.24.

denying biblical commentaries of Origen.[171] The historical counterpart of his thinking on the subject of the self's historicity appeared in the doctrine of the "two cities," which are intermingled in the body but separated in the intellect through the will. From a combination of philosophical and patristic sources Augustine evolved an idea of the self as being at once embodied and yet potentially disembodied,[172] a view to which his nascent trinitarian theory lent strong support.

At the time of his conversion to the religious life he had not fully sorted out the implications of his position.[173] This awaited the publication of the *Confessions* and the literal commentary on Genesis, completed between 410 and 415, where he outlined the scriptural context of his thinking on the origin of the human soul.[174] In the latter work he argued that when we are about to perform some action involving the body, we normally work out in advance (*disposuimus*) the details of our future action and anticipate them in our thinking (*antecedimus*), just as, in language, no syllable, no matter how short, would be considered to be in its appropriate place in a meaningful statement if its position had not been seen in advance (*prospecta*).[175] In reflections such as this Augustine combines intentionality with the concept of creation in God's "image and likeness,"[176] concluding that "living according to the flesh" is a defect of the mind as much as of the body.[177] If one considers the path he followed after 386–87, his early comparison of the teachings of Plotinus and Paul on this theme can be said to have opened a new chapter in the Western understanding of the incorporated self as a component of the ancient spiritual exercise.

[171] See Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), pp. 160–177; 387–427.

[172] E.g., *De Mor. Eccl. Cath.*, 1.4.6, where the alternatives are inconclusively debated. For an excellent philosophical review of what it means to Augustine to have a body, based on Varro, see Christopher Kirwan, "Augustine on Souls and Bodies," in *Logica, mente e persona: Studi sulla filosofia antica*, ed. A. Alberti (Florence, 1990), pp. 211–216.

[173] This is suggested by the conflicting comments on the rational soul at *De Imm. An.*, 6.11 and 15.25; cf. with caution C. W. Wolfskeel, "*De Immortalitate Animae*" *of Augustine* (Amsterdam, 1977), pp. 2–4.

[174] Esp., *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 1–2, and briefly in *De Doct. Christ.*, 1.24.24–25; cf. Charles Couturier, "La structure métaphysique de l'homme d'après saint Augustin," *AM* vol. 1 (1954–1955), pp. 543–546. On the scriptural context of Augustine's thinking about the soul, see Gerald J. P. O'Daly, "Augustine on the Origin of Souls," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 10 (1983), 184–191.

[175] *De Gen. Ad Litt.*, 12.23.49; cf. *Conf.*, 11.18.23–11.20.26.

[176] Etienne Gilson, "*Regio Dissimilitudinis* de Platon à Saint Bernard de Clairvaux" *Mediaeval Studies* 9 (1947), 125–128.

[177] *De Civ. Dei*, 14.2.

HERMENEUTICS

As a final element in the reconstruction of Augustine's understanding of the interior dialogue, I draw attention to literary/hermeneutic strategies as these appear in his early writings and are later situated in an autobiographical framework in the *Confessions*. The connection between this subject and Augustine's conception of relations between the body and mind is straightforward: both his philosophy of the body and his understanding of the materiality of the text are modeled on the incarnation.

The decline of Augustine's confidence in external sources of information, including those produced by rational dialogue, was accompanied by a progressive deepening of his interest in the spiritual life. The reading of the Bible came to express his love for God, which he was convinced is the only thing that can be truly enjoyed, as well as his love for neighbor, who enjoys God with us.[178] The beginning of his reorientation is recorded at *Confessions* 3.5.7, where he notes that when he first attempted to read scripture, shortly after his conversion to philosophy, he found biblical texts unworthy of comparison to the dignity and stateliness of Cicero. His pride was wounded by the lowliness of the style, and as a consequence his mind was blinded to the inner meaning.[179] He only returned to the study of scripture some twelve years later, by which time he had learned to appreciate the spiritual and literary elements under the guidance of the sermons of Ambrose, which he heard in spring 386. By then he had learned that he could not simply discipline his body: he had to transcend the limits of a body that could not ever be fully disciplined. In this context, his distaste for scripture following his adoption of philosophy can even be interpreted as an act of grace, through which he was subsequently compelled to humble his pride and adopt the virtues exemplified by Christ.

This transition took place in stages, which appear between the writing of *De Quantitate Animae* and *De Vera Religione*. His transformation into a spiritual thinker entered a final phase after his return to Africa in 388. Three years later he became priest in the bustling port town of Hippo Regius,

[178] *De Doct. Christ.*, 1.26.27; cf. John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (London, 1938), pp. 87–92, 94–100; Gerald Bonner, "*Vera lux illa est quae illuminat*: The Christian Humanism of Augustine," in *Studies in Church History*, ed. D. Baker, vol. XIII (Oxford, 1979), p. 14f.; Oliver O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (New Haven, 1980); O'Donovan, "'Usus' and 'Fruitio' in Augustine, 'De doctrina christiana,'" *Journal of Theological Studies* 33 (1982), 361–397.

[179] *De Doct. Christ.*, 3.5.9. On this point, see the classic essay of Erich Auerbach, "Sacrae scripturae sermo humilis," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur romanischen Philologie* (Bern, 1967), pp. 21–26.

leaving for good the cosmopolitan life of Milan and Rome and returning to his agrarian roots, as well as to the puritanical Christianity of Roman Africans, which he had imbibed from his mother. His interest in reconciling Platonism and the Bible waned, as did his concern with other purely philosophical issues; instead, he sought to demonstrate the superiority of Christian morality, which is the subject of his subsequent exegetical, pastoral, and polemical writings. His dogmatic outlook was confirmed by the working out of his conception of grace, which emerged quite early in his thinking on the subject and reached a consolidated statement by 397 in *Ad Simplicianum* 1.2, where he argued that there is a connection between divine predestination, leading to salvation, and the rejection of those not chosen or elected. Writing in the *Soliloquia* in 387, he was still tempted by the notion shared by a number of pagan thinkers that there was more than one way for the human soul to seek improvement. By the time he succeeded Valerius as bishop of Hippo in 395, he had adopted the view that the only legitimate pathway to the Christian life was through Christ.[180]

In concert with this view, his attitude toward pagan literature had hardened into open hostility by 396, when he wrote the first draft of *De Doctrina Christiana*. This move has been a source of consternation for generations of scholars. But, viewed in an ancient context, Augustine was only rephrasing what Plato had said against the study of poetry in the *Republic*, when he gave his reasons for its banishment from his ideal city.[181] There he argued that poets like Homer told stories about the gods, and these stories, which could influence their audience's actions, were often immoral.[182] Correct behavior could only result from a different type of literature. Similarly, in the *Gorgias*, Plato criticized teachers of rhetoric for

[180] *De Regressu Animae*; *De Civ. Dei* 10.32. The earlier view is found at *Sol.*, 1.13.23; the correction at *Retr.*, 1.4.3.

[181] Plato's view is summarized at *De Civ. Dei*, 2.14, where it is proposed that Roman legislation on actors followed Socrates' account in *Rep.*, 10; on the gods' immortality, cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 3.2–3; 3.5; 6.5 (based on Varro); 8.13. On Plato's attitude in works both known and not known to Augustine, see John Ferrari, "Plato on Poetry," *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 1: *Classical Criticism*, ed. George A. Kennedy (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 92–148; on the problem of imitation in the *Rep.*, on which Augustine chiefly drew, see pp. 108–119; on earlier opposition to poetry among philosophers, see Glenn W. Most, "The Poetics of Early Greek Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. A. A. Long (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 336–342. Note also that Augustine introduces this argument ingeniously at *Conf.*, 5.5.8, ff., when opposing the views of Mani, which, he claims, are based on literary fables rather than scientific facts. This, in turn, is a preface to his rejection of Faustus (5.6.10, ff.), who knows nothing but some passages of Cicero, Seneca, and bits of Latin verse (5.6.11).

[182] Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 1.32. Augustine's criticism is directed less at epic poetry than at the corrupting influence of the first Greek theater in Rome; cf. 2.8. He quotes with approval Cicero's view that

making people believe what they said, whether this was right or wrong. Orators, therefore, like poets, were morally irresponsible in the use of language. Rhetoric was a counterfeit art, which aimed at persuasion, just as poetry aimed at arousing the baser passions through images.

Augustine echoes Plato's views, especially on Homer, but possibly under the influence of Cicero,[183] he defends the ethical value and rhetorical beauty of poetry, not only within the Bible but through persistent if decorative quotations of Vergil, Horace, Terence, and other Roman authors. He is convinced that God employed the literary technique of antithesis in order to draw attention to the beauty of the universe – a sort of eloquence in events rather than in words.[184] Plato proposed to reduce the rôle of tragedy and epic poetry in education and to limit the use of comedy. In their place he advocated the rather bland praise of virtuous men, hymns to the gods, and the dramatization of acceptable actions. By contrast Augustine argues that this goal can be better attained by replacing secular with religious literature. The stories of the Bible provide readers with texts whose morality is unquestionable, as well as a literary context of considerable aesthetic appeal. The behavior of the prophets and the apostles is a suitable substitute for the scurrilous antics of the pagan deities.[185] The gods of

Romans never allowed a man to be praised or criticized on stage; *ibid.*, 2.9; cf. 2.11–12; 2.27. If actors were not permitted to take up political careers, theatrics should not be part of worship; 2.13. For a variety of arguments against poetry, theater, ceremonial, and obscenities see 2.4–5; 2.26–27; 3.12; 3.17; 3.31; 4.26–27; 5.8; 6.5–6 (on Varro); 7.3; 7.21–27; 8.13; on image-worship, condemned by the Jews and by Varro, 4.31; 7.5. Augustine supports Cicero's criticism of augury (*De Natura Deorum*, 2.28.70) at *De Civ. Dei*, 4.30 but opposes his Stoic rejection of foreknowledge (*De Divinatione*, 2) at 5.9. He supports Apuleius's contention that the fiction of poets (*fictio poetarum*) can trick us into believing that demons are actually gods; *De Civ. Dei*, 9.7.

[183] Cicero criticizes poetry at *Tusc. Disp.*, 1.6.11 and more emphatically at 2.11.27 and 3.2.3. He was convinced that Homer erred in transferring human qualities to the gods, when it would have been more appropriate to speak of divine capacities in humans, which he characterizes as *vigere*, *sapere*, *invenire*, *meminisse*, since it is on account of such qualities that the soul is to be considered divine (*ibid.*, 1.26.65). The statement is quoted with approval by Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, 4.26. Yet the study of epic poetry clearly forms a part of the program outlined in the *Hortensius*, which Augustine knew; on this topic see the edition of Grilli, pp. 61–62; 113–114; 139–155.

[184] *De Civ. Dei*, 11.18. A similar view is expressed in *Ep.*, 102.6, to Deogratias in 409, concerning Jonah's three days in the whale's belly (Jon. 2:1). Augustine contrasts the relating of an event of this kind in pagan authors such as Porphyry, Apuleius, or Apollonius of Tyana, where it is a question of fable, magic, or trickery, with the method employed in scripture, which depends on rhetoric. As human speech is expressed by words, he notes, God's power is expressed by deeds; and just as rare words, used with discretion, embellish speech, divine eloquence is enhanced by unusual events and their significance. Cf. *Ep.*, 138, to Marcellinus, in 412, where there is a similarly negative portrait of Apuleius, "philosopher and magician." For Augustine's hexameters on the gifts of creation, as an example of the imitation of pagan methods, see his verses *De Anima*, *De Civ. Dei*, 15.22; cf. *Anthologia Latina* 1.2.43.

[185] *Ep.*, 91.5 (to Nectarius, in 408).

classical antiquity, each enjoying his or her passions, are thus transcended by the morally superior notion of a single God, as well as by a hierarchy of virtues crowned by faith, hope, and charity. In order to acquire an ethical outlook, it is only necessary to study the record of Christ's deeds, the stories of his miracles, and the acts of his followers down to the present.[186]

In the end Augustine evolved a more positive view of the potential force of literature in shaping moral education than Plato, even if one takes into consideration the views offered in *Phaedrus* and the *Laws*. Also, he subtly incorporated the teaching of rhetoric into his preaching and exegesis, thus, on the one hand, condemning the subject he had once professed, while profiting from the practical knowledge that he had so arduously acquired. Moreover, through the use of literary hermeneutics he opted for the harmonization of scriptural texts over the incessant quarreling of philosophers as a set of guidelines for the achievement of happiness.[187] Cicero furnished him with a stylistic vehicle for his philosophical interests, while his own life story, somewhat embellished, re-expressed much that he found valuable in the Vergilian heritage, particularly in the wanderings of Aeneas in books one to four of the *Aeneid* and the trip to the underworld in book six, the reading of which was influenced by his studies in Neoplatonism.[188] He interpreted these episodes allegorically as a parallel for the biblical exodus and personally as a prefiguration of his intellectual struggles to find the truth of Christianity.[189] If the *Republic* was a charter for restricting the literary imagination, the *Confessions* was a powerful argument in favour of its rehabilitation in the field of ethics.

Augustine was no more convinced than Plato that stories, images, and fanciful conceits can convey a foundation for acceptable behavior. He nonetheless believed that the study of our personal life-narratives can enhance our self-understanding through an exploration of the relationship between narrative and the future-oriented activity of the self. In the light of this interest he could argue that truth and fiction are not far apart in the manner in which selfhood is represented:[190] they are connected by

[186] *Ep*., 101, to Memorius, bishop of Capua, in 408 or 409. Augustine says that those who are truly "liberally educated" have read a "truly liberal book", the Bible.

[187] *De Civ. Dei*, 18.41; cf. 19.1, where it is noted that in *De Philosophia* Varro distinguished some 288 "sects" of philosophy.

[188] Pierre Courcelle, "Interprétations néo-platoniciennes du livre VI de l'Enéide, in *Recherches sur la tradition platonicienne* (Geneva, 1955), pp. 114–115.

[189] E.g., *Ep*., 55.11.21, where he opposes the study of pagan literature but approves teaching Christian ethics in a figurative form (*figurate*) rather than through plain words.

[190] *De Civ. Dei*, 9.7: "Non procul autem a ueritate dicit hanc esse fictionem;" cf. Apuleius, *De Deo Socr*., c. 11.

the fundamental movement of human thinking, which is intentional.[191] In Augustine's view, there is no foundation for art without lived experience; as a consequence, a planned life is the result of the inherent tendency toward such planning in the human soul.[192]

He proposed that we proceed in life from the interior knowledge that we exist, as evidenced by thought, to suppositions about what we might do at any given moment. In doing so, we move from a position of certitude to degrees of uncertainty, as we offer ourselves models for our potential courses of action.[193] These plans interact with the real and imaginary lives of others within a wide network that encompasses language, culture, and religion. We are never sure what will take place in the future, and our means of understanding our fates, to the degree we can do so, is essentially literary: it is not through prophecy, revelation, or vision that we are made to understand that God's will differs from ours, he wrote to Paulinus and Therasia, but through an accident of circumstance, by which an event takes on another meaning from what we had anticipated.[194] Augustine's view of narrative is well interpreted by the novelist Graham Greene when he wrote that "a story has no beginning or end: arbitrarily one chooses that moment of experience from which to look back or from which to look ahead."[195]

The inner meanings in events depend on God, or rather, on what Augustine calls *intellectus gratiae*:[196] this is the understanding lodged in grace through which the deity and his divine will become identical. There is no time lapse between his thoughts and actions: he arranges our lives as narratives, whose patterns we recognize either through literature or the literary shapes of lived experience.[197] We have been given the

[191] *De Imm. An.*, 3.3. *Intentio* (along with *attentio, distentio*, and related concepts) has a wide range of meaning in Augustine's writings. This includes tension, attention, concentration, and mental extension; only in specific contexts does the term mean only what contemporary philosophy calls "intention." Speaking of intentions that we may wish for ourselves, or those that others may wish for us, Augustine derives *intentio* from Greek σκοπὸς; *De Civ. Dei*, 19.19. On the proactive quality of intentions in Augustine, possibly influenced by Plotinus, see Sofia Vanni Rovighi, "La fenomenologia della sensazione in Sant'Agostino," *Rivista di filosofia neo-scolastica* 54 (1962), 18–32; cf. J. Rohmer, "L'intentionalité des sensations chez S. Augustin," *AM*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1954–1955), pp. 491–498; O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, pp. 84–87.

[192] *De Imm. An.*, 4.5: "At ut sedes arti nulla sine vita est, ita nec vita cum ratione ulli nisi animae."

[193] *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.16.33: "Ipsarum etiam futurarum motionum imagines praeveniunt fines actuum nostrorum."

[194] *Ep.*, 80.3.

[195] I quote this Augustinian tenet from the eloquent opening sentence of Graham Greene, *The End of the Affair* (London, 1951).

[196] On the development of this notion in Augustine's writings after 397, see Josef Lössl, *Intellectus Gratiae. Die Erkenntnistheoretische und hermeneutische Dimension der Gnadenlehre Augustins von Hippo* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 196–309.

[197] *Ep.*, 159.2, to Evodius in 414, drawing on *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.

capacity to distinguish between narrative and historical truth. Also, we can grasp the difference between individual and cultural memory, which is explained in Augustine's writings by means of an interpretation of the classical notion of reminiscence. In his view what is essential to collective memory is not the transfer of a skill from a previous life, as Socrates proposed in the *Meno*,[198] but the appropriation of a shared narrative, which is handed down from one generation to the next. When applied to the Old Testament or to the New, this approach results in a hermeneutics of narrative experience in which the subject's personal life and its mythical, biblical, or literary background can be understood to occupy the same cultural space. To use Michel Foucault's term, we are all "archivists" of the past in our search for an ethical context for our lives.

[198] Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, 1.24.57.

CHAPTER 2

Soliloquy and self-existence

Etenim qui secum loqui poterit, sermonem alterius non requiret.
Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, 5.117

Nearly all my writings are private conversations with myself. Things that I say to myself tête-à-tête.
Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I attempted to provide a sketch of some of the factors which contributed to Augustine's adoption of the soliloquy as his preferred form of spiritual exercise. Among these I singled out (1) the lengthy tradition of "spiritual exercises" in ancient thought; (2) Augustine's incorporation of interiorist themes into his outlook before joining the priesthood; (3) his discovery of Cicero's *Hortensius*, which convinced him of the value of philosophy; (4) his interest in Scepticism and Platonism, and the rôle of Platonism in providing a historical rationale for "Christian philosophy"; (5) his innovative thinking about body and mind, which abandoned the Platonic and Neoplatonic disdain for corporality in favour of a doctrine inspired by his reading of Paul, in which the body plays a central part in spiritual progress; and finally (5) his approach to interpretation, which encompassed his studies in grammar and rhetoric and was shaped into a powerful tool for inward self-scrutiny.

In this chapter I focus on one element in this group of forces, namely the soliloquy itself, and its use in the demonstration of self-existence. My argument is that Augustine is not only interested in refuting the Sceptical view that nothing can be known for certain, as he states in *Contra Academicos* and elsewhere, but that he also, and perhaps principally, envisages the *cogito*[1] as an important element in constructing a

[1] Throughout this chapter I refer to Augustine's argument against Scepticism for the existence of the self as "the *cogito*," as has become customary in philosophical studies of both Augustine and

narrative philosophy. In Chapter 3 of this study I illustrate the manner in which this philosophy evolves in two dialogues, namely *De Ordine* and *De Libero Arbitrio*, and in Chapter 4 I provide an outline of the theoretical components in the design, which arise chiefly from Augustine's reflections on images, words, time, and memory. In this chapter I am concerned with the soliloquy and the *cogito* both separately and in combination in an effort to show that Augustine's narrative interests develop coherently in a number of successive statements on the theme of the self's existence.

Put simply, I propose that the soliloquy, which is the literary form in which the problem of self-existence is framed, and the solution to that problem, which involves the assertion or awareness of self-consciousness, are different facets of Augustine's interest in language and time. His position is that there can be no evidence for the existence of the self without the speaking voice in which and by which the individual self is identified. This makes personal identity dependent on the emergence of the notion of the self from thought into inner speech and subsequently into outer speech. Augustine also regards such talk about the self as a phenomenon that takes place within an awareness of the duration of time. His proof for the human awareness of time's extensibility consists in the passage of syllables, words, and larger units of discourse from their impingement on the auditory sense to their interpretation in the brain. Therefore, in his view, any argument about the self, insofar as it is expressed in language, exhibits a temporal, sequential, and even at times a narrative form. He concludes that the self is temporally conditioned and narratively conceived. In his writings, therefore, it is possible to speak of a timeless soul but not of a timeless self.

THE GENRE OF THE SOLILOQUY

There are a number of writers in antiquity and late antiquity before Augustine who make use of soliloquies; however, there is no one who employs inner dialogue in relation to narrative in the fashion in which this combination appears in his early writings and the *Confessions*. This is one of the reasons why Augustine is looked upon as giving a decisively new direction to Western autobiographical writing.

Descartes; for a review of the scholarly issues and a bibliography, see Emmanuel Bermon, *Le "cogito" dans la pensée de saint Augustin* (Paris, 2001), pp. 9–30.

Viewed in a philosophical context, Augustine's soliloquies provide an important link between the ancient and modern deployment of inner dialogue. They look back to Plato, Cicero, and Seneca, among others, and forward to the internal conversations of such figures as Montaigne, Descartes, Pascal, and even Wittgenstein, who introduces his *Philosophical Investigations* with a commentary on the bishop of Hippo's account of learning to speak by gesturing and talking to himself[2] and solves ensuing problems while talking to himself.

In order to describe his inner conversations Augustine coined the term *soliloquium*, which is made up of the adjective *solus* (alone) and the verb *loqui* (to speak).[3] The English cognate, which appears in 1604, was highly influenced by the use of soliloquies by Renaissance dramatists. Examples of dramatic soliloquies which incorporate philosophy are found in Calderón, Racine, Lessing, Schiller, and notably in Shakespeare, in whose plays they take the form of solo speeches, unheard by the other actors, before listening audiences. The frequently quoted specimen of this genre is Hamlet's "To be or not to be," which faithfully adheres to ancient and Augustinian guidelines for soliloquies as spiritual exercises, including among its techniques ethical self-questioning and an inquiry into the speaker's existential situation. Soliloquies frequently occur in medieval monastic writings, where Augustine and Boethius are both models; they are utilized in a secular context in Petrarch's poetry, in which the author addresses himself while addressing his beloved Laura; and they are found in Renaissance students of the classical dialogue, such as Ficino, Erasmus, and Tasso,[4] who imitate Plato, Cicero, and other ancient authors. In his essay *On Solitude*, Montaigne observes that the "genuine treasures" of our lives are "traditional words of wisdom," which should be stored in *une*

[2] On this question, see B. Stock, "Ludwig Wittgenstein: réflexions sur le rôle d'Augustin dans sa vie et pensée," in B. Stock, *Bibliothèques intérieures* (Paris, 2005), pp. 227–252.

[3] Augustine employed the term in the plural, *soliloquia*. Contemporary dictionaries define the soliloquy as a type of monologue; however, in the ancient, late ancient, and medieval periods, it is preferable to refer to it as a subgenre of the dialogue.

[4] Torquato Tasso, *Dell'arte del dialogo*, chs. 3–9, ed. Guido Baldassari, intro., Nuccio Ordine (Naples, 1998), pp. 38–42. A number of works in the Middle Ages incorporated *soliloquium* into their titles; e.g., Isidore, *Synonyma* or *Soliloquia* (*PL* 183.825–862); Bede, *Soliloquium de Psalmo 41* (*CCSL* 122 [1955], p. 447); Peter Abelard, *Soliloquium*, ed. Charles Burnett (*Studi medievali* 25 [1984], 885–891); Hugh of St. Victor, *Soliloquium de Arrha Animae* (*PL* 176.951–970); Bernard of Clairvaux, *Soliloquium* (ed. J. Leclercq, *S. Bernardi Opera* 6.2 [Rome, 1972], pp. 239–240); Adam of Dryburgh, *Soliloquium de Instructione Animae* (*PL* 198.843–872); Bonaventure, *Soliloquium de Quattuor Mentalibus Exercitiis* (ed. Quaracchi, vol. VIII [1898], pp. 28–67); Thomas à Kempis, *Soliloquium Animae*, ed. M. J. Pohl, vol. I (1910), pp. 191–346.

arriereboutique toute nostre, where, in solitude and liberty, we converse with ourselves alone.[5]

A history of Western and Eastern traditions of self-isolation was completed by Petrarch under the title *De Vita Solitaria* in 1362. The book was popular during the Renaissance and studied by inward conversationalists as late as Spinoza, who discovered a copy in his father's library. A history of the related theme of solitude was published by Johann Georg Zimmermann under the title *Über die Einsamkeit* in 1784 and 1786. This lengthy treatise traced the connections between solitude, inner dialogue, and the creative imagination in a variety of authors, including Petrarch and Rousseau. The work was translated into English as well as French and became an influence on English Romanticism through Wordsworth and Coleridge. Another nineteenth-century student of the subject was Arthur Schopenhauer, who associated solitude with "pure contemplation" and noted that writers and artists capable of attaining this state of mind "are given to soliloquizing."[6] In the preface to the 1853 edition of his poetry Matthew Arnold spoke similarly of the soliloquy as a "dialogue of the mind with itself." The literary soliloquy was made a central feature of "modernist" verse by an admirer of Arnold, T. S. Eliot.[7]

As a form of self-inquiry or self-report in philosophy, the soliloquy was reasonably common in antiquity.[8] Practitioners include Pyrrho[9] and Carneades, the latter described by Augustine as philosophizing frequently while talking to himself: *secum … ipse loquens*.[10] Inner dialogue was utilized by Epictetus,[11] and, possibly under his influence, by Marcus Aurelius.[12] As recorded by Porphyry, Plotinus engaged in a similar practice as a mode of composition and as a way of focusing his attention:

He was wholly concerned with thought … He worked out his train of thought from beginning to end in his own mind, and then, when he wrote it down, he

[5] Montaigne, *Essais*, 39, ed. Pierre Villey, vol. 1 (Paris, 1965), p. 241. For a brief discussion of the medieval literary usage that may anticipate Montaigne, see Burnett, *art. cit.*, 881–884.

[6] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, 2nd edn (1844), trans. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp (London, 1883), book 3, respectively pp. 263–264 and 246.

[7] Matthew Arnold, *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, ed. Kenneth Allot (London, 1965), p. 591; T. S. Eliot, "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," *Selected Essays 1917–1932* (London, 1932), p. 129.

[8] Ilsetraut Hadot, *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung* (Berlin, 1969), pp. 142–176.

[9] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Phil.*, 9.64. [10] *C. Acad.*, 3.10.21.

[11] *Discourses*, 3.14.1; on the Socratic dialogue in Epictetus, see Anthony Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 52–94.

[12] See Pierre Hadot, *The Inner Citadel: The "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA.: 1998), pp. 88–89.

wrote as continuously as if he was copying from a book. Even if he was talking to someone, engaged in continuous conversation, he kept to his train of thought. He would take his necessary part in the conversation to the full, and at the same time keep his mind fixed without a break in what he was considering. When the person he was talking to was gone he did not go over what he had written … He went straight on with what came next, keeping the connection, just as if there had been no interval of conversation between. In this way he was present at once to himself and to others.[13]

By contrast, the Latin Neoplatonists, Macrobius, Martianus Capella, and Boethius constructed inner dialogues by means of allegorical figures. The late ancient masterpiece in this genre is the *Consolation of Philosophy*,[14] which, Seth Lerer has demonstrated, redeploys ancient techniques for self-analysis developed in Augustine's early writings,[15] in particular in the *Soliloquia* and *De Magistro*.

If the distinctive genre of philosophical expression in antiquity is the external dialogue, the parallel discourse in late antiquity and the Middle Ages may well be the philosophical or theological soliloquy. Christian authors found an abundant source of inspiration for their devotional soliloquies in the Psalms, wisdom books, and prophets with the result that, after Justin Martyr, the soliloquy became a regular feature of biblical exegesis and pastoral treatises. There are important inner dialogues in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, where they serve penitential purposes, in Athanasius's *Life* of St. Antony, where they are pitted against diabolical forces, and in John Cassian's *Conferences*, where they record the confessional prayers of the desert fathers. In the *Confessions*, Augustine dramatizes the connection between pagan and Christian soliloquies by envisaging his interior dialogues as taking place with historical figures from both traditions (e.g., in book eleven with Plato and Moses).[16] This is a complement to a tradition which was brought into Latin writing by Cicero and brilliantly reused by Petrarch in his fictive letters with Cicero and other ancient writers.

[13] *Vita Plotini*, c. 8, trans. A. H. Armstrong, *Plotinus*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA, 1989), pp. 29, 31.

[14] For a brilliant account of this synthesis, see John Magee, "Boethius' Anapestic Dimeters (Atatalectic), with regard to the Structure and Argument of the *Consolatio*," in *Boèce ou la chaîne des savoirs*, ed. A. Galonnier (Paris, 2003), pp. 147–169.

[15] Seth Lerer, *Boethius and Dialogue: Literary Method in "The Consolation of Philosophy."* (Princeton, 1985), pp. 90, 152, and 204, with interesting observations on similarities and differences between Augustine's and Boethius' approaches to inner dialogue, writing, and spiritual development.

[16] On Plato, see *De Vera Rel.*, 3.3; on Moses, *Conf.*, 11.3.5; a technique already used by Cicero in the *Tusc. Disp*.

Between Alcuin's *Compendia*, which was written sometime after 766, and Erasmus's *Colloquia*, which were published in 1516, the Middle Ages furnishes many examples of such mixed genres, such as Dante's *Vita Nuova*, which, like Boethius' *Consolation*, begins in soliloquy but proceeds to open dialogue. The rebirth of Platonic allegory in the twelfth century added a new dimension to the subject through the introduction of hitherto unknown interlocutors, whose company included emotions, abstractions, theological virtues, and the goddess *Natura*, all of which are found in the Latin cosmological poetry of Bernard Silvestris and Alan of Lille as well as the Old French moralizing verse of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. Soliloquies likewise appear in logical inquiries and mystical reflections, for example in Anselm of Canterbury's *Monologion* (which may be modeled on Augustine's *Soliloquia*) and Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, in which an interpretive dialogue takes place in the mind of the author as his preaching is heard by his audience. Still another dimension of the soliloquy arises in correspondence, for example, in the letters of Abelard and Heloise, which constitute an early epistolary novel.[17]

Within ancient philosophy, which provides Augustine with his point of departure in the genre, the paternity for the soliloquy belongs to the Platonic dialogues. In the *Sophist*, the visitor defines "thinking" as "the soul's conversation with itself."[18] In other dialogues the soul is also pictured as "talking to itself," especially when debating questions of knowledge and ignorance.[19] Exchanges of ideas between Socrates and his friends typically progress through questions and answers and have as their purpose internal self-examination and the search for self-knowledge.[20] The presupposition of this questioning is that the required knowledge is present but hidden in memory; its expression requires an interior dialogue in order to become apparent to the subject. In the *Theaetetus*, the soul "asks itself questions and answers them itself, affirms and denies." Plato concludes that "a judgement is a statement which is not addressed to another person

[17] The literary development of the soliloquy within the novel has a continuous tradition after the twelfth century, reappearing finally in such writers as Kafka, Joyce, and Proust.

[18] *Sophist*, 264a; trans. Nicholas P. White, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis and Cambridge, 1997), p. 288.

[19] *Sophist*, 228c-d; cf. 255c. There is an assumption about the possibility of inner speech throughout the critique of the sophist, although this is not spelled out; e.g., 238d, ff.; 260d, ff.; also the possibility of someone thinking that he is saying something when in reality he is saying nothing is considered along with the problem of self-examination by means of words; 230b.

[20] E.g., *Gorgias*, 495e, where Socrates invites Callicles to "see" or "contemplate" himself correctly; cf. *Alcibiades*, 132d, ff.

or spoken aloud, but silently addressed to oneself."[21] A rôle for memory in such conversations is revealed in the *Philebus*, where Socrates distinguishes between talking about what is before one's eyes with those nearby and discussing one's conclusion about what is seen within oneself.[22] "If memory and perception concur with other impressions …," he notes, "they seem to inscribe words in our soul, as it were," and these can lead to either true or false judgements.[23]

If the originals of these statements were unknown to Augustine, comparable notions were handed down by at least one Latin author with whom he was reasonably well acquainted, namely Horace. The poet refers more than once to the habit of composing verse by means of internal meditation, (which is a notion reused by Licentius in book one of *De Ordine*). At *Satire* 1.4.137–139, he notes that he habitually puts his thoughts in motion with closed lips, and later, when there is time, jots them down:

haec ego mecum
compressis agito labris; ubi quid datur oti,
illudo chartis.

He strolls along the Via Sacra, while mulling over his poetic trifles (1.9.1–2):

sicut meus est mos
nescio quid meditans nugarum .

He lies in bed until around ten, then takes a walk after reading or writing something that has given him pleasure in tranquil moments (1.6.122–123):

Ad quartam iaceo; post hanc vagor; aut ego lecto
aut scripto quod me tacitum iuvet.

In such statements Horace suggests that his writing is an exhortation to think about himself.[24] This interest was expanded in the Latin poets of the Silver Age, when verse turned to the rhetorical examination of the author's emotions.

Another Latin author who experimented in this tradition was Seneca, whose *Epistulae Morales*, written between 63 and 65 A.D., produced the most sophisticated adaptations of the soliloquy before Augustine. Seneca's soliloquies frequently take place in double dialogues, i.e., in exchanges with Lucilius and within himself. The letters consist in recollections of their discussions of philosophical topics and act as written appendices to

[21] *Theaetetus*, 189e-190a, trans. M. J. Levett, revised by Myles Burnyeat; cited in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson, p. 210.

[22] *Philebus*, 38e.

[23] *Ibid.*, 39a; trans. Dorothea Frede; in *Plato*, *Complete Works*, p. 428.

[24] See Colin McLeod, *Collected Essays* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 262–291.

oral exchanges. These conversations are the by-products of the pair's reading of the same books; the letters begin with a present (or absent) written text as a foundation and end with another written text as the edifice that has been built on it. Before these external dialogues take place as well as afterwards Seneca and Lucilius enter individually into separate inner dialogues on the meaning and relevance of the chosen texts.

Can these conversations be characterized as "dialogues" along Socratic lines? Perhaps not, since the figures of "Seneca" and "Lucilius" frequently stand for "self" and "other" within the mind of the historical Seneca himself in a way that uncannily foreshadows the twin rôles of Augustine as author and speaker in the dialogues written at Cassiciacum, Milan, and Rome. In Seneca, therefore, as later in Augustine, the conditions for interior conversation that are found in Plato's *Theaetetus* are recreated, but in both authors the non-material soul in which the original dialogues are envisaged is replaced by the speaking voices of real people. Also, in Seneca these conversations remain unformalized until a certain threshold of familiarity is crossed, and the older man speaks frankly to his younger friend, frequently relating details of his personal life which are atypical of the classical dialogue.[25] By contrast, in the later letters he is more formal and dogmatic than his predecessors in the Platonic tradition.[26] Also, his source material is more restricted. In the early letters, his speeches are generally based on statements by Lucilius or by thinkers whom he admires, chiefly Epicurus; in later ones they almost exclusively advocate Stoic principles, which are summarized and explained by himself. He thus plays the rôles of interpreter, commentator, and spiritual director,[27] again anticipating the self-portrait of Augustine of Cassiciacum.

However, if there are accidental similarities in their approaches to inner dialogue, there is a major difference in the outlook of these writers. In Seneca, narratives serve as illustrations of philosophical principles, whereas in Augustine, as I show later in this chapter, philosophy grows organically out of narrative, from which it is inseparable. Seneca's intention is not to tell a story, as does the *Confessions*, but to set up a philosophy of life in which narrative has an exemplary function, as it does later

[25] Among Augustine's early writings, these qualities are most directly reflected in his dozen or so letters to Nebridius, which constitute a "dialogue" on the interrelated issues under discussion in their infrequent but intense conversations. The sense of spiritual direction in this correspondence may have been inspired by Seneca, whom Nebridius was reading at the time.

[26] These include *Ep.*, 8.6, 10.1, 13, 17, 25, 26, 27, 55, 68.4–7, and 99.23, which cannot be reviewed here.

[27] Ilsetraut Hadot, "Épicure et l'enseignement philosophique hellénistique et romain," *Actes du VIIIe Congrès de l'Association Guillaume Budé* (Paris, 1969), pp. 347–354.

in Marcus Aurelius, Plotinus, and Plutarch. It is in this context that he advises Lucilius to train himself in philosophy, suggesting among other techniques the practice of self-examination, including the examination of the recent events in his life, by means of inward soliloquies. And it is toward this end that he directs some of the most memorable statements in the letters. The precondition of Lucilius's education is personal isolation: *Inimica est multorum conversatio* (7.2; cf., 8.1). He should withdraw into himself, to the degree he can: *Recede in te ipsum, quantum potes* (7.8; cf., 14.3; 25.7). For the wise man is content with himself: *Se contentus est sapiens* (9.13; cf., 9.5), subjecting everything within his purview to internal scrutiny (81.10). In time he can be entrusted to himself (10.1). In order to prepare himself for this moment he should engage in daily meditation (*cotidiana meditatio*, 16.1; cf., 16.3), which will provide the foundation of his well-being (8.5). He should resemble a craftsman who is absorbed in his work. The object of this artisanship is the shaping of a balanced self (9.7). He must behave as if his work was witnessed continually by someone else (25.5; cf., 11.8). For in the end he must match his words with actions: *Concordet sermo cum vita* (75.4 cf., 20.2; 24.15). If he follows these precepts consistently, he will in time be disassociated from his former, illusory self (84.1–2), which is the abiding source of his discontent (110.10).

In pursuing such aims, Seneca communes with himself through words and communicates with future generations through his writings (8.6). This technique is illustrated by letter 26, on which I pause briefly. Here he claims that his years do not show because his mind has remained vigorous and alert through the habit of discussing important matters with himself. These conversations begin in the company of Lucilius and have the initial function of distracting him from his body's decay, but later, when he mulls them over, he invariably finds himself in inner dialogue with himself on more profound matters. The interior conversations typically proceed in three stages which consist in (1) his entry into his reflections, which are overseen by the mind (*ire in cogitationem iubet*, 26.3; cf., 102.1); (2) his restatement of Lucilius's objections to his views within his thoughts ("*ut proprie dicam*" 26.4); and (3) his subsequent discourse, in which he scrutinizes himself through inner dialogue and offers himself advice (*me observo et adloquor*, 26.5).[28]

[28] Cf. *De Ira* 3.36.1 and esp. 3–4; discussed by R. B. Rutherford, *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius: A Study* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 16–17.

Seneca has in mind a similar program for Lucilius. He advises him not to devote too much time to intellectual activities involving others – to studies, debates, or even, somewhat surprisingly, to the pursuit of wisdom by such means. Nor should he rely too heavily on conversations with his mentor, although these make up a formative stage in his education. Instead he should develop personal self-discipline and rely as much as possible on the tested strength of his soul (*verum robur animi*, 26.6). He should conduct the only kind of self-examination that really counts, namely conversation within himself. At the end of the letter Seneca shifts his attention from Lucilius to his broader audience and reminds his readers that while he has been engaged in an internal dialogue he has taken the trouble to record what he said to himself as well as to his correspondent: *Haec mecum loquor, sed tecum quoque me locutum puta* (26.7). The line between soliloquy and epistle thus becomes indeterminate. In letter 27 he goes one step further and asks Lucilius to listen to him as if his pupil were talking to himself: *Sic itaque me audi, tamquam mecum loquar* (27.1). He can thus enter into the sanctuary of his inmost thoughts and examine himself with his master's guidance.[29]

Despite affinities with Seneca's goal of self-examination, with Plotinus's search for mental elevation, and with biblical examples of spiritual disciplines, Augustine's use of the soliloquy in his early writings developed in an original manner, less directly influenced, it would appear, by his Greek or Latin predecessors in the genre than by the evolution of his own thinking. Soliloquies are found in a variety of literary, philosophical, and theological settings between 386 and 400, as well as later in his commentaries, sermons, and letters. In the *Confessions*, in which a variety of first-person speeches occur, they take many forms: devotions (e.g., beginning of books one, five, and ten), self-questioning (e.g., 6.11.18–19; 9.6.14;10.8.2–10.18.26; 12.5.5–6; 13.38.53 [cf., Matt. 7: 7–8]), theological debate (e.g., 4.5.24; 7.3.5), exegesis (e.g., 11.3.5; parts of books twelve and thirteen), reading (e.g., 3.2.2; 7.10.16), and writing (e.g., 1.13.20; 12.6.6). In such examples Augustine often refers to the *soliloquium* as an independent genre, but inner dialogue cannot be separated from his notions of outer dialogue and (inner or outer) monologue. In principle these differ: we would normally speak of a dialogue as an external conversation between two or more people, a soliloquy as an internal dialogue between two speaking voices within the same mind

[29] *Ibid*., 27.1: "In secretum te meum admitto et te adhibito mecum exigo." Cf. *Ep*., 68, where Seneca's theory of self-scrutiny by means of soliloquy is summarized. In the correct practice of *otium*, Lucilius's intention should not be to boast, or to hear his discipline praised by others, but "ut ipse tecum loquaris" (68.6).

or soul, and a monologue as a single speaking voice, without reference to anything else. Yet, as these occur in Augustine's works, monologue frequently grows out of dialogue, as in book two of *De Ordine*, and soliloquy is an alternate form of external dialogue, as in the *Soliloquia*.[30]

The term that Augustine most frequently uses to describe his internal and external discourses is *sermocinationes*, i.e., discussions, disputations, or conversations. Quintilian and Apuleius, on whose distinctions he may have drawn, employ this to render Greek *dialogos*, whereas Cicero, Augustine's acknowledged mentor in the writing of dialogues, prefers a simple transliteration.[31] Augustine appears to be following a Ciceronian model when he describes his soliloquies in oral terms, even in the situations in which, as in Seneca, they are based on the readings of texts.[32] Also, Augustine conceives dialogues as public discourses, whereas his soliloquies are private conversations, even on the occasions when they appear to be overheard, as in the case of his inner dialogues in God's presence. In *De Beata Vita*, *Soliloquia*, and *De Ordine*, they usually take place in periods of repose after the day's public debates are finished. If the external dialogue is collective discussion of a work under examination, e.g., Cicero's *Academica* in *Contra Academicos*, the inner dialogue is a personal metacommentary on both the reading of this work, the discussion that has followed, and other topics, as Reason suggests at *Soliloquia* 2.7.13–14.

One person occupies a special place in these conversations: this is Monica, who is sometimes present during his internal dialogues, as at *De Beata Vita* 2.16, or present in his thoughts, as at *Confessions* 9.4.7–12, when he recites the Psalms in the garden at Cassiciacum.[33] In contrast to this stable point of reference, his other audiences undergo a considerable evolution. Between the first and second set of dialogues, i.e., between those completed respectively in 386–387 and 387–395, his listening (and reading) audience is significantly expanded beyond his immediate circle of

[30] E.g., *De Doct. Christ.*, 1.6.6.

[31] On the introduction of *dialogus* to Latin, see *TLL*, vol. v, cols. 950–951. Augustine uses the term chiefly in reference to Cicero; e.g., *De Civ. Dei*, 3.15: "In *Hortensio* … dialogo"; Augustine knows the Greek derivation of *grammatica* and *dialectica*; *C. Cresc. Donat.*, 1.13.16; he is aware of Varro's views; e.g., *De Civ. Dei*, 6.9; 7.2; and he benefited early from the skills of Manichaean debaters, for whom *dialogos* and *dialegomai* meant "preaching"; see Richard Lim, "Manichaeans and Public Disputation in Late Antiquity," *RA* 26 (1992), 236–237.

[32] On the question of reading in the Augustinian and Boethian dialogue, see Lerer, *Boethius and Dialogue*, 46–56; 69–78.

[33] For a remarkable analysis of Monica's rôle, see Catherine Conybeare, *The Irrational Augustine* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 61–138.

students and friends in Milan. Also, in the earlier series the participants are identified and his personality is clearly defined, whereas in the later group the names of the debaters are mentioned once, at the outset, or not at all, since Augustine is less interested in characterization and more in the delineation of positions. Although the historicity of these dialogues is not in doubt, Augustine is hazy on the actual circumstances in which they took place.[34] Finally, let us note that his external and internal audiences frequently overlap, since he is sometimes engaged in internal debates with himself as he listens to his students debating other matters; and he knows what his students are thinking, because they speak in external dialogue, while they are ignorant of what he is saying to himself until he reveals the content of an inner dialogue (as at *De Ordine* 1.10.29, where an internal train of thought leads him to correct their mistaken notions of what constitutes the spiritual life). These moments of interior reflection on his part deliberately break the flow of the external conversation, creating, as Pascal noted, the appearance of disorderliness while in reality establishing an alternate principle of order.

In attempting to trace the evolution of Augustine's technique in writing dialogues it is useful to bear in mind the distinction made by Jean Andrieu between dialogues in dramatic form, which can be compared to scenes from plays, and dialogues in narrative form, which are organized around the positions of the participants and for which, as a consequence, additional staging or scenery is irrelevant.[35] It is also worth noting that the origin of narrative soliloquies in Augustine's writings is not philosophical but autobiographical. If the evidence from the *Confessions* can be trusted, he seems to have taken up soliloquizing from an early age. In his (admittedly retrospective) description of how he learned to speak as an infant, he pictures himself taking part in an interior dialogue, as yet wordless, over what he thinks is the meaning of adults' speech (1.8.13). As a boy, he acquires a knowledge of Latin by speaking, in contrast to Greek, which he masters using manuals of grammar: in his own language he is able to listen to people as they talk; these speakers then become a silent audience for his thoughts as he talks to himself (1.14.23). When he receives religious instruction from Monica, he rehearses Christian moral precepts by means of a similar method, i.e., by means of internal conversations (2.2.3). Another variant of this technique occurs during his reflections on

[34] On the first group, see Goulven Madec, "L'historicité des Dialogues à Cassiciacum," *RA* 32 (1986), 207–231, with a judicious review of the subject's literature.

[35] Jean Andrieu, *Le dialogue antique: Structure et présentation* (Paris, 1954), p. 283.

his adolescent theft of pears, in which he laughs outwardly, as a result of an inner dialogue, on the absurdity of his action (2.9.17). To complicate matters further, he is then "in love with love" – a notion, he notes, which he must have talked over with himself, since at that point he had had no direct experience of physical love (2.1.1; 3.1.1). As he emerges into manhood, a different sort of temptation, although no less sensual, is furnished by Manichaean images, which inspire a number of fantasies. But not long afterwards he begins to overcome their temptations through internal debate on their significance (3.6.10–3.7.12).

His earliest written work, *De Pulchro et Apto*, which may have been a dialogue, results from a soliloquy which he describes on one occasion as "a mouthpiece for his contemplation" (4.14.23) and on another as an attempt to listen to God's "interior melody" (4.15.27). His tendency to engage in interior conversations on a variety of philosophical and theological questions is revealed by his statement on the death of a Manichaean friend, which took place in circumstances that left him with feelings of remorse and guilt (4.4.9). As he notes: "I had become a great question for myself, and I interrogated my soul, saying, 'Why are you sad, why are you so very distressed?' " We do not learn the content of this dialogue with *Anima* (whose powers, allegorized in the *Soliloquia*, are the subject of an internal conversation on another topic near the end of *De Ordine*).[36] His sadness at his friend's demise is relieved by the presence of his other friends in Carthage, and this is still another occasion for a soliloquy. He tells us that he and his companions read books to each other and chatted about them, both seriously and for amusement, in the way in which a person talks to himself: *tamquam ipse homo secum*.[37] This is the earliest example in autobiographical literature in which a reading community gives rise to inner dialogue.

Approaching conversion, Augustine engages in other sorts of soliloquies. These conversations, whose subject is the possibility of a change in his lifestyle, take up several chapters of book eight of the *Confessions*, as he progressively attempts, and fails, to awaken himself to truth (8.5.12). Here he resorts to allegory for configuring his inner dialogues, as he does in the *Soliloquia*, which, in this respect at least, may be the literary predecessor of the *Confessions*. In these several conversations he sees himself as though naked before Conscience; he engages in debate with Continence

[36] *De Ord.*, 2.18.48: "Ita secum loquitur."

[37] *Conf.*, 4.8.13; cf. *De Duob. An.* 3.3 (written before 392): "Volverem mecum haec, loquerer mecum, deferem ad alios [= Manichaeos].

(8.7.18; 8.11.25–26); and he considers at length the problem of the "two wills," which respectively command body and mind (8.9.21–8.10.22). Subsequently it is an inner or outer voice which tells him to "pick up" and "read" the verse of Paul's Epistle to the Romans at the moment of conversion (8.12.29); he afterwards speaks of his interior confession, which constitutes still another soliloquy, as "a cry" from his "mind" (10.2.2; cf., 10.4.6). This is a solo inner voice, which speaks out to God and which, he notes, reveals his motivations better than the outer voice by which he communicates with his readers (10.3.4).[38] His great soliloquy on memory in book ten returns by another route to the question of how it is that he knows who he is (10.6.9; cf. 10.8.14, 10.15.23). Books ten and eleven of the *Confessions* comprise the lengthiest and possibly the most complex soliloquy in ancient thought, moving subtly between autobiography, philosophy, and theology.

Whether or not all of these events took place as Augustine describes them, they provide a pattern for his understanding of the rôle of soliloquies in the evolution of his thinking before and after writing his dialogues. There are moments in his autobiography when the narrative background is not made evident, for example, in *De Immortalitate Animae*, when he is in conversation with himself as he engages in a Neoplatonic attempt to abandon the senses in favor of the mind,[39] or a decade later in the *Confessions*, as he "rises" through his own thinking while trying to sort out what is understood by the notions of will and memory.[40] However, there is an implicit narrative background to such experiences, as there is in his dreams and visions.[41] In these examples his internal conversations are used to configure the process of reasoning over time,[42] and, in books one, five, ten, and thirteen of the *Confessions*, to endow his first-person prayers with a combination of personal flavor and philosophical structure. The narrative and non-narrative dimensions occasionally overlap, as in book eleven of the *Confessions*, where the discussion of time is presented in a

[38] This is an extension of the rhetorical device utilized in the dialogues, in which Augustine contrasts the voice with which he speaks to the participants and the voice by which he narrates what takes place; however, here his inner voice has been demoted to the status of transitory words, while he seeks a more permanent form of communication with God.

[39] *De Imm. An.*, 10.17: "Quis enim bene se inspiciens, non expertus est tanto se aliquid intellexisse sincerius, quanto removere atque subducere intentionem mentis a corporis sensibus potuit?"

[40] On will, see *Conf.*, 8.9.21; on memory, 10.10.17.

[41] E.g., *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.2.3–4.

[42] *De Imm. An.*, 4.6: "Sed cum vel nos ipsi nobiscum ratiocinantes, vel ab alio bene interroganti de quibusdam liberalibus artibus invenimus." Cf. 6.10: "Ratio est aspectus animi, quo per seipsam, non per corpus, verum intuetur;" 13.20: "cum seipsum … interrogat animus."

soliloquy which is itself the by-product of an earlier exegetical soliloquy on the meaning of "*In principio*."

The best-known example of a soliloquy which has both a philosophical and narrative construction in his early writings is the "vision at Ostia" in book nine of the *Confessions*. Augustine and Monica rise in stages, passing from external to internal conversation as they move upwards beyond sensations, emotions, and even language itself, finally enjoying a glimpse of the paradise of the saints. This episode, whose sources are both biblical and Neoplatonic, is the culmination of a series of literary experiments earlier in the autobiography, including the abortive attempts to achieve transcendence in book seven. The principles involved in such ascents are explained at *De Civitate Dei* 9.16, where the central rôle of language is clarified. Owing to the penury of human communication, Augustine notes, mortals cannot acquire an understanding of God's nature or divine mysteries by means of speech alone.[43] It is necessary for those seeking wisdom to rise above the body by an effort of mind, in the course of which they transcend the limitations of spoken language and experience a sudden understanding of God. At that instant the deity is lodged in their minds "as a kind of intelligible and yet ineffable presence," uncontaminated by temporal or corporeal influences.

SOLILOQUY AND NARRATIVE: TWO EXAMPLES

The evolution in Augustine's thinking about the rôle of narrative within soliloquized spiritual exercises can be illustrated briefly by means of two examples of the genre in his early works, namely the opening chapters of the *Soliloquia* (386–387) and the conversion scene in book eight of the *Confessions* (397–400).

Soliloquia. The reader will recall that this work, which is one of Augustine's earliest dialogues, begins with a description of himself immersed in thought.[44] He has apparently been mulling over a number of (unspecified) problems for some days in an attempt, as he puts it, to separate potentially good from bad courses of action.[45] As he engages in these reflections he hears a voice speaking to him. He is unsure whether this is

[43] Cf. *De Doct. Christ.*, 1.6.6.

[44] My comments on *Sol.* 1.1 are a revision of my article, "*Lectio divina* e *lectio spiritualis*: la scrittura come pratica contemplativa nel Medioevo," *Lettere italiane* 52.2 (2000), 171–172; Eng. trans. in *After Augustine: The Meditative Reader and the Text* (Philadelphia, 2001), pp. 103–104.

[45] This is the typical literary setting of the soliloquy, which is reiterated with minor differences by Boethius, *Cons. Phil.*, 1, m. 1, and Petrarch, *Secretum*, pro.

his own voice within his mind or that of another person speaking from an undesignated location nearby. He enters into a dialogue with this voice and realizes that he is in conversation with his own faculty of reason.[46]

Reason asks him a series of questions, the first of which is deceptively simple. How would he ensure that something he considers worth preserving could be retained in his thoughts before he moved on to a new topic? The obvious answer is by means of memory. But Reason points out that his memory may not be capacious enough to store everything of note that arises in his thinking.[47] Alternately, he can set down his thoughts in writing;[48] however, on this occasion this option is not open, since a recent illness has left him too weak for *scribendi labor*.[49] Reason adds that in her view it would be inappropriate for him to dictate his thoughts to a secretary, since this method of preservation would require the presence of at least one other person, whereas the type of reflections that she has in mind should ideally take place in pure solitude (*solitudo mera*).[50]

How then is Augustine to avoid the possibility of forgetting the insight in question? In her response to this problem, Reason advises him to utilize a type of mental exercise that has two parts. First, he is to pray for health and assistance, and to commit his prayer to writing so that he will be encouraged by what he has thus far accomplished; afterwards he is to sum up what he has learned by means of this prayer in a few brief

[46] *Ratio* is not named in the dialogue but at *Retr.*, 1.4.1, where she is configured as the speaking voice of Augustine's rational capacity.

[47] Reason adds a second caveat at *Sol.*, 2.20.34: one is sometimes aware that one's recollection of what was said differs from what was actually said, without, however, being able to pinpoint the error's source.

[48] *Sol.*, 1.1.1: "Ergo scribendum est." The written nature of the exercise is clarified as they proceed; e.g., 1.14.26 and 1.15.27, where Reason speaks of concluding the *primum volumen* and Augustine refers to the dialogue as a *libellus* (the term later used by Petrarch, a student of the *Soliloquia*, in his imitation of the form in the prologue to the *Secretum*). These texts in *Sol.* act as artificial memories; this is suggested at 1.4.9, where a distinction is made between knowing things in the intellect and knowing "quae undeunde conlecta memoriae mandavi et quibus adcommodavi quantam potui fidem."

[49] Dictation would in principle have been less tiring than writing, assuming that Augustine was himself the scribe, as suggested at *Ep.*, 12 and at *Ep.*, 9.4, where he expresses anger through the desire to break his pen; cf. *Sol.*, 1.13.23, where Reason notes that enough has been written for one day, in view of his frail condition. (Augustine states that during this period his voice was too weak for lecturing; *Conf.*, 9.2.4.) A few moments later Reason tells Augustine to write down the two forms of prayer that she recommends, obviously forgetting her claim that he is too ill for manual labor.

[50] The statement is difficult to interpret. Augustine may just be eliminating the fictional secretaries whom he introduces elsewhere to create an impression of historicity for the dialogues, or he may be referring to the real secretaries who recorded the dialogues; on this question see Eligius Dekkers, "Saint Augustin éditeur," *Troisième centenaire de l'édition mauriste de saint Augustin* … (Paris, 1990), pp. 235–244.

conclusions, also in written form.[51] The goal, in her opinion, is not to reach a crowd (or confusion) of readers (*turba legentium*) but a small number of presumably interested companions (*pauci cives*). His soliloquy can thus be looked upon as a speech made to himself and as a text to be communicated to others.[52]

Augustine follows Reason's advice. The extended version of his prayer is found at 1.1.1–4; a brief concluding summary occurs at 1.2.7, when he tells Reason that what he desires is essentially a knowledge of the soul and God. At 2.1.1, he sums up his insights a second time, stating:

God, always the same, may I know myself, may I know you.
That is my prayer.
(*Deus semper idem, noverim me, noverim te. Oratum est*).

Once Reason is convinced that her instructions have been followed in book two, she leads Augustine through the first complete version in his writings of the argument for personal existence known as the *cogito*.[53]

To summarize: The exercise begins with a rejection of standard modes for the preservation of discourse, namely memory or recording.[54] Bypassing these, the Augustinian soliloquy passes through four stages of transition: (1) mental preoccupation, (2) redirecting of attention, (3) solitude and tranquility, and (4) altered consciousness, which is indicated by the appearance of personified Reason. Writing appears as an exhortation in the prayer in book one, and as an *aide-mémoire* in the prayer in book two.[55] The original features consist in the definition of the *soliloquium* (2.7.14) and the *cogito* (2.1.1). The presence of these elements at different stages of the same discussion suggests, as noted, that Augustine sees a

[51] Is this in contrast with her previous observation, namely that he is too weak for this effort? Perhaps not. In her earlier advice, Reason may be thinking of an extensive written record, as for example takes place in the transcription of the dialogues themselves; here she may have in mind something shorter, which corresponds to the two recommended versions of his prayer, which Augustine could have written down himself, despite the recent illness to which she refers.

[52] Cf. *Ep.*, 132, where Augustine tells his Roman friend, Volusianus, that the purpose of "reading and meditation" is not "fencing with words" but "enlightenment through knowledge;"cf. *Ep.*, 33, where similar words are addressed to Proculeianus, the Donatist bishop of Hippo.

[53] As later in Descartes, philosophical discovery is subordinated to an exercise which isolates the mind, turns reflection inwards on itself, and makes creative thinking a part of spiritual awakening; cf. *Sol.*, 2.20.34–35, where the rôles of memory and illumination are specified. For a further comparison of Augustine and Descartes on the *cogito*, see the discussion later in this chapter.

[54] The entire dialogue can be considered an exercise in composition, as Reason suggests at 1.13.23, concluding "hodie satis, ut puto, scripsimus."

[55] Cf. *Sol.*, 2.6.9, where a second short intercessory prayer is found, echoing the demands made at 2.1.1.

connection between the dialogue within the mind and the argument for the mind's existence.

Confessiones. A decade later Augustine presented a revised version of this spiritual exercise at *Confessions* 8.7.16–8.12.29. In this soliloquy he is once again preoccupied with personal problems. In contrast to the *Soliloquia*, however, where nothing is known in advance of his internal debate, we are given a considerable background by means of a series of narratives which begins at 8.2.3. We learn of his visit to Simplicianus, successor to Ambrose as archbishop of Milan, and of the conversion of the rhetorician and translator, Marius Victorinus, whose writings he already knows (i.e., the translation of Aristotle's *Categories* mentioned at the end of book four and the *libri Platonicorum*, likely consisting of texts of Plotinus and Porphyry, discussed in book seven).

Later, at 8.6.13, Augustine and Alypius, then resident in Milan, are paid a visit by a high court official, Ponticianus, and during their conversation, this otherwise unknown person discovers a copy of Paul's Epistles lying open on Augustine's gaming table. Believing his hosts to be Christians like himself, he tells them about a number of developments concerning which they appear to be ignorant: the appearance in Latin of Athanasius' *Life* of St. Antony, the organization of a group of monastic communities by Ambrose in the city's suburbs, and the story of the conversion of three civil servants in a woodland retreat near the imperial town of Trier. These accounts set up a second level of narrative, one whose sequence of events is not based on personal experience but on a series of texts that Augustine has read.

The story of the bureaucrats, related in detail, focuses Augustine's attention in a way that differs from the appearance of Reason in the *Soliloquia*, and also involves overlapping narratives. This takes place through the creation of a pattern of sound and silence, as Ponticianus tells his tale (8.7.16). Augustine follows this sequence, and, during the intervals between the spoken words (*inter uerba*), his thinking returns to his problems[56] by means of silence rather than speech. The verb *narrare*, repeated three times, is an indication that his attention is focused; as a consequence, he is unable to yield to sensory and worldly distractions, as so often during his moral reflections in the past. Moreover, what holds his attention is not a maxim or doctrine, but a series of historical events whose causal

[56] An early reference to the problem of "space between words," however, referring to the sound of words in the mind rather than to word-separation in the text; on the latter, see Paul Saenger, *Space Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford, 1997), chs. 1–2.

connections are not apparent to him during that fateful spring in Milan but are subsequently revealed, as an aspect of divine grace. Soliloquy, narrative, and latent meaning are thus connected.

A second episode in the conversion scene occurs at the moment when he reaches a crisis over his personal indecisiveness (8.12.28–29). This too is aural, and begins with his hearing, or thinking he is hearing, a voice from a nearby house: a boy or a girl, repeating again and again in sing-song fashion,

Tolle, lege, tolle, lege:
"Take up, / read; / take up,/ read."[57]

As in *Soliloquia* 1.1.1, it is the sound of a voice in the absence of the knowledge of its source that arrests Augustine's ongoing train of thought. In the parallel scene in the *Confessions* he cannot recall a children's game in which this refrain occurs. He concludes that it is not the voice of a child; on the contrary, the words appear to be coming from another source and they are directed towards him alone. As in the case of Reason in the *Soliloquia*, he cannot tell whether what he hears is coming from inside or outside his mind. In both the dialogues, his attention is concentrated on what is immediately on his mind or in his thoughts, namely the voice of his interlocutor, and in both cases the process of interiorization reduces the level of his anxiety. In the *Soliloquia*, he begins a conversation with Reason; in the *Confessions*, his tears cease and he regains his composure.

Following the advice that he hears, now that he understands what the words mean,[58] he picks up the book nearest at hand. This is the Epistles of Paul, which has made its way from his study to the garden retreat. The implication is that he brought it with him without thinking about it, as God intended, the text thus foreshadowing by its presence and confirming by his discovery of that presence the theory of grace which by now he has adopted. His sense of an event waiting to take place is also suggested by the conversion of St. Antony, as related in chapter 2 of Athanasius' *Vita*, which reached him a short time previously and provided a narrative

[57] *Conf.* 8.12.29: "Et ecce audio uocem de uicina domo cum cantu dicentis et crebro repetentis quasi pueri an puellae, nescio, 'Tolle, lege, tolle, lege.' " On the implications of reading *diuina* for *uicina*, which is supported by some manuscripts, see Henry Chadwick, "History and Symbolism in the Garden of Milan," in *From Augustine to Eriugena: Essays on Neoplatonism and Christianity in Honor of John O'Meara*, ed. F. X. Martin and J. A. Richmond (Washington, DC, 1991), pp. 42–55. I do not reiterate the controversies over the meaning of this text; the acknowledged turning point in interpretation is Pierre Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1968), pp. 188–201.

[58] Having proceeded, let us note, as he did as an infant, as recorded at *Conf.*, 1.8.13, by connecting meaningless syllables into meaningful discourse with the aid of memory.

backdrop for his mournful reflections on his inaction.[59] He opens the codex containing Paul's letters at random and finds himself at Romans 13:13–14. He silently reads the passage concerning the suppression of excesses,[60] experiences an overwhelming sense of relief, and decides freely to enter the religious life.[61]

To summarize: *Confessions* 8.7–12 repeats with modifications the stages of transition to a contemplative state of mind that are found in *Soliloquia* 1.1.1 and 2.1.1. Both texts begin with Augustine passing through a period of self-absorption; this is followed by the redirection of his attention away from his personal concerns. Both make use of solitude and silence: in the conversion scene, the *solitudo mera* of *Soliloquia* 1.1.1 is represented by the tranquility of the garden behind the house in Milan into which he withdraws for his final deliberations. A comparable theme is introduced at *Confessions* 8.12.29, when it is emphasized that he reads the chosen passage of Romans in silence: *legi in silentio*.[62] Allegories appear in both accounts, as an indication of altered states of consciousness. The personification of Reason in the *Soliloquia* is roughly paralleled by the allegorical figures of Conscience and Continence respectively at *Confessions* 8.7.18 and 8.11.27, both of whom, like Reason, take part in internal conversations. In the *Soliloquia*, this debate involves logical alternatives; in the *Confessions*, it concerns his "two wills" (8.10.22–24).

However, there are some important differences between the two texts. In the *Soliloquia* the focusing of Augustine's attention precedes his period of solitude, whereas in the *Confessions* it comes afterwards. There is no reiteration in the *Confessions* of the recommendation for lengthy and brief prayers in the *Soliloquia*. The prayers in the autobiography consist

[59] *Vita Antonii*, c. 2. Augustine incorporates the pre-reading experience described by Athanasius, in which Antony is pictured as mulling over two canonical scriptural texts dealing respectively with the need to follow in the footsteps of Christ and to renounce worldly possessions (Matt. 4:20; cf. 19:27; Acts 4: 35–37). These statements, which are in Augustine's mind as he converts, must be assumed to be in his readers' minds, as they, like him, learn about this famous conversion through a recently latinized life. However, it is also important to note the difference: Antony opts for a solitary ascetic life, despite the clear indication at Acts 4: 32 that Jesus is referring to a group experience (i.e., "the whole body of believers"), while Augustine, more faithful to this text, has in mind personal asceticism within a community of believers.

[60] It is not clear whether his silent reading of the text of Romans took place as the refrain continued, after it stopped, or after he ceased to focus his attention on it.

[61] The moment of decision can be compared to the suddenness of attaining wisdom in Stoicism; e.g., *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, ed. H. von Arnim (re-edited Stuttgart, 1964), vol. III, pp. 221 and 539–542.

[62] As in the celebrated account of Ambrose reading silently before his parishioners at *Conf.*, 6.3.3, this is an illustration of Neoplatonic interiorization made possible by a technique of reading rather than a description of silent reading for its own sake.

in philosophical and theological reflections on Augustine's reading of the Psalms, the gospel narratives, and the Epistles of Paul. These may be considered the equivalent of the insights that Reason asks him to preserve in the *Soliloquia*, but they occur in a more easily recognizable Christian context in the *Confessions*.[63] Finally, in the recorded texts in the *Soliloquia* there is no anticipation of Augustine's conversion by means of a codex book at *Confessions* 8.12.29. This is portrayed as a historical event and in that form it strengthens the reader's impression that the conversion scene is not intended to be understood as an abstract, mystical, or allegorical account of a change in lifestyle, but, like the gospel narratives which are its distant ancestor, as a single, unrepeatable occurrence, which involves a combination of human will and divine grace.

One possible explanation for these differences, and especially for the rôle of the codex, can be found in Augustine's changing conception of the reading process between the writing of the two works.[64] It is important to recognize that Augustine writes (or dictates) only one type of text but that he deals metaphorically with different types of book formats, just as he refers to the different doctrines contained in pagan and Christian writings. As a part of this mise en scène, he configures the episodes in the *Soliloquia* in a manner that recalls ancient reading practices before the introduction of the codex book, inasmuch as it consists in a series of interconnected dialogues which are, so to speak, "unrolled" before Augustine and then before his (presumably reading) audience.[65] These dialogues are rational exercises for the mind and forms of rhetorical persuasion for the unconvinced student of philosophy, and their vehicle is the human voice. By contrast, the conversion scene in the *Confessions* is inconceivable in its bookish setting without the presence of two codices: the life of St. Antony (8.6.15), which, at the moment of conversion, Augustine recalls that the anonymous bureaucrats were reading in Trier; and the Epistles of Paul, which he himself has been studying intensively in Milan, as he bears witness in book seven (7.21.27).[66] In the logic of the narrative, these texts

[63] The great prayer with which the *Soliloquia* begins is easily interpreted within Augustine's early theology, but it lacks the direct quotations from the Bible which characterize his prayers in the *Confessions*.

[64] See B. Stock, *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1996), pp. 20–111.

[65] For a review of Augustine's conception of the *codex*, see Pierre Petitmengin, "Codex," *AL*, vol. 1, pp. 1022–1037; on the rôle of the codex in his conversion, see Karl F. Morrison, *Conversion and Text*: *The Cases of Augustine of Hippo*, *Herman-Judah*, *and Constantine Tsatsos* (Charlottesville, 1992).

[66] For a more extensive discussion of this point, see Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, pp. 75–102.

are united by a book format which is connected to their specificity and historicity and in this form work on Augustine from the inside, silently, while what is expressed outwardly is his emotional response, whose significance at 8.12.29 can only be guessed at by Alypius but is fully understood by his readers. Alypius thus takes the symbolic form of the later reader: he is told what has happened, just as other potential converts read about it.

If writing functions in the *Soliloquia* and in the *Confessions* as a viaticum to a contemplative state of mind, then the written texts in question nonetheless work differently and are directed toward separate audiences. The résumés of the lengthy prayer in the *Soliloquia* are intended to be read by Augustine's select companions in Milan and at Cassiciacum, that is, by those with whom he can converse personally. Books one to nine of the *Confessions* are written for a group of friends, presumably entering religious life, who may have been the immediate audience, and for a larger group of potential converts.[67] Most importantly, in the narrative books of the autobiography Augustine is not engaged in reflection on summaries of doctrine but on the story of his life that is contained in his memory. Unlike Montaigne, he does not see himself as the one and only subject of his book: on the contrary, as in *Soliloquia*, he makes it clear that he has to know God before he can in any sense know himself. Yet, as in Montaigne, his writing, which is the exploration of his reflections, is an ongoing exploration of himself.

CRITIQUE OF THE DIALOGUE

In the years that elapsed between the writing of the *Soliloquia* and the *Confessiones*, Augustine's conception of the soliloquy was considerably transformed. In this section I deal with one aspect of that transformation: this consists in Augustine's critique of the external dialogue.

I begin this phase of my discussion with a statement by Arthur Schopenhauer, who summed up the difference between the dialogue and the soliloquy in the following terms:

> Only in the latter (i.e., soliloquy) is everything as it were cut from one piece or played in one key; and thus it can attain absolute clearness, and true coherence, in fact unity; whereas with the former (i.e., dialogue) heterogeneous pieces of a very different origin are put together and a certain unity of movement is forced,

[67] Cf. *Conf.* 9.7.13 and 10.3.3.

which often stops unexpectedly. Thus only ourselves do we thoroughly understand; others are half-understood, for at best we attain to a community of concepts, not to that of intuitive apprehension.[68]

This opinion may not be Augustinian in inspiration but it is certainly Augustinian in sentiment. The evidence is found in the *Soliloquia*, where the advantages of the external and internal dialogue are taken up and discussed.

In order to appreciate the context of Augustine's remarks on this subject it is necessary to return briefly to the two soliloquies which I have just analyzed. As noted, the soliloquy in *Confessions*, book eight, is conceived within a group of interdependent narratives leading to Augustine's conversion. By contrast, the exchange between Augustine and Reason with which the *Soliloquia* begins contains no mention of the historical events surrounding Augustine's life in Milan or at Cassiciacum. The historical dimension of his experience is deliberately omitted so that the reader's attention can be focused on the logic of the discussion, which is concerned with ideas alone.

The central subject of the *Soliloquia* is what is known and what is not known by the human soul. The argument pivots around the statement of the *cogito* at 2.1.1, which distinguishes *logically* between the certainty of the soul's existence and the uncertainty surrounding many other things that are said to be known, such as the circumstances of one's life – birth, parents, places, etc. The remainder of the dialogue is concerned *ontologically* with the same question, namely certainty and uncertainty, for which Augustine's solution does not in fact depend on the anti-Sceptical argument of the *cogito* but makes use of a version of the negative theology.

It is in the context of this discussion that Augustine introduces a critique of the external dialogue which begins at 1.15.27 and continues at 2.3.3, immediately after the argument for self-existence. The lengthier of these discussions (2.3.3) proceeds in two stages. In the first, Augustine returns to a topic that is taken up in book one, namely the contrast between the true (*verum*) and truth (*veritas*). He concludes that things can be said to be true, even if they are not permanent, whereas truth refers to something that is permanent and unchanging. As a part of this statement, he compares the ephemeral nature of words spoken in open debate with the more enduring conclusions that can be reached by means of conversations taking place within oneself.

[68] Arthur Schopenhauer, "On Philosophy and its Method," no. 6, in *Parerga and Perilipomena*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Oxford, 1974), vol. II, p. 7.

This is the introduction to his thinking on the dialogue, which is elaborated at 2.7.13–14. There Reason gives her explanation of why the soliloquy is preferable to the open dialogue as a way of achieving the tranquility necessary for discovering the nature of truth. At the beginning of this account she asks Augustine to join her in reviewing the points that they have so far covered in their debate on this topic. He agrees but without enthusiasm, since he has found Reason's questions a little wearying – thus illustrating dramatically the point that Reason is about to make philosophically concerning the potential for confusion created by words which are spoken in open conversation. Indeed, possibly echoing her thoughts, Augustine has the impression that the debate between them is "going around in circles"; they have failed to make significant progress on the problem with which they began – the nature of the soul and God.[69] Nonetheless, he has made up his mind to persevere to the end of their debate. He is confident (for reasons not disclosed) that the pair will reach a mutually agreeable conclusion.[70] What he does not say, either through himself or his reason, is that this desired point of synthesis lies beyond outer and inner words in the Word of God.

In the subsequent exchange he is forced to retract a statement that he previously made in the discussion mentioned above concerning the true and truth. He is embarrassed at this error, which is the sort of slip that he himself criticizes in his students elsewhere.[71] But Reason points out that his emotion is out of place, since the pair are speaking to each other within the confines of his mind: there is no external witness to their conversation. Reason reminds him that it was in order to avoid the problems of the open dialogue that they chose to conduct their inquiry by means of internal questions and answers, which she now calls *soliloquia*.[72] She

[69] At *Sol.* 1.14.26, he again asks Reason to cease her questioning, although for emotional rather than intellectual reasons. At 2.4.6 she is accused of proceeding too rapidly; by 2.5.8 he is "in magnas angustias." She lays snares through unnecessary complexity (2.14.25); as a result the argument progresses slowly (2.8.15; cf. 2.13.23, where the use of *conlige* may be an ironic reference to Reason's advice at 1.1.1). By contrast, Augustine proceeds too quickly to his conclusion and fails to examine issues with sufficient care (2.15.27).

[70] *Sol.*, 2.7.13: "Ecce me, loquere quod velis. Nam ego circuitum istum semel statui tolerare neque in eo defetiscar spe tanta perveniendi, quo nos tendere sentio." The *semel* may be rhetorical, since by this date Augustine had on at least one occasion abandoned the "roundabout" type of discussion of the open dialogue with his students in favor of a straightforward lecturing style in *C. Acad.*, 3; cf. *De Ord.*, 2. On the circular nature of the open dialogue, see *De Mag.*, 10.31 and the discussion later in this chapter. Such complaints are not unusual in late antiquity; see Porphyry, *Vita Plotini*, c. 30.

[71] E.g., *De Ord.*, 1.7.19; 1.10.29.

[72] It is not clear that a deliberate choice was made for the soliloquy over the open dialogue, as Reason's statement would seem to suggest. *Sol.*, 1.1.1 only speaks of Augustine already "turning

says that this is a novel and perhaps uncultivated term but appropriate for the sort of debate in which they are engaged.[73] In the *Retractationes*, Augustine adds a footnote to this statement. During the period in which he was writing his first dialogues, i.e., *Contra Academicos*, *De Beata Vita*, *De Ordine*, and the *Soliloquia*, he reminds us that he was chiefly motivated by a desire to inquire into questions concerning truth. In taking up this task he employed the method of asking himself questions and responding, as if there were two people speaking, namely Reason and himself, even though in reality he was aware that he was alone, talking to himself.[74]

In her statement on the subject at *Soliloquia* 2.7.14 Reason draws attention to the advantages of the soliloquy over the exterior dialogue in philosophical inquiries,[75] one of which was later noted by Schopenhauer. The problem with discussions involving outsiders does not arise from the method of questions and answers, which she is convinced is the surest way of arriving at the solution to a problem (i.e., through logical deduction).[76] The complications follow the expression of ill-considered opinion that takes place when debates are conducted in an open forum and the rules of argumentation are abandoned.[77] The participants may be afraid of being defeated in argument or distressed at their errors, as Augustine evidently was. The presentation of positions is often accompanied by unnecessary noise, confusion, and high feelings, all of which make the logic of

over many and varied things" in his mind and "questioning" himself. The appearance of Reason is portrayed as a surprise.

[73] *Sol.*, 2.7.14: "… quoniam cum solis nobis loquimur. Soliloquia vocari atque inscribi volo, novo quidem et fortasse duro nomine, sed ad rem demonstrandam satis idoneo."

[74] *Retr.*, 1.4.1: "Inter haec scripsi etiam duo volumina secundum studium meum et amorem, ratione indagandae, veritatis de his rebus, quas maxime scire cupiebam, me interrogans mihique respondens, tanquam duo essemus, ratio et ego, cum solus essem."

[75] For a historical parallel, cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 3.3, where Socrates is described as having worked out a Neoplatonic and monotheistic position that anticipates Christianity, while his sectarian followers engage in endless squabbling over the meaning of his statements on ethics and the highest good. At 9.5, Augustine recalls Cicero's criticism of "the verbal controversies that have already for a long time troubled the minor Greek thinkers, who are more interested in debate than in truth;" cf. Cicero, *De Orat.*, 1.11.47. (However, for Cicero the intimacy of friendship has some of the qualities of interior conversation; *Laelius*, 22). Augustine's critique of open discussion may also have arisen in part from his negative experience as a Manichaean polemicist. At *De Duob. An.* 11, he notes: "I used almost to enjoy a certain harmful victory in debates while discoursing with inexperienced Christians."

[76] A conviction reiterated at *De Imm. An.* 10.17; cf. 6.10, 7.14.

[77] This statement may be disingenuous, since emotion is evidently present, if controlled, in the previous discussion between Reason and Augustine. Emotion elsewhere contributes to the dramatic setting and to error; cf. *De Mus.*, 6.5.8.

the exchanges difficult to follow.[78] There are digressions,[79] even distractions, and one's thoughts inevitably wander from the main theme.[80] Arguments frequently concern words alone rather than "things" or "truth."[81] Considerations such as these lead Augustine to observe on more than one occasion that the oral dialogue is a juvenile type of engagement, which, if possible, should be complemented by mature reflection that is free of the petty caviling by which it is so often characterized.[82] In view of these problems, Reason prefers to enlist God's help in creating a peaceful environment which will permit Augustine to pursue truth by means of a dialogue within himself.[83] The purpose of this type of disputation is the cultivation of the mind as it moves upwards to God.[84]

Reason's statement clarifies one of the functions of the opening prayer in the *Soliloquia*, which does not at first sight seem to be part of the debate that takes place in the dialogue: it is a way of putting Augustine in a tranquil and meditative frame of mind. Free of emotions and sensory distractions, he can engage in a logically organized debate within himself.[85] The remarks at 2.7.13–14 should be viewed as a stage in the development of this exercise rather than as a criticism of the dialogue

[78] Cf. *C. Acad.*, 3.4.9, where Augustine objects to the "Tuscan" manner of carrying on a discussion, in which the response to a question is another question.

[79] Cf. *De Mus.*, 1.12.26.

[80] On which Augustine had ambivalent views; see *De Ord.*, 2.7.21, where Licentius provokes his discontent by frequently being lost in thought; but compare *C. Acad.*, 2.7.21, where there are favorable results.

[81] E.g., *De Mus.*, 6.9.24: "De vocabulis quidem nihil satagas; res in potestate est: placato enim, non natura imponitur." Cf. *C. Acad.*, 2.11.25, where Licentius reiterates what Augustine has frequently said, namely that it is disgraceful for those engaged in a dialogue to linger over questions of mere words when what is at stake is the search for truth.

[82] E.g., *De Mus.*, 6.1.1: "Satis diu pene atque a deo plane pueriliter per quinque libros," etc.; cf. *C. Acad.*, 2.9.22. A comparable reflection takes place at the end of the dialogue in *De Mag.*, 10.31. Unknown to Augustine was Socrates' statement of the same theme at *Phaedrus* 278b. Cf. Seneca, *Ep.*, 88, citing Posidonius, who separates the *artes ludicrae*, conceived for satisfying pleasure, from the *artes liberales*, whose object is wisdom.

[83] *Sol.*, 2.7.14: "Interdum et aperta, pacatissime, ut opinor, et commodissime placuit a meipso interrogatum mihique respondentem deo adiuvante verum quarere." *Meipso* evidently refers to Augustine, since Reason is speaking within his mind. It follows that Reason is voicing Augustine's criticism of the dialogue, or, if he has his student readers of the *Sol.* in mind, offers them justification for his tendency to think for himself, without the need for discussion, and to lecture afterwards on the results of his deliberations. For Augustine the soliloquy is both a rational dialogue and a type of meditation; 2.15.27. On the tranquil, detached outlook of a person engaging in internal debate, see also *C. Acad.*, 3.14.31; *De Mus.*, 6.12.35. At *C. Acad.*, 2.2.4 Augustine speaks of his interlocutors as answered by him, or by themselves, as they are instructed from within; cf. 2.2.5; 2.23.8.

[84] Cf. *C. Acad.*, 2.7.17, where, speaking of the open dialogue, Augustine remarks: "cum haec inter nos disputatio suscepta sit exercendi tui causa et ad elimandum animum prouocandi."

[85] This is the purpose of the brief prayer at *Sol.* 2.6.9, which prefaces a stage of Reason's explanation of the nature of truth and falsity.

itself, whose merits Augustine elsewhere acknowledges.[86] Far from dispensing with this mode of discussion, the soliloquy can be viewed as the implementation of the Socratic method from the inside, albeit within a rearrangement of its priorities, in which reason is a means rather than an end. In this respect, the inner dialogue is no more "rational" than its outer counterpart; on the contrary, all human rationality is viewed as a stage in spiritual progress, which proceeds from outer to inner words and then to a sense of transcendence. The deductive process is thus incorporated into a contemplative framework whose purpose is to achieve and maintain internal composure. The presence of this objective within a program for the classical dialogue is an indication that Augustine's interest in the external and internal forms of argument extends beyond their functions in reaching solutions to specific problems and enters into his thinking about other questions relating philosophy to theology, to which I turn later in this chapter.

As an addendum to what is said on this topic in the dialogues I turn briefly to letter 3, where a confirmation is found of Augustine's predilection for inner dialogue. The letter was written to Nebridius shortly after the *Soliloquia* was completed in 387.[87] Augustine pictures himself alone as he reads his student's letter by lamplight, before going to sleep.[88] He then finds himself in silent conversation with himself on the problems the pair have discussed (on which he has written elsewhere).[89] This inner conversation takes place before he says his prayers (3.4); this reverses the pattern

[86] *De Imm. An.*, 4.6; *C. Acad.*, 2.7.17; 2.9.22; *De Beata Vita*, 2.10; *De Mus.*, 2.2. Cf. *Ep.*, 49.1 and 51.1.

[87] In letter 3, Augustine speaks of writing the *Soliloquia* (3.1; 3.4) and alludes to *De Beata Vita* (3.1–2) and possibly to *De Quantitate Animae* or *De Immortalitate Animae* (3.2–4).

[88] *Ep.*, 3.1: "Legi enim litteras tuas ad lucernam iam cenatus; proxime erat cubitio, sed non ita etiam dormitio; quippe diu mecum in lecto situs cogitaui atque has loquelas habui Augustinus ipse cum Augustino." Cf. *Ep.*, 12, written to Nebridius in 389, in which Augustine speaks of insomnia on long winter nights, when he would mentally review the previous day's activities; and, *Ep.*, 13, where he again mentions working at night. *Ep.*, 12.2 recalls *Ep.*, 3, where, thinking along similar lines, he remarks: "Necesse est te meminisse quod crebro inter nos sermone jactatum est." *Ep.*, 13, speaks of sleeplessness; cf. *Ep.*, 158, from Evodius, who recalls reading at night to an unlettered servant boy eager to learn to read and write.

[89] A hint of this sort of composition recurs in *Ep.* 22.3, to Valerius, in 392. *Ep.* 3.1 suggests that Augustine was reading silently; otherwise, his voice might have prevented him from focusing his attention on his mental *and* oral conversation with himself. Cf. *De Ord.*, 1.3.6 and *Sol.*, 1.1, both of which appear to begin in silent debate. At *C. Acad.*, 3.14.31, Augustine asks the reader to engage in internal dialogue by visualizing a debate between a wise man and Wisdom. This interior conversation is to take place while he or she is reading the work, presumably therefore in silence. More generally, the letters reveal an adaptation of the principle of soliloquizing in which a text acts as the intermediary between separate internal dialogues on the part of the correspondents; e.g., *Ep.*, 23.3. The principle is well illustrated by the several letters to Paulinus of Nola; e.g., *Ep.*, 27.

of the *Soliloquia*, in which the internal dialogue follows the devotions requested by Reason, but retains the relationship between prayer, interior speech, and meditation.

The stages by which the discussion evolves in the dialogue and the letter are comparable. Reading the letter, Augustine enters a contemplative frame of mind in which he thinks rationally about the matter at hand (*cogitaui*). His reflections continue for a period of time, after which he finds himself engaged in an internal dialogue (*loquelas habui*). As in the *Soliloquia*, the beginning of this dialogue attracts his attention and breaks into his reverie by means of a voice that speaks within himself: *Augustinus ipse cum Augustino*. In *De Immortalitate Animae* he refers to this type of situation in these words, which recall the *Soliloquia*'s opening statement: *nos ipsi nobiscum ratiocinantes* (4.6).

The letter tells us something about the *Soliloquia* that we do not learn from the work itself. This occurs at the point at which Augustine asks himself how Nebridius could have arrived at his conclusions concerning the possibility of achieving happiness. Less gloomy on this subject than he was after 397, Augustine is nonetheless more reticent than his student, who is still attracted by the possibility that mortals can attain a happy or blessed life by realizing their intellectual potential, presumably without help from God. By contrast, Augustine (as later Erasmus) never tires of saying that happiness is the reward of wisdom, whereas misery is the result of folly.[90] Therefore, is long as folly exists, no mortal can truly be said to be happy. In penning these sentiments he seems to have forgotten that Nebridius has not yet read the *Soliloquia* and as a result is unable to follow his argument concerning truth and happiness in that dialogue in a way which would give his remarks in his letter their larger philosophical context. Despite this limitation, Augustine seems to be aware that his pupil is occasionally engaged in inner dialogue with himself on the questions that both have under review. The implied soliloquy on his student's part can even be looked upon as a preface to book ten of *De Trinitate* where the problem of otherness is discussed in greater detail.[91]

Let us also note that, as elsewhere in the dialogues, these imaginary conversations in Augustine's mind are not spontaneous discourses but

[90] Erasmus adopts essentially the same view in the *Encomium Moriae*, arguing that misery is the result of the illusion of happiness, largely due to the acquisition of worldly goods and influence, which is in reality folly. However, he reverses Augustine's order: it is Folly who appears in his soliloquy and draws attention to the absence of wisdom in the world.

[91] For a discussion of this problem, see Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, pp. 97–102; cf. more generally, E. Bermon, *Le "cogito" dans la pensée de saint Augustin*, pp. 326–356.

supplements to previous conversations between him and Nebridius based on shared readings.[92] A confirmation of this orientation in a different context is found at the end of book one of the *Soliloquia*. After thanking Reason for her explanation of the nature of truth, Augustine states, "I will investigate these matters diligently and cautiously with myself and then with you, to be sure, when we are in silence,"[93] thus suggesting that one soliloquy, which comprises the *Soliloquia*, will give rise to another, at the end of book two. The second soliloquy is configured as an unwritten book, which will result from Augustine's future conversations with Reason[94] (and may be the unwritten chapters of *De Immortalitate Animae*). In letter 3, a comparable relationship to a preexisting text is present, since Augustine and Nebridius are both aware that the correspondence between them is independent of their separate internal dialogues. The genre of the soliloquy is thus able to overcome its own potentially crippling subjectivity – a point that was not lost on Augustine when he expanded this technique in the *Confessions*.

THE AUGUSTINIAN "*COGITO*" IN CONTEXT

The narrative orientation of Augustine's soliloquies can be confirmed and the consequences made more evident if we examine their use in his solution to the problem of self-existence known as "the *cogito*."[95] In order to illustrate this point I propose to discuss a series of statements dealing with self-existence in Augustine's early writings and in the extension of his views into his mature theology. These begin with *Soliloquia* 2.1.1 and *De Beata Vita* 2.7, in which the existence of the mind or soul is affirmed principally by words spoken within the mind. I then proceed to the restatements of the *cogito* in *De Vera Religione*, *De Civitate Dei*, and *De Trinitate*, in which Augustine is chiefly interested in situating the demonstration within a narrative theology.

[92] *Ep.*, 3.1: "An lectis illis libellis etiam sapientem me ausus est credere?" Are the *libelli* those written by Augustine or other texts, such as "Plato" (3.1)?

[93] *Sol.* 1.15.30: "Habeo gratiam, et ista mecum atque adeo tecum, quando in silentio sumus, diligenter cauteque tractabo." The use of *adeo* suggests two sorts of colloquy, one with himself but without Reason, the other between himself and Reason. This is a variant on the description of the soliloquy at 1.1.1.

[94] *Ibid.* 2.16.30: "Alius locus nobis erit de istis rebus disserendi;" 2.19.33: "Aliud ista quaestio volumen desiderat, si eam vis tractari diligenter." Cf. Lerer, *Boethius and Dialogue*, 51.

[95] Augustine reuses the *cogito* with slight variations in a number of places in his writings; these include *De Beata Vita* 2.7, *Soliloquia* 2.1.1, *De Libero Arbitrio* 1.7.16 and 2.3.7, *De Vera Religione* 39.73, *De Duobus Animabus* 10.13, *Confessiones* 13.11.12, *De Civitate Dei* 11.26, and *De Trinitate* 10.10.14 and 15.12.21.

Descartes. Before turning to these examples of the *cogito*, I offer some observations on Augustine and Descartes, since it is in Descartes rather than Augustine that the *cogito* becomes a foundation for a non-narrative philosophy of mind.

It is clear to those who have compared these two affirmations of the *cogito* that Augustine did not intend the statement of this principle to be used for the analytical purposes for which Descartes was convinced it was designed.[96] However, it has also been established that similarities exist between the two presentations of the idea. These were first noted by Descartes' colleagues, Mersenne, Colvius, and Arnauld, who were well acquainted with the bishop of Hippo's works.

Circumstantial evidence suggests that Descartes could have known the texts in which Augustine's *cogito* is found,[97] but in his response to queries on the subject he minimized the connection between their respective statements of the principle and denied that there was any serious intellectual affiliation. Typical of his reaction was a letter dated 14 November 1640 in which he thanked Andreas Colvius for drawing attention to the anticipation of his statement, "je pense, donc je suis," that is found at *De Civitate Dei* 11.26. He observes that both he and the bishop of Hippo demonstrate "the certainty of existence" by means of the *cogito* but that their purposes differ. In his view, Augustine's argument shows that "there is a certain likeness of the Trinity in us, in that we exist, we know that we exist, and we love the existence and the knowledge we have," whereas

[96] The link between Augustine and later medieval authors was John Scottus Eriugena; see B. Stock, "*Intelligo me esse*: Eriugena's 'Cogito'," in *Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie* (Paris, 1977), pp. 327–335; complemented by Edouard Jeauneau, "Le Cogito érigénien," *Traditio* 50 (1995), 95–110.

[97] Possible parallels are tabulated by Zbigniew Janowski, *Index Augustino-Cartésien: Textes et commentaire* (Paris, 2000), pp. 20–106; cf. Janowski, *Cartesian Theodicy: Descartes' Quest for Certitude* (Dordrecht, 2000), pp. 141–149. For a recent review of the issues, see Wayne J. Hankey, "Between and Beyond Augustine and Descartes: More than a Source of the Self," *Augustinian Studies* 32 (2001), 65–72, and the thorough study of Emmanuel Bermon, *Le "cogito" dans la pensée de saint Augustin*. The seminal article on this subject is Geneviève [Rodis]-Lewis, "Augustinisme et cartésianisme," in *AM*, vol. II (Paris, 1954), pp. 1087–1104; repr. in *L'Anthropologie cartésienne* (Paris, 1990), pp. 101–125. Other important studies include: Etienne Gilson, "Le Cogito et la tradition augustinienne," in *Études sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système cartésien* 2nd edn (Paris, 1930), pp. 190–201; cf. Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (New York, 1937), pp. 125–198; Henri Gouhier, *Cartésianisme et Augustinisme au xvii siècle* (Paris, 1978); Jean-Luc Marion, *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes* (Paris, 1981); Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* (Cambridge, 1998); Sacha Bourgeois-Gironde, *Reconstruction analytique du cogito* (Paris, 2001), esp. pp. 132–155 ; cf. Gareth B. Matthews, "Augustine on the Mind's Search for Itself," *Faith and Philosophy* 20 (2003), 415–429. On Augustine's conception of *cogitatio* and its relation to the notion of the imagination, see the perceptive remarks of G. Watson, *AL*, vol. I, pp. 1046–1051; cf. Watson, on *cognitio*, cols 1051–1064.

he is attempting to demonstrate that "this 'I', which is thinking, is an immaterial substance with no bodily element," and he is doing this in his view independently of theological considerations. In his opinion this is a more significant achievement than simply arguing against Scepticism by "inferring that one exists from the fact that one is doubting."[98]

The version of Augustine's *cogito* to which the letter made reference, and to which Descartes addressed his reply, was a relatively late summary of the argument written sometime after 410. A better vantage point for comparison could have been found in Augustine's writings on the subject before 390. If these are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that Augustine and Descartes began their inquiries with the same question: Is there any knowledge that resists doubt and can be said to be possessed by the individual with absolute certainty? After discussing a range of possibilities Descartes gave essentially the same answer as Augustine: "I, who am doubting, must exist, while I am entertaining doubt."[99]

The common ground between the two thinkers was well expressed by Descartes' admirer, Spinoza, in the phrase *ego sum cogitans*. In some sense, they are both saying, "I exist, while I am thinking"[100] (The similarity was noted subsequently by Schopenhauer,[101] who, as remarked, saw soliloquies as a superior form of argumentation to exterior dialogues). A variant of the view expressed by Descartes and revised by Spinoza appeared in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, where it is stated in the form "*Cogito quia sum, et sum quia Cogito*."[102] Virtually the same view was expressed by Jean-Paul Sartre, who asserted that the point of departure for Cartesian thinking is

> the subjectivity of the individual, and that for strictly philosophical reasons … There cannot be, at such a point of departure, any other truth than this one: *I think, therefore I am*, which is the absolute truth of consciousness attaining itself … Outside of the Cartesian *cogito*, all objects are merely probable.[103]

98 For a discussion, see Janowski, *Index*, 136–152; on this letter, p. 142; on other letters to Descartes on the question, see Bermon, *Le "cogito" dans la pensée de saint Augustin*, pp. 10–17.

99 Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, vol. VI, p. 32; echoing Augustine's formulation at *De Lib. Arbit*., 2.3.7. On this point, see G. E. M. Anscombe, "The First Person," in *Mind and Language*, ed. Samuel Guttenplan (Oxford, 1975), p. 44.

100 Lit. "I myself exist," or "I exist for myself, while I am thinking." It is not clear whether Descartes and Spinoza adhered to ancient usage regarding pronouns, which renders difficult an unequivocal translation.

101 Arthur Schopenhauer, "Sketch of a History of Ideal and Real," in *Parerga and Parelipomena*, vol. I, pp. 3–10.

102 *Biographia Literaria*, ed. J. Shawcross (London, 1907), vol. I, pp. 94–95; for a discussion, see Thomas McFarland, "Coleridge and Descartes," in *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 320–323.

103 *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* (Paris, 1946), pp. 63–64.

A comparison between Augustine's and Descartes' *cogitos*, therefore, has to begin with the recognition of some important similarities. Yet Descartes was not mistaken when he stated that he and the bishop of Hippo had utilized the *cogito* for different purposes. In his letter of 14 November 1640 he drew attention to his major objective, which was to determine what it is according to the most rigorous thinking that can be said to be grasped clearly and distinctly by the mind. By contrast, in his various statements of the *cogito*, Augustine was interested in establishing a philosophical foundation for the believer's faith in doctrines like the trinity, which, he argued, cannot be grasped clearly and distinctly by any human mind.[104]

In responding to Scepticism, therefore, both Augustine and Descartes had in mind the distinction between objects that are known with certainty and those that Sartre calls "merely probable," but their conceptions of this distinction differed. In demonstrating the self's existence, Augustine provided one example of a statement which he thought was irrefutably true; however, he did not imply that he could thereby establish certain knowledge about other matters. By contrast, Descartes was convinced that in the affirmation of self-existence he was laying the foundation for all certain, i.e., scientific knowledge, including, first and foremost, that of the external world. While Descartes totally refused Scepticism, Augustine denied one Sceptical notion, namely that nothing exists, and affirmed another, namely that some things about the self are not known certainly. As it happens, these concern the self's narrative and historical context.

Unlike Descartes, then, Augustine is convinced that there are some matters on which the question of probability and improbability can never fully be resolved. His statement, *si fallor*, *sum*, does not lead to the assumptions of Descartes' *cogito*, *ergo sum*, but to questioning the possibility that any humanly devised method can establish indubitable truth. In the light of this difference, it is not only their attitude toward Scepticism which separates Augustine and Descartes; they also stand on opposite sides of fundamental issues in the philosophy of mind and nature as it develops in the modern period. Augustine proposes that the subjective knowledge of the active mind is self-evident to the thinking subject. In that respect, he supports the notion of immanent knowledge, evidence for which, he argues, is our subjective awareness of time (as later in Edmund Husserl).[105] At the same time, Augustine argues for radical transcendence in relation

[104] *De Doct. Christ.*, 1.6.6.

[105] See Edmund Husserl, *General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. R. W. Royce Gibson (New York, 1962), part 2, chs. 3–4. For thoughtful reflections on Augustine and Husserl in this context, see E. Bermon, *Le "cogito" dans la pensée de saint Augustin*.

to the source of such knowledge, which in his opinion is divine. As a consequence of his attempted union between the principles of immanence and transcendence, Augustine's *cogito* cannot be used to support the thesis of the axiomatic reality of the external world, as it is found in Descartes and later in Kant and Leibniz.[106]

Augustine's approach to such matters is underpinned by typically ancient assumptions concerning the inherent vitality of the soul.[107] In his view the soul is not perceived outwardly through sense impressions, and thereby through measurable events, but inwardly and intuitively, whence it provides our awareness that we are beings capable of sensing, perceiving, and understanding.[108] Such knowledge exists in the very mind or soul of man,[109] which becomes aware that it has benefited from its acquisition when the object of thought in question enters the stream of consciousness through the focusing of attention.[110] It is this self-awareness, as a kind of intimate knowledge within each of us, which is the basis of our knowing everything else,[111] and, in Augustine's view, it is the presence of this vital principle in the soul that is chiefly demonstrated by the *cogito*. The fact of self-existence in turn provides a demonstration of the soul's ability, once created by God, to animate itself.

Augustine is certain of a number of things concerning his inner life. The most important of these does not concern self-existence but the human will, separate aspects of which are taken up in various writings under the headings of love, desire, and intentions. He believes that the soul is the source of the body's movements as well as the source of the soul's capacity to move itself, and this movement is brought about by the will, which acts, as Gerald O'Daly notes, as an "unmoved mover" within the soul.[112] Also, in his view there is a connection between the soul's knowledge of itself and its inherent desire for knowledge; this is observable as early as infancy, when it is expressed as the child's wish for the ability to speak before learning how to speak.[113] It is such desire, implanted into the soul

[106] Emmanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, in *Emmanuel Kants Werke* (in Gemeinschaft mit Hermann Cohen *et al.*), ed. Ernst Cassirer (Berlin, 1912–1922), vol. III, p. 647; for Leibniz, see *Die philosophische Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, ed. C. J. Gerhardt (Berlin, 1895–1890), vol. IV, p. 468.

[107] *De Imm. An.*, 9.16: "Est autem anima vita quaedam."

[108] *Ep.*, 2 [109] *De Imm. An.*, 1.1 [110] *Ibid.*, 4.6

[111] *De Trin.*, 8.6.9: "Quid enim tam intime scitur seque ipsum esse sentit quam id quo etiam cetera sentiuntur, id est ipse animus?"

[112] *De Imm. An.*, 3.3; *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 8.21.41; cf. Gerald O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (London, 1987), p. 21.

[113] *Conf.*, 1.8.13; cf. *De Mag.*, 14.45.

by God, which impels the soul toward the love of God: the soul, which is detached from the deity through history and time, seeks naturally to return to God as the source of its love, thus overcoming time.[114] It follows that God has given humans the knowledge of the self's existence so that they can use this knowledge productively in finding their way back to him. The philosopher, no less than the believer, is a *peregrinus*.[115] As in Plotinus, the path to the contemplative life appears before us: we forget what lies behind and focus our attention on what lies ahead.[116] And it is precisely here, as a Christian thinker, that Augustine envisages a rôle for biblical narrative.

Soliloquia. *De Beata Vita*. With these prefatory remarks in mind, I return to an examination of a selection of Augustine's successive statements of the *cogito*, beginning with his earliest full argument for self-existence in the *Soliloquia*,[117] to which I append remarks on a relevant section of *De Beata Vita* (2.7).

At *Soliloquia* 2.1.1, Augustine expresses a desire to know himself. As a first step in the inquiry, Reason asks him whether he knows that he exists. He initially replies in the affirmative, but when invited to explain how this knowledge has come about he cannot do so. Reason then proceeds to question him in Socratic manner concerning his knowledge of his body and mind. He replies negatively to queries about the certainty of his knowledge on such matters as his body's composition and movement. She then asks him whether he knows that he is in the process of thinking, reflecting, or meditating; in other words, whether he is conscious of his mind's activity: "*Cogitaris te scis?*" He answers that he knows this: "*Scio*." About this he has no doubt. The existence of his self or soul is thus established.

Reason asks him three further questions, which move in the direction of metaphysics. To the first, whether he loves life, he responds affirmatively. She then asks whether he will be satisfied with what he knows if he acquires certain knowledge that he is immortal. When he again replies positively, she asks whether he would be equally happy if he discovered that he would not be permitted to know anything more than he already knows. In this case his answer is no: he would be living in such a state of ignorance that he could not be considered to be

114 See Isabelle Bochet, *Saint Augustin et le désir de Dieu* (Paris, 1982), pp. 118–130.

115 *Ep*., 2.

116 *De Trin*., 9.1.1: "Perfectionem in hac uita dicit non aliud quam ea quae retro sunt obliuisci et in ea quae ante sunt extendi secundum intentionem.

117 Excepting *De Beata Vita*, 2.7, discussed below.

living at all. Reason concludes that he loves life for the sake of knowing (*scire*), not living (*vivere*). The chief source of his unhappiness is his lack of self-knowledge (as he tells his friend, Zenobius, in the preface to *De Ordine*).

How can such knowledge be acquired? Reason and Augustine agree that no one is made unhappy simply by the presence of knowledge (*scientia*) but by the accompanying understanding (*intellegentia*). Yet no one is happy unless he is alive and no one can be said to be living unless he exists. Augustine desires to exist, to be alive, and to understand (*esse*, *vivere*, *et intellegere*): to exist in order to live and to live in order to understand. This is the first of the triadic relationships that intervene in his discussion of the *cogito*, and these prepare the way for the full exploration of the subject in the context of the trinity in books eight to fifteen of *De Trinitate*.[118]

The question of the knowledge required by the soul for its correct sustenance was also taken up during the same winter of 386–387 in *De Beata Vita*, to which I briefly turn as an alternative to the statement of the *cogito* at *Soliloquia* 2.1.1.

This dialogue, which preceded the *Soliloquia* by only a short time, is the record of a conversation between Augustine and his students at the banquet for his thirty-third birthday.[119] The work begins and ends with a description of the twin forces concerning which mortals have only limited knowledge: the one, introduced in the prefatory letter, has to do with the control of our lives by nature, providence, or God; the other, which is mentioned at the work's conclusion, turns to unfathomable Christian mysteries. The certainties in the dialogue are represented by the principle of the *cogito*, which is introduced at 2.7, and the permanence of the understanding provided by prayer, which is affirmed at 4.5.[120] This roughly parallels the structure of the *Soliloquia*, in which the proof for self-existence is prefaced by a magnificent Neoplatonic prayer and followed by other devotions.

[118] There are many variants of this triadic style of thinking in Augustine's early writings; for example, at *De Libe. Arbit.*, 2.3.7, where the *cogito* is likewise invoked. There, Augustine's partner, Evodius, proposes that the trio is represented by mineral, animal, and human. On this view, a stone exists, an animal lives, and humans alone have understanding. For a discussion of the division between animal and human and its significance for the *cogito*, see E. Bermon, *Le "cogito" dans la pensée de saint Augustin*, pp. 31–47.

[119] The notion of banquet is a topos; see J. Martin, *Symposion: Die Geschichte einer literarischen Form* (Paderborn, 1931); on the social context, see Pauline Schmitt Pantel, *Le cité au banquet: Histoire du repas public dans les cités grecques* (Rome, 1992).

[120] Cf. *Sol.*, 1.1.2, which is different in function – summing up a theological position.

De Beata Vita occupies a special place among the early Augustine's statements on self-existence in clarifying the rôle of attention; the work can also be seen as an early statement of the part played by the will in sustaining an individual's sense of identity over time. These topics are introduced near the beginning of the dialogue, after the participants agree that humans are not only composed of bodies and souls but of something in addition which would "complete and perfect a person."[121] Before this knotty problem can be addressed, Augustine and Monica ask whether each of these components of the fulfilled person has its appropriate type of sustenance or nourishment. If so, the soul's "food" might consist in "the understanding and knowledge of things (2.8)."[122]

One of the students, Trygetius, doubts the usefulness of this analogy. But Monica points out that he inadvertently gave them all a lesson in what it means over breakfast. The others had nearly finished when he noticed that he had placed his food in the wrong type of bowl. Augustine may be suggesting that Trygetius's soul was being nourished by the wrong doctrine, namely Academic Scepticism (as noted in *Contra Academicos*). But the anecdote may also be his way of linking the topics of attention, will, and self-consciousness in the context of his discussion of the *cogito*.[123]

The distinction between conscious and non-conscious knowledge is made at several places in Augustine's writings. At *De Trinitate* 9.12.18 he points out that something can be knowable even if the knowledge in question is not. At *De Genesi ad Litteram* 12.2.3 he notes that the soul is awake even though we may be asleep. On such occasions we have knowledge and are not fully conscious of its presence in our minds; yet this is knowledge over which the will can exert some influence. Still another facet of his thinking about non-conscious knowledge occurs in *De Musica* book one, and in *De Magistro*, where he discusses the status of knowledge that we acquire and retain by means of practice, such as learning how to walk, run, or play an instrument. These are things that we know, but are not aware that we know, until the action in question is performed. One of the purposes of Augustine's reiterated statements of the *cogito* is to focus our attention on such inner workings of the mind: to force us to think about

[121] *De Beata Vita*, 2.7; for Augustine's mature response see *De Trin*. 9.1.1., *et seq*., discussed later in this chapter.

[122] On the extensive (if at times wearying) use of food metaphors in the dialogue, see Conybeare, *The Irrational Augustine*, pp. 69–80.

[123] Cf. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, 2nd edn (1844), trans. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp (London, 1883), p. 253, who speaks of "all willing" as it "arises from want, therefore from deficiency."

our thinking, so to speak, irrespective of the content of our thought,[124] and thereby to become aware of the rôle of attention in determining what enters our inner conversations on specific issues.

The verb that Monica uses to describe Trygetius's absentmindedness in *De Beata Vita* is *cogitare*. Like the statement of the *cogito*, her observation is intended to illustrate the temporary independence of mind from body which can be achieved by means of mental detachment and concentrated attention. In the breakfast anecdote this is partial rather than complete autonomy, since it is presumably Trygetius's body that tells him he is hungry before he decides that he needs some food.[125] Only after his moment of concentration on this need does his attention return to the subject that preoccupied him beforehand (presumably Scepticism).

The anecdote also points to another facet of the Augustinian understanding of attention. This arises from his view that our attention is never focused on the mind or the body alone, but on some combination of the two. Trygetius provides a good working example of this hypothesis. Through his awareness of his physical needs (in this case hunger) his body has acquired the temporary status of an "other" in his thoughts; that is, he can think of his body as separated from his mind and as having its own logic of necessity for sustenance and continuity. It is his awareness of this otherness which makes him conscious of the existence of an inner self, which is able through the will to determine the direction of his thinking, i.e., whether it focuses on the needs of the body or on something else. The successor to the brief conversation on the will in *De Beata Vita* is Augustine's inner debate at *Confessions* 7.3.5 on the "two wills," namely that of the body, following habit, and that of the mind, following reason.[126]

Monica anticipates an aspect of Augustine's statement on this topic in the *Confessions* by observing that the mind or soul is nourished by its own theories or deliberations whenever it perceives, understands, or knows anything (2.8). She thus hints at the notion of inner teaching, but we do not learn precisely what she has in mind in the phrase *theoriae et cogitationes*. To judge by her comments elsewhere, this would be direct intuition, based on faith, rather than knowledge acquired by arguments. For

[124] Other statements on this theme include *De Gen. Ad Litt.*, 12.12.26, where ecstasy is defined as a total withdrawal of attention from the bodily senses, and 12.20.40, where Augustine refers to the cognitive pathway for attention which, proceeding from the brain, regulates the experience of sensations, permitting or denying access to cognition.

[125] Cf. *C. Acad.*, 2.4.10, where Alypius notes that the hungrier his father was, the more preoccupied he was with cares.

[126] Both discussions may be indebted to Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, 2.20.21, where the problem of the two wills is linked to self-mastery.

his part, Augustine proposes two solutions to the problem of the soul's alimentation in other writings completed around this time. In *De Ordine* he argues that the source of such knowledge is the liberal arts, which permit the mind to rise as far as reason can proceed,[127] whereas in book six of *De Musica* (6.1.1), anticipating *De Doctrina Christiana*, he suggests that the liberal arts work most effectively within a hermeneutic framework in which reason interacts with authority. At *De Beata Vita* 2.7–8 he may not yet have in mind these larger interpretive issues but rather the educational levels of his pupils, which permit *doctissimi* to be sustained more easily than *imperiti*,[128] making the latter less inclined toward the vices resulting from the soul's sterility or apparent hunger (*quaedam sterilitas et quasi fames animorum*, 2.8). The labored food metaphors in these paragraphs have their purpose in his design. Just as the *cogito* demonstrates the potential separation of mind and body, the "banquet" draws attention to the respective rôles of each in the pursuit of the blessed or happy life (2.9; 2.14; 3.17).

The larger context of these observations is the distinction between the happy and the happiest life, the rudiments of which Augustine may have acquired along with his knowledge of the liberal arts from his reading of Varro.[129] He retains a distant echo of the Stoic position, possibly inspired by Cicero, in which living a happy life means living in accord with nature and living in such a way that the only true good is recognized to be virtue;[130] he is still debating this idea in book ten of *De Trinitate*. Also, at this point in time, he seems to agree with the Peripatetic notion that happiness requires the satisfaction of the needs of both body and soul, although his conception of a duality of will, later developed in the *Confessions*, is unique to his position.

Despite the complexity and interest of these possibilities, we reach midpoint in the dialogue without a clear idea of where Augustine's discussion is heading. Why does he provide us with such an eclectic mixture

[127] On this theme see Ilsetraut Hadot, *Arts libéraux et philosophie dans la pensée antique*, 101–102; 115–130.

[128] Cf. *De Mus.*, pref., where five types of potential readers are described: two types of *eruditi*, (1) spiritual persons and (2) educated laypersons susceptible to emotional appeals; cf. *Sol.*, 2.7.13–14; and two types of *ineruditi*, (1) those unable to appreciate the complexities of *De Mus.*, 6 and (2) those who understand its subtleties by means of faith but find such refinements unnecessary (such as Monica). The single designated reader is a person like Augustine, who is torn between the pleasure of the text and the desire to free himself from all sensory entanglements in order to reach "a place of blessed security."

[129] *De Civ. Dei*, 19.3; on Varro, *ibid.*, 6.4.

[130] *Ibid.*, 5.20; cf. Cicero, *De Fin.*, 5.26–27. At *De Gen. Ad Litt.*, 12.31.59 Augustine distinguishes between permanent and impermanent virtues.

of views, and why, in the end, do they all seem unsatisfactory to him, as leader of the debate? The answer, I believe, lies outside *De Beata Vita* itself and concerns the critique of the rational dialogue which is developed in detail elsewhere. The discussion following 2.7–8 is just another example of the circularity of open debate that is amply criticized by Reason in the *Soliloquia*.[131] One might argue, therefore, that *De Beata Vita* is unsuccessful from a logical position because that is what Augustine wants the work to be. The most convincing part of the dialogue from a philosophical standpoint is found in the brief statement of the *cogito* at 2.7. A second element exists in what is suggested between the lines concerning the will, which, as noted, is expanded in the *Confessions* as well as at *De Trinitate* 13.7.10 and *De Civitate Dei* 14.25. However, the dialogue ends without clear advice for Augustine's students on how to choose between philosophy and Christianity. Also, while Augustine advocates the search for the happy life through the philosophical virtues of *temperatio* and *animi moderatio*,[132] the practice of these virtues, as he emphasizes, offers no guarantee that his students will attain true or lasting happiness, i.e., *beata vita*. All that his junior colleagues can do is to prepare themselves for this possibility by achieving internal stability, thus freeing themselves through the operation of the will from the vicissitudes of fortune.[133] The ultimate source of their happiness is unknowable: this is God, *aeternus et semper manens*.[134]

In the background of these final statements lies a long-standing debate on the relation of virtue to wisdom in Middle Platonism, a part of which Augustine acquired through Cicero,[135] whose tutor and friend, Antiochus, had recommended a mixture of theoretical and practical activity of the type outlined in *De Ordine*[136] and suggested between the lines in *De Beata Vita*. Augustine also suggests a contrast between a psychological construction of the virtuous life, independent of any metaphysical considerations,

[131] Augustine distinguishes between genuine philosophers and mere wranglers; the latter maintain that persons are happy who live as they wish, while true thinkers know the difference between wanting something inappropriate and failing to attain what is desirable; cf. *Hort.*, ed. Grilli, fr. 39; *De Trin.*, 13.5.8.

[132] Cf. *De Mor. Eccl. Cath.*, 1.15.25, where similarly the practice of virtue leads to the blessed life; cf. 1.19.35. At *De Civ. Dei*, 19.1, Augustine adds nuance to the discussion of virtue by arguing that there are four things desired by everyone, namely pleasure, repose, a combination of the two, and the primary blessings of nature. These are either desired for their own sake or for the sake of virtue. The problem is resolved at *De Civ. Dei* 19.3–4 after a discussion of the relationship of the practice of social virtues to the achievement of the final good.

[133] *De Beata Vita*, 2.11; cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 1.9.

[134] Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 19.25.

[135] Cf. *Hort.*, ed. Grilli, fr. 95–105.

[136] *De Civ. Dei*, 19.3.

and a historicist view, emphasized in the final chapter, in which mortals' efforts at leading a good life form part of a scheme over which they have no influence; and this, as I have already suggested, has a long life in his mature writings on the self. However, the quality of this thinking is not reflected in *De Beata Vita*, which concludes without clarifying the way in which the pursuit of virtuous activities can be reconciled with metaphysics. Augustine's final position in the dialogue appears to be a Christian extension of the Platonic view that happiness means "likeness to God":[137] he leaves unresolved the question of how man is to love God and at the same time enjoy the happy life or how the believer may enjoy something that he does not know.[138]

De Vera Religione. I have dwelt at length on these issues in *De Beata Vita* because in this dialogue Augustine introduces two themes in connection with the *cogito* which play a large rôle in later writings on the subject. These are the contrast between the temporal and the non-temporal and the appropriateness of biblical history as a background for understanding self-existence.

These problems are addressed at greater length in *De Vera Religione*, which represents a significant change of direction in Augustine's thinking, inasmuch as the demonstration of the self's existence is placed in a framework in which philosophy remains in the background and the major scenery consists in texts from the Old and New Testament. Indeed, as early as 388, when *De Libero Arbitrio* was in progress, Evodius, Augustine's interlocutor in that dialogue, appears to have taken the *cogito* for granted, as noted;[139] and by 390, the probable date of *De Vera Religione*, the demonstration of the self's existence is summarized without direct reference to earlier debates on Academic Scepticism, which form its original context at Cassiciacum. The *cogito* appears late in the work (39.73) within a lengthy soliloquy involving Mind, and, far from underpinning the work's argument, as is the case in the *Soliloquia*, it is introduced as an additional point in a discussion that has moved forward by means of exegetical rather than philosophical arguments.

[137] *Theaetetus*, 176b; cf. John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, (London, 1977), p. 44.

[138] Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 14.25 (following the quotation of Terence): "Beata quippe uita si non amatur, non habetur," etc.

[139] *De Lib. Arbit.*, 2.3.7: [Aug.]: Quare prius abs te quaero, ut de manifestissimis capiamus exordium, utrum tu ipse sis. An fortasse tu metuis ne in hac interrogatione fallaris?" Evodius, unimpressed, asks to move on to the next question; cf. 1.7.16.

De Vera Religione is written in the form of a letter to Augustine's friend and patron, Romanianus, and is itself a lengthy soliloquy. The genre of the soliloquy is chiefly employed as a method for dramatizing the comparison of pagan and Christian writings by means of fictive spokesmen for their respective positions. The stated purpose is to win Romanianus back to Christianity from the Manichaeism that has resulted from Augustine's own pernicious influence. At the same time Augustine is engaged in an ongoing conversation with himself over what he can salvage for his renewed Catholicism from the Platonic writings to which by now he has had abundant access, albeit through translations. He has promised his friend and patron a statement on such topics,[140] but only finds time to write after the death of Monica, his sojourn in Rome, and his return to Thagaste in 388. He completes the task one year before entering the priesthood.[141]

The presentation of Augustine's position is constructed rhetorically around a set of revisited notions – mind vs. sense, light vs. darkness, and spiritual vs. carnal. What is new is the appearance of terms concerned with spiritual improvement, namely *disciplina naturalis* and *disciplina rationalis*. These introduce into Augustine's writings about the self the conception of the grounded, historically evolving individual, who, conscious of inherited sin and its ever-present potential for harm, nonetheless strives to withdraw from the enticements of time, place, and material things in order to pursue a higher ascetic goal. (This thinking is in turn the preface to Augustine's conception of "the two cities," a theme which also makes an initial appearance in the work.) In *De Vera Religione*, therefore, Augustine is still searching for wisdom and the happy life,[142] as at Cassiciacum, but the quest is now envisaged in Judeo-Christian terms. The views of Plato are presented as a stage in the evolution of his own thinking, just as the Socratic dialogue is redeployed in the pursuit of the wisdom that is found in authoritative moral stories from the past. This is the beginning of an important shift in Augustine's outlook: it is a move away from philosophy, albeit informed by historical considerations,

[140] *De Vera Rel.*, 7.12; cf. *C. Acad.*, 1.4. The letter, Ciceronian in style, was intended to act as a protreptic, convincing his former patron, as the *Hortensius* had convinced him, to convert to philosophy: in his case, from worldly ambitions to the quest for God; in his friend's, from Manichaeism to Catholicism.

[141] Romanianus was not the only recipient; others are mentioned at *De Vera Rel.*, 55.107: "homines carissimi et proximi mei." But we are not told who they are.

[142] *De Vera Rel.*, 1.1: "omnis uitae bonae ac beatae uia." Writing to Nectarius in 409, Augustine makes clear that both the singular and plural of "way" in the Bible refer to a single pathway to truth by way of Christ; *Ep.*, 104.5, citing Ps. 24:10.

toward an interest in a lived narrative which fulfils philosophical criteria by historical means.

The discussion of these themes begins at *De Vera Religione* 2.2ff., where Augustine champions the view, doubtless derived from Cicero,[143] that Greek religious beliefs, originally associated with rites and mysteries, gradually yielded to rational accounts based on natural philosophy. A fundamental rôle in this transition was played by Socrates, whom Augustine pictures as weaning his countrymen away from devotion to inanimate objects. Augustine thus adheres to the Stoic view which associates Socrates' interest in ethics with his repudiation of such inquiries into nature.[144]

However, in Augustine's interpretation, the development of ethical rationalism created a dilemma in its wake. There were many schools of thought, but philosophers all frequented the same temples.[145] Although united in forms of worship, they were divided in their teachings.[146] As a consequence, there were no generally agreed moral guidelines for society.[147] Augustine does not question the positive achievements of this change in perspective, in which philosophy was employed successfully in religious matters, and religious thinking more than occasionally benefited from exposure to logical discipline.[148] He is convinced that philosophy was superior to popular religion as a guide for public morality[149] and that its triumph left many positive legacies, for instance the theory of illumination shared by Neoplatonism and Christianity.[150] Nonetheless, in his opinion thinkers before Plotinus were held back by a fundamental error: they did not understand the non-sensory nature of God in Judeo-Christian monotheism.[151] This meant that they did not accept the principle of an insurmountable gap between God and man.

These views are presented in a fictive dialogue with Plato,[152] in fact a soliloquy, which is followed by a mixture of Platonic and Neoplatonic

[143] Respectively *Tusc. Disp.*, 1.13.30, 1.16.36, and 1.13.29.

[144] Cf. Cicero, *Acad.*, 1.4.15, the probable source; expanded at *De Civ. Dei*, 8.3; cf. on the background, A. A. Long, "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy," 151.

[145] *De Vera Rel.*, 1.1: "eorum sapientes, quos philosophos uocant, scholas habebant dissentientes et templa communia." Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 3.3.

[146] *De Vera Rel.*, 1.1: "apparet aliud eos in religione suscepisse cum populo et aliud eodem ipso populo audiente defendisse priuatim."

[147] *Ibid.*, 5.8.

[148] *Ibid.*, 7.12: "in sacris philosophantur …, in philosophia consecrantur."

[149] *De Civ. Dei*, 2.7.

[150] *Ibid.*, 10.2, referring to Plotinus.

[151] Cf. *ibid.*, 7.5, where Varro's explanation of physical images of the gods is criticized on comparable grounds, and image-worship itself condemned.

[152] This is in fact a type of soliloquy; cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 8.5; cf. 2.13, where the fictive participant is Scipio Africanus.

teachings.[153] The discussion is pervaded by Augustine's frequently expressed view that truth can only be recognized by the mind and that man's spiritual progress is frequently impeded by habitual submission to inordinate desire (*libido*) and misleading impressions (*falsae imagines*).[154] These views, put into the mouth of Plato, combine Plato's well-known dislike of the teaching of ethics through poetry with Augustine's own arguments against the reliability of mental images (possibly based on a combination of Sceptical and Stoic sources), which are outlined in the *Soliloquia*. Philosophy is conceived as a set of doctrines and as a type of therapy, inasmuch as a mind or soul that has been contaminated by sensory misrepresentations has to be restored to health before it can experience the necessary clarity of vision for spiritual advancements.[155]

Augustine concludes his account by shifting his ground from an emphasis on the content of teachings to the nature of the teacher. He asks his configured Plato this question: if his doctrines were believed, even if not understood, or alternately if they were understood and made the basis of religious practices, could one consider the individual who was capable of persuading others concerning the truth of these views to be an ideal spiritual guide, possibly even divine? The person who fulfils these criteria can be described as a Platonized Christ; that is, as a teacher who recognizes Plato's distinction between appearance and reality and yet acknowledges the Christian God's promise for historical redemption. Implicitly rejecting Manichaean views, Augustine thus offers Romanianus a *uitae modus* in accord with Old and New Testament norms in which sacred history replaces pagan philosophy as the chief ethical guide and instrument of purification.[156]

[153] A similar method is utilized at *Conf.*, 11.3.5, where the other party is Moses. The following two paragraphs summarize *De Vera Rel.*, 3.3. Augustine notes that his question could equally have been asked by a *discipulus eo ipso tempore*, although this would presumably be someone who had also read Plotinus and/or Porphyry; on the interpretation of the passage in the context of Augustine's other statements on Platonism, see Goulven Madec, *Saint Augustin et la philosophie. Notes critiques* (Paris, 1996), pp. 21–23.

[154] The discussion of *libido* is extended in *De Lib. Arbit.*, 1; see ch. 3.

[155] Cf. *De Beata Vita*, 2.11, where this permanence is attributed first to the virtues then to God; and *De Civ. Dei*, 8.3, where Socrates is pictured as abandoning natural philosophy in search for "quod esset beatae uitae necessarium."

[156] Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 8.3, where Socrates is described as experiencing a two-stage elevation that recalls Augustine's own failed experiment in Neoplatonic ascent in *Conf.*, 7: he first cleanses himself through the adoption of high moral standards in order to free his soul from the weight of material and emotional attractions; then allows his soul to rise by means of its own power and intelligence toward the incomparable light in which universal causality resides. The "shrewd urbanity" with which he subsequently cross-examines his pupils is the model for Augustine's repartees in the Cassiciacum dialogues. Note, as well, that this doxography views Socrates' scepticism as a consequence of his monotheistic faith – another anticipation of the early Augustine.

This is a personal interpretation of the history of ancient beliefs[157] in which Christ unites philosophy and religion in the *disciplina morum*, the teaching of morals. As Augustine sees matters, this *disciplina* is either *naturalis* or *rationalis* (16.32; 17.33). By "natural discipline" he means the consequences of the fall of man and the promise of redemption. This discipline is suitable for the less intelligent, for whom it is a doctrinal guide, as well as for the more gifted, for whom it provides an accurate outline of Christian theology.[158] And it proceeds along narrative lines, inasmuch as the individual consciously participates in the extension of the story.

By contrast, "rational discipline" operates through what is said, done, or conveyed in mysteries: *in dictis, in factis, in sacramentis*. The purpose of this type of teaching is the comprehensive instruction and exercise of the soul (*ad omnem animae instructionem exercitationemque*). Augustine places a great many things in this category: methods of exegesis and interpretation (17.33–36); the problem of evil and the sources of true happiness, as a consequence of free will (20.38–23.44); the rôle of authority in a person's life history, as it passes through its seven ages, (24.45–28.51); and the function of reason as a guide in ascending from the visible to the invisible (29.52 ff.). The range of topics covered in the earlier dialogues, now detached from abstract debates, is thus made part of a program of self-reform. Needless to say, these principles are the intellectual by-products of the reading of biblical narratives, in the *disciplina naturalis*.

The notion of a mental or spiritual exercise is an integral part of the *disciplina rationalis*. This aspect of the exposition is triadic or trinitarian in shape, recovering and transforming arguments from the *Soliloquia* and *De Libero Arbitrio* concerning the difference between existence, life, and understanding, which, as noted are the correlative of the *cogito*. Romanianus is advised not to observe the marvels and beauties of nature purposelessly and uselessly; rather than treating them with vain and transient curiosity (*vana et peritura curiositas*), he should make the experience of these phenomena, even as they enter and depart from the

[157] Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 8.2, where Augustine charts the beginnings of the "Italian" school of Magna Graecia, descending through the wise men (*sapientes*) to Pythagoras, who gave the name "philosophy" to the subject; then to Thales, Anaximander, Anaximines, Anaxagoras, and Archelaus (teacher of Socrates), who redirected the study of philosophy from natural phenomena toward ethics (*ad corrigendos componendosque mores*) and discovered that the universe was brought into being uniquely through the will of God (*in unius ac summi Dei uoluntate*, 8.3). It was Plato who united the speculative interests of Pythagoras with the ethical inquires of Socrates, thereby producing a theoretical and practical philosophy divided into moral, natural, and rational questions; 8.4.

[158] *De Vera Rel.*, 16.32; cf. *De Mus.*, 6.1.1.

field of his senses, a step toward his appreciation of immortal and everlasting things: *gradus ad immortalia et semper manentia*, 29.52. He will thus proceed from *naturalis* to *rationalis uita*: the one sustains the body, while exceling it, while the other, being autonomous, is unexceled by anything else in nature.[159]

Within the *rationalis uita* the type of mental progress that is advocated is a disciplined and ascetic contemplative practice which has the *cogito* as its distant foundation: a source of unity of action which, like the proof of the self's existence, is something certain and straightforward.[160] This program of upward ascent involves the body in accord with Augustine's increasing interest in the incarnation. Finally, Romanianus is asked to perform an exercise himself: to seek this unity through simplicity of heart (*in simplicitate cordis*), which is achieved by focusing attention, obeying the discipline of silence, and following the path of introspection.[161] The resulting state of mind is described as the leisure of thought, *otium cogitationis*: a type of reflection that frees the subject's mind from the constraints of space and time[162] so that he can focus on the essential harmony of things.

This statement subtly alters the conditions in which the *cogito* originally appeared in the dialogues, suggesting a balance between ascetic discipline and logical deduction. Also, the view is presented by means of a soliloquy involving Mind that differs in an important respect from the internal dialogue in the *Soliloquia*. Augustine does not assume that he is speaking inside his mind but that he is speaking to a source of understanding that is capable of observing his mind from the outside (as later, Anselm, in the *Monologion* and *Proslogion*). Also, as in earlier soliloquies, in which the focusing of attention and the attainment of a state of tranquility are the first two stages of a meditative prayer, here these are followed by a third stage, namely the attainment of an altered state of consciousness, which

159 *De Vera Rel.*, 29.52: "Naturalis uita … quae profecto quoniam uitam dat corpori, praestantior eo sit necesse sit"; cf. 30.54; see Nello Cipriani, "La schema dei *tria vitia* (*voluptas, superbia, curiositas*) nel *De vera religione*: Antropologia sogiacente e fonti," *AUG* 38 (1998), 158–161. The manner in which rational judgements are made is subsequently the subject of a lengthy exposition (30.54–33.62), after which Augustine returns to the theme of ascent (34.65), inviting his former patron to abandon material things and corporeal habits in an effort to win mastery over himself.

160 *De Vera Rel.*, 35.65: "Vnum certe quaerimus, quo simplicius nihil est."

161 His statement is supported by a quotation from Ps. 46.10 (in the Itala) which recommends the believer enjoy a period of leisure in which he can become acquainted with God: "Agite otium … et agnoscetis, quia ego sum dominus." Cf. Vulgate, Ps. 45:10.

162 *De Vera Rel.*, 35.65: "Non otium desidiae, sed otium cogitationis, ut a locis ac temporibus uacetis."

intervenes in *De Vera Religione* after a lengthy discussion of falsehood as a type of temptation for the soul (29.72 ff.). This part of the discussion is inspired by the opening chapters of Genesis, which, by 390, may be said to lie in the background of Augustine's various accounts of the loss and recovery of formal truth. In sum, in *De Vera Religione*, meditative presence is complemented by a concern with eschatology, while the rôle of reason is largely taken over by that of authority.

If Augustine's optimism about philosophy has waned, therefore, his interest in narrative has considerably increased. The process of recovery begins with his praise for the wisdom of God, through whom, he proposes, this supreme artist "wove together his handiwork in an orderly fashion, just as a poet creates a unified composition by means of metre."[163] When we desire earthly things, we are likewise looking for harmony, symmetry, or suitableness (*convenientia*), since it is the opposite (*resistentia*) that produces unhappiness.[164] In search of this harmony, Romanianus is advised to abandon the negative picture of creation in Manichaeism and discover the principles of divinely inspired order in himself: *Noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi. In interiore homine habitat ueritas* (39.72). From a historical viewpoint, moving outside time means moving to the end of time; from a psychological viewpoint, it means bracketing time: focusing one's attention on the non-temporal and realizing the presence of the timeless divine mind. Augustine tells his friend: *transcende et te ipsum*. But he no longer believes that a higher harmony, God's *summa convenientia*, is possible for humans, even if, like Romanianus, they possess superior gifts.[165] All his companion can do is to seek this harmony in his mind's disposition (*mentis affectu*), attempting, as Paul might say, to bring the interior man into harmony with the man in whom he dwells.[166]

During this phase of Augustine's conception of *rationalis disciplina* there is a restatement of the *cogito*,[167] in which allegorized Mind is pictured as asking itself what are the sources of doubt and certainty. However, on this occasion Augustine is not only concerned with the existence of the self but also with the presence of Christ,[168] who, teaching from within, supplements philosophical illumination with divinely inspired inward vision.[169]

[163] Cf. *Ibid*., 22.42, where Augustine rehearses his explanation of the temporal and the eternal by means of the example of a line of quantitative verse; see ch. 4.

[164] Cf. *De Mus*. 6.90.15–6.92.20; 6.114.1–6.116.4.

[165] *De Vera Rel*., 22.42.

[166] *Ibid*.: "ut ipse interior homo cum suo inhabitatore … conueniat."

[167] *Ibid*., 39.73.

[168] *Ibid*., quoting Jn. 1:9; cf. *Conf*., 7.9.13.

[169] Augustine reaches the same conclusion, minus metacognition, in *De Mus*., 6.14.45.

Augustine's reflections on this theme recall the initial dialogue in *De Vera Religione*, in which the configured Plato observed that a person capable of teaching about transcendence would himself have benefited from instruction from within. It is in this context that Augustine advises Romanianus to think of this rule (*regula*) for establishing rational discipline by analogy with the argument for the *cogito*. His statement on this type of instruction also looks back to another feature of the inner dialogue in the *Soliloquia*, on which it appears to provide a gloss. There Reason asked Augustine how an insight could be preserved, if it were somehow discovered (*invenisse*); here he observes that reason does not "create" arguments like that which defends the existence of the self but rather "discovers" them within the mind (*sed inuenit*). These truths are eternally present, waiting to be revealed within ourselves. When we find them, we are reawakened and renewed.[170] In *De Vera Religione*, the *cogito* thus reemerges in the company of the topics of remote knowledge, fundamental principles, and the implanted image of God in man.

De Civitate Dei. Augustine completed the program announced in *De Vera Religione* in *De Civitate Dei* and *De Trinitate*; the latter may even have been in progress during the period in which the letter to Romanianus was written.[171] In these works he further elaborated the design for integrating the *cogito* into his narrative theology. In parallel with this development he also elaborated a "historical" notion of the self, as contrasted with the psychological or philosophical conceptions implied in a non-historical consideration of the *cogito*. Before proceeding to this stage of Augustine's thinking, I would like to attempt to clarify this distinction.

To reiterate what was said earlier: In psychological perspective Augustine is concerned with timeless aspects of selfhood which are directly apprehensible in consciousness (i.e., "I doubt, therefore I exist"). In historical perspective he is concerned with time-bound aspects of selfhood which involve history, culture, and society (e.g., "I am the product of creation and the fall"). In his understanding of the self, these views are complementary and it is from their combination that he arrives at a synthetic conception of the self, which is unique in ancient thinking on the subject inasmuch as it takes into consideration simultaneously both "non-developmental" and "developmental" factors.

170 *De Vera Rel.*, 39.73: "Non enim ratiocinatio talia facit, sed inuenit. Ergo antequam inueniantur, in se manent, et cum inueniuntur, nos innouant."

171 In *Ep.* 169, Augustine says that books 1–11 of *De Trin.* were missing by 415; therefore, a new version had to be written. Independent evidence suggests that he was at work on book 11 of *De Civ. Dei* by 417.

What is meant by these terms? Within the writings that have so far been examined, the non-developmental components include the *cogito*, the principle by which self-existence is affirmed from within the mind, as well as a number of psychological relationships dealing with triadic divisions within the soul (e.g., memory, will, and understanding). The developmental factors are represented by hierarchical schemes for the soul's ascent from the sensory to the rational (for example, *De Ordine* 2.12.35 ff., which will be discussed in Chapter 3), as well as the social, cultural, or historical factors that contribute to the making of the self,[172] which come into play chiefly after the writing of the *Confessions*.

It is the developmental scheme which is outlined in Augustine's biblical commentaries and synthesized in *De Civitate Dei*, where the notion of the self is dealt with in the light of the lessons of Roman history, the comparative evolution of philosophical schools, and the eventual triumph of Christianity, as the one true religion.

Here it is chiefly historical forces that are at work. In the *Confessions* they act behind the scenes, as Augustine gradually comes to realize the influence of grace and predestination in his personal life, whereas in *De Civitate Dei* they are configured more openly, as movements within history itself. The summary of his position which is incorporated into book eleven of *De Civitate Dei*, to which I now turn, is that history changes the world and that our awareness of history's meaning changes us. The link between the psychological and historical depends on memory, as shown in books ten and eleven of the *Confessions*, where our recollections create the conditions of permanence within the act of contemplation, just as time is momentarily suspended by meditative thought in the reading of sacred text.

Personal and historical memories thus become Augustine's chief rationale for the doctrine of transcendence as it pertains to his thinking about the self. This doctrine is represented in the *Confessions* by means of his passage through the stages of infancy, youth, and adulthood. As he moves through each period of life, he becomes aware that his *body* has changed into a form that has permanently left behind what existed before, but that his *mind* has retained the knowledge of that previous state of existence, thus reflecting the soul's power to condition the present through the past and to recreate a sense of transcendence through recollection. In books one to ten of *De Civitate Dei*, a similar perspective creates what Vico will

[172] Cf. *De Quant. An.*, 33.70–76, where Augustine touches on the same theme in describing the stages of the soul's growth.

later configure as historical consciousness. As one age succeeds another, irrecoverable changes take place in society, and these correspond to the changes undergone by the body in growing up. As the individual, studying historical developments, reflects on those changes, he is made conscious of the rôle of the past in shaping his attitude toward the present, and the permanence of change itself as the principal motor of development in the fallen, post-Edenic world. The individual therefore recapitulates in his contemplation of social mutations the same elements that are found in his meditations on personal change, namely permanence and transcendence. Recall that for Augustine, "the two cities," earthly and heavenly, are inextricably bound together and intermingled throughout history: [*duae ciuitates*] … *quas in hoc interim saeculo* … *perplexas* … *inuicemque permixtas*.[173]

Book eleven of *De Civitate Dei* provides an inventory of Augustine's reasons for simultaneously maintaining "non-developmental" and "developmental" perspectives on the self. The discussion is framed by two examples of permanence. These occur in chapters 1 and 26 and are represented respectively by scripture and the *cogito*. The remainder of the book is taken up with contrasts between permanence and impermanence, and with examples of mediation between them.

I summarize these briefly, then add comment. Augustine argues that humans need speech for communication, whereas God speaks directly to our hearts and minds, that is, to our higher nature, which is made in his image (11.2). Christ spoke impermanent words but communicated the permanence of scripture: we trust those words, just as we trust many things to have taken place through the report of witnesses, especially concerning invisible things, which are out of the reach of our experience (11.3). Similarly the existence of the world is something we observe, while the existence of God, who created the world, is a matter for belief (11.4). He is the source of both creation and time (11.6): the one sole good, simple and unchanging, through whom all good things were created, although these are subject to change and increasing complexity (11.10). This diversity can be judged according to its utility or nature, that is, by its genuine importance or by its response to merely perceived needs (11.16). Also, it is through the opposition of the principles of permanence and changefulness that the beauty of the universe is expressed: these enhance God's handiwork, just as rhetorical antitheses ornament discourse (11.17). As a consequence, speech and silence, visible and invisible, simplicity and complexity, light

[173] *Ibid.*, 11.1.

and darkness, temporal and eternal, even evil and good – all are aspects of divine creativity.

Augustine's treatment of the self follows from these criteria. If there are permanent elements, illustrated by the *cogito*, our knowledge of disciplines, or our innate understanding of concepts like wisdom, virtue, and happiness, there are impermanent elements, far more numerous, which are illustrated by everything that we do not know with certainty that pertains to our lives. Mediation between permanence and impermanence takes place through an overlapping group of triads. Philosophy, following Varro, is divided into three parts, namely physics, logic, and ethics, in which, respectively, we seek nature, knowledge, and the principle of life, just as in considering the value of an artist, we distinguish between his ability, training, and application (11.25). In a comparable manner the image of God in man is represented by the trinity, although in this instance the image is inadequate and distanced, far from representing its authentic substance. This image is perceived imperfectly, in contrast to such notions as memory, will, and understanding; as a consequence it needs to be perfected through refashioning (*reformatione perficiendam*). The proof of this imagistic resemblance, as well as a subsidiary indication of the imprecision of our understanding of it, arises from still another triadic conception reiterated from earlier works, namely that we exist, we know we exist, and we are happy in both this existence and its knowledge. We have no doubt of these things, since they do not depend on the senses or memory, by whose images we could easily be deceived. And even if he could be mistaken in this belief, Augustine recalls, he would have proven by that error that he exists. "*Si fallor*, *sum*."

De Trinitate. As a conclusion to Chapter 2, I turn briefly to books eight to fifteen of *De Trinitate*, which contains the most extensive discussion of the *cogito* in Augustine's writings.[174]

In these books Augustine completes his analysis of the *cogito* within the narrative, historical, and linguistic setting in which it appears in *De Civitate Dei* 11.26 and earlier statements on the theme. He asks how humans, in their reflections on theological questions, can possibly approach a subject like the trinity, whose divine significance clearly lies beyond their intellectual capacities. His answer is that they can come to an approximate understanding of what is involved if they work outwards from what they know, namely the triadic relations that characterize human cognition. The later books of *De Trinitate* represent his lengthiest

[174] Cf. E. Bermon, *Le "cogito" dans la pensée de saint Augustin*, p. 77.

and most persistent attempt to come to grips with such tripartite schemes as they are expressed in the minds of mortals and to differentiate them from the holy Trinity. He presents the problem *in nuce* at *Confessions* 13.11.12, when he asks:

Who can understand the omnipotent Trinity? Yet everyone speaks about the subject, if indeed it can be the matter of discourse. It is a rare soul who knows what he is talking about when he is speaking of it. People debate and quarrel, and without peace no one sees that vision. I wish that people who reflect on such triads would do so within their own selves (*Vellem, ut haec tria cogitarent homines in se ipsis*). These three aspects of the self are very different from the Trinity, but I may make the observation that on this triad they could well exercise their minds, test their ideas, and examine the problem, thereby becoming aware how far distant they are from it. The three aspects I mean are being, knowing, willing. For I am and I know and I will. I exist, knowing and willing and I know that I exist and that I will and that I exist willing and knowing (*Dico autem haec tria: esse, nosse, uelle. Sum enim et scio et uolo; sum sciens et uolens et scio esse me et uelle et uolo esse et scire*).[175]

In the context of the comments on the soliloquy earlier in this chapter, three features of this statement are worth noting: first, the indirect but unmistakeable criticism of the outer dialogue in the phrase *ubi se exerceant et probent et sentiant*; second, in the sentence that follows Augustine's insistence on grounding the psychological relationship *esse, nosse, uelle* within the self, i.e., as he says, *in se ipsis*. His emphasis is placed on attention and introspection, which are the two preconditions mentioned elsewhere for productive inner dialogue:

In these three [*esse, nosse, uelle*], therefore, let him who is capable of so doing contemplate how inseparable in life they are: one life, one mind, and one essence; yet ultimately there is a distinction, for they are inseparable, yet distinct. This fact is certain to anyone by introspection. Let him consider himself and reflect and tell me what is there.[176]

The third feature of this statement that is noteworthy is the fact that the difference between human cognitive triads and the divine trinity is a reflection of the divide between time and eternity. *Esse*, *nosse*, and *uelle*, as understood in this passage, refer to the life of the self as it is experienced over time. It is their imprisonment in the temporal mode which in the end makes them unlike the triadic relationship between father, son, and holy spirit.

[175] *Conf.*, 13.11.12, trans. H. Chadwick, modified.

[176] *Ibid.*, trans. Chadwick: "In his igitur tribus quam sit inseparabilis uita et una uita et una mens et una essentia, quam denique inseparabilis distinctio et tamen distinctio, uideat qui potest. Certe coram se est; attendat in se et uideat et dicat mihi."

This temporal cognitive awareness is frequently referred to by the term *cognitio* in Augustine's writings. In the later books of *De Trinitate*, *cognitio* refers to the reflecting subject's ability to acquire knowledge about himself as well as to the interior examination by which this knowledge is obtained and to the conceptualized formulation of the knowledge acquired when the process of inquiry has finished. As it takes place in time, this *cognitio* has a historical as well as a pyschological dimension, the latter having to do with the subject's awareness of the self's passage through time, its historical genesis and development, which Augustine calls *cognitio historica*.[177] It is in the context of such a "historical cognition," which might also be called *cognitio narrativa*, that Augustine's references to the *cogito* are best viewed in *De Trinitate*, rather than as a return to the analytical and more overtly psychological framework in which the *cogito* appears in the *Soliloquia*, in which theological questions are given less attention than the philosophical refutation of Scepticism. In this sense one can think of *De Trinitate* as the culmination of the progressive deepening of the historical landscape of the *cogito* as it takes place between *De Vera Religione* and *De Civitate Dei* 11.26. It is even possible to look on books one to seven of *De Trinitate* as a complement to books one to ten of *De Civitate Dei*, since these segments of both works attempt to contextualize theological questions within the historical evidence provided by the Bible.

A useful introduction to the historical aspects of Augustine's thinking on self-existence has been provided by Basil Studer, who notes that in considering the theme of *cognitio historica* in his later writings

> it may help us first to look at the use of the word *historia* [which has] a two-fold meaning … The first meaning is investigation or research, the second one is narration. Hence, in terms of research, *historia* takes in both the past and the present, and is based upon the experience both of the person conducting the investigation and on the testimonies of other people.[178] Yet, looking at its other context or signification, the word *historia* does not denote a succession of events, but rather the narration or exposition of either present or past persons or events. This *narratio rerum*, which permits us to enter into contact with the past or present as far as it concerns what is remote from us, is communicated by words, especially by written words.[179]

[177] On Augustine's sense of *cognitio* and, within this concept, *cognitio historica*, see Gerard Watson, "Cognitio," *AL*, vol. 1, pp. 1051–1064.

[178] *De Trin*., 4.16.21: "sed per locorum ac temporum historiam quaesierunt, et ab aliis experta atque conscripta crediderunt."

[179] *Ibid*., 4.17.22, 14.8.11, and for a more extensive discussion of the rôle of the written word, see Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, pp. 23–33, 126–206. The apposite quotation is from Basil Studer, "History and Faith in Augustine's *De Trinitate*," *Augustinian Studies* 28.1 (1997), 14–15.

The value of these observations becomes evident if we turn from book eight of *De Trinitate*, which deals with potential problems arising from misinterpreting historical statements in the Bible, to books nine and ten, which take up the sort of knowledge that results from the psychological dimension of trinitarian thinking. At the beginning of book eight Augustine pictures the human soul as being able to will itself upwards towards God and the good (8.3.5); however, he cautions his readers that

> care must … be taken lest the mind, in believing what it does not see, picture it to itself as something which it is not, and so hope and love that which is false … For, when we believe in any corporeal things, of which we have heard or read but have not seen, our mind must represent them to itself as something with bodily features and forms, just as it occurs in our thoughts (8.4.6–7; cf., 7.6.12).

He then passes in review a number of instances of potentially misleading images of this type, for example, the picture we may have of Paul after reading his works (8.6.7; 8.6.9); the impression we have of Christ's countenance based on his statements (8.6.7); the notion of narrative influenced by witnesses of the resurrection (8.5.7); and the mental configuration of cities, e.g., Carthage and Alexandria, based on whether we have actually seen them or not (8.6.9).

The remainder of book eight and part of book nine are concerned with the status of interior knowledge of oneself and other things. In this context Augustine presents the view that loving is a form of desiring, as an introduction to the theme of self-knowledge. He points out that in the case of loving (as in much else) we only desire what we do not possess. To what degree therefore, he asks, can I be said to know what I desire, if in fact I do not yet possess it and as a result I do not truly know what it is? Augustine's answer to this problem is found in the activity of knowing itself. I know what I desire to the degree that I have self-knowledge, since this knowledge includes my awareness that I desire. As a consequence, I know that I am willing myself to move in a certain direction, i.e., one which will satisfy my desire. We assume that all people desire happiness, and to achieve this end they must move in the direction of the good. As a consequence, when I desire, and recognizing that I am desiring, I also recognize my ability to love; and in this love there is implicitly a triadic relationship, since what is involved is the person who loves, the person or thing that is loved, and the action of loving which unites them (9.2.2; 9.4.4). Augustine sums up these three elements as *mens*, *amor*, and *notitia* (mind, love, and knowledge).

However, the mind cannot love itself unless it knows itself (9.3.3). But what is it that it knows? It is here that Augustine introduces decisively new thinking into the question of trinitarian analogies in the mind. When the mind knows and loves itself, he reasons, this love is not directed towards something immutable; on the contrary, when a person thinks of aspects of his self-knowledge, he is "attentive to what is going on within himself"(*quid in se ipse agatur attendens*, 9.6.9). This self-attention has two dimensions: first, obviously, it takes place over time, and secondly, according to Augustine, it takes place in outer speech, as contrasted with our true changeless selves, the knowledge of which we have inside us as an inner word:

With the eye of the mind, therefore, we perceive in that eternal truth, from which all temporal things have been made, the form according to which we are (*formam secundum quam sumus*), and by which we effect something either in ourselves or in bodies with a true and right reason. The true knowledge of things, thence conceived, we bear with us as a word and beget speaking from within (*notitiam tamquam uerbum apud nos habemus et dicendo intus gignimus*); nor does it depart by being born. But in conversing with others we add the service of our voice or of some bodily sign to the word that remains within, in order to produce in the mind of the listener, by a kind of sensible remembrance, something similar to that which does not depart from the mind of the speaker (9.7.12).

As Rowan William notes, in these pages

a sketchy image of the divine life thus appears; but book 10 refines it further. The mind's self-apprehension is precisely the apprehension of a self in movement, knowing its own temporal incompleteness and its motivation by desire. The paradox is that, in knowing its incompleteness, the self knows itself completely; there is no other perfect knowledge of the self available (10.8.11; 10.10.16).[180]

[180] Rowan Williams, "De Trinitate," in *ATA*, p. 849; see also Williams "The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in the *De Trinitate*," in *Augustine: Presbyter factus sum: Collectanea Augustiniana*, ed. J. Lienhard (New York, 1993), pp. 121–134. For an introduction to scholarship on *De Trin*. see Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's "De Trinitate*," (Oxford, 2008), pp. 6–23; on book ten, see pp. 190–218; for an outline of major themes and their relation to scholastic theology, see E. Hill, Saint Augustine, *The Trinity* in *The Works of Saint Augustine* 1.5 (New York, 1991), pp. 18–59. On the blend of literary and biblical themes, see especially Lewis Ayres, "Between Athens and Jerusalem: Prolegomena to Anthropology in *De Trinitate*," *Modern Theology* 8.1 (1992), 53–73; on book ten, Ayres, "The Discipline of Self-Knowledge in Augustine's *De trinitate* Book x," in *The Passionate Intellect*, ed. Lewis Ayres (Brunswick, NJ, 1995), pp. 261–296. For an evaluation of Cartesian and phenomenological approaches to self-knowledge in *De Trin*. which are not taken up in this volume, see Wayne J. Hankey, "Self-Knowledge and God as Other in Augustine: Problems for a Postmodern Revival," *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter* 4 (1999), 83–123.

These refinements occupy the sections of books ten and fifteen, which are devoted to self-knowledge. Taken together, represent one of Augustine's finest philosophical and theological achievements.

In book ten, he deals chiefly with the cognitive aspects of the question; in book fifteen, with thought and language. He sums up his thinking about the cognitive dimension in book 10, chapters 4 and 8–9. In chapter 4, he argues that when the mind is said to know itself, this means that it knows itself in full. His example is the mind's knowledge that it is alive, which it cannot know in part.

> As a consequence, when the mind seeks to know itself, it already knows that it has a mind; otherwise it would not know whether it seeks itself … For it might possibly be that it is not a mind, and so while it seeks to know a mind, it does not seek itself. Wherefore, since the mind, in seeking what the mind is, knows that it seeks itself, it certainly knows that itself is a mind. Again, if it knows in itself that it is a mind, and that it is a whole mind, it knows itself as a whole (10.4.6).

But what is the nature of this "seeking"? Augustine turns to this question in chapter 8, arguing that the mind, to seek and find itself, has to abandon the temporal and concentrate on its permanent qualities: "not seek itself as though it were absent," but to "fix the attention of its will … upon itself, and think of itself," (10.8.11) taking care "to discern itself as present" (10.9.12). Further, the only thing to which the mind should pay attention is the words of the command, "Know thyself":

> Let not the mind … add another thing to that which it knows itself to be when it hears that it should know itself. For it knows with certainty that these words are said to itself, that is, to itself that is, lives, and understands …
>
> For who would doubt that he lives, remembers, understands, wills, thinks, knows, and judges? For even if he doubts, he lives; if he doubts, he remembers why he doubts, he understands that he doubts; if he doubts, he wishes to be certain; if he doubts, he thinks; if he doubts, he knows that he does not know; if he doubts, he judges that he ought not to consent rashly (10.10.13).

Augustine completes this outline of self-knowledge in book fifteen by extending what he has said earlier on outer and inner words. The link with the discussions in his early writings is provided by the philosophy of language, which is taken out of the grammatical and rhetorical contexts of the dialogues and placed in a biblical setting. As noted in the Introduction, the impermanence of spoken words is contrasted with the permanence of God's Word within a hierarchy leading upwards through external, internal, and metaphysical language. The mediating element in this design is the interior word in the mind of man or woman,

which depends on the "signs" of spoken words but, based on memory and recognition, enlightens the individual concerning meaning from within. The inner conversation, or soliloquy, is the vehicle of this interior enlightenment, working through questions and answers which locate the desired information.[181] The arguments concerning the soliloquy and the *cogito*, on the one hand, and the historical grounding of the notion of the self on the other, represent Augustine's attempt to reach a coherent solution on the non-temporal and temporal factors influencing our notion of selfhood and to incorporate these into his philosophy of language.

Within books eight to fifteen, the manner in which our thoughts coalesce, take shape as inner words, and are finally enunciated provides a model for the way in which divine creativity issues in God's word and the created universe. The human race lost its symmetry with divine discourse through the disobedience of the first couple. As a result of this act the human "likeness" was ever afterwards in need of repair. As God's word proceeded from the eternal to the temporal, resulting in the beginning of time and the history of the world, so mankind, in search of renewal, proceeds from the temporal to the eternal: this takes place historically through the incarnation and mentally through the elevation of thought through sensory, mental, and post-mental levels. In Augustine's view, the image of God in our minds is remade by means of a Pauline type of self-reform.[182]

At *De Trinitate* 15.12.22, Augustine revisits the *cogito* in the light of this thinking. When we say that we know something, he asks, what is the source of the knowledge (*scientia*) out of which we form a thought (*cogitatio*)? Further, how much can a person know concerning this process of thinking, even if he or she is very well trained and taught (*peritissimo atque doctissimo*). Of course there are types of knowledge about which it is normal to entertain doubt: these include optical illusions, in which images are inaccurately conveyed to the mind, as well as dreams and fantasies, which have the qualities of events experienced through the senses.[183] On the other hand, there is knowledge about which we have no reasonable doubt: in this category falls the scientific knowledge of the world, especially as ascertained by mathematics, and trustworthy facts conveyed to

[181] *De Trin.*, 15.11.20: "Proinde uerbum quod foris sonat signum est uerbi quod intus lucet, cui magis uerbi competit nomen."

[182] *Ibid.*, 15.11.21: "Cum ergo hac transformatione ad perfectum fuerit haec imago renouata *similes* deo *erimus, quoniam uidebimus eum* non per speculum sed *sicut est*, quod dicit Paulus apostolus [1 Cor. 13:12], *facie ad faciem*."

[183] *Ibid.*, where Augustine gives two examples of optical illusions, an oar in water that appears to be bent and a tower which appears to navigators to be moving.

us by faithful witnesses (e.g., the knowledge that oceans exist). As noted, we trust things that we have seen for ourselves or that we assume to exist on the testimony of others.

Certain knowledge can result from the combined operations of reason and memory. When we wish to remember the object for which a word stands, we retrieve the relevant word-image from our mental storehouse, which is memory. The process moves from image to thought to word, which becomes the instrument by which we communicate this knowledge to ourselves. The word in question is the by-product of an inquiry in which we speak inwardly within ourselves, asking a question and receiving an answer, as in other types of soliloquy.[184] This inner dialogue sets in motion a chain of communication in which the word in thought precedes the word as it sounds and even the thought of the sound (*cogitatio soni*, 15.12.22). This mental word is a very close replica of the thing as it was originally noted (*uerbum simillimum rei notae*). From this *res nota* there appears in the mind an image of the truth that the object represents, and this image, in the form of a word existing in our thought, becomes a spoken word. The original word, as it is framed in the memory, can be understood by analogy with God's Word; however, this type of word is not derived from any known language.[185]

This chain of reasoning represents the high point of Augustine's thinking about the way in which soliloquies help us to resolve problems of language, thought, and memory. His argument likewise completes his thinking on the strengths and limitations of the ancient dialogue (as suggested by his repeated use of the verb *quaerere*). Augustine places the individual in the position of a person who is engaged in a dialogue with himself, posing questions and answers in a Socratic fashion as one by one the proposals for achieving self-knowledge are rejected. When he comes to his final statement on the matter – namely that the mind, in seeking itself, loves knowing itself, and that what it chiefly knows is its own mode of knowing – he has effectively closed the internal dialogue by which he has proceeded deductively up to this point and shifted the entire question of knowledge away from knowing something to the "knowing" itself: in other words, away from the type of solution that the dialogue might have furnished, negatively or positively, to a type of solution that involves knowledge that is inward, intuitive, and unexaminable. For, as he proves

[184] *Conf.*, 10.10.17; 10.19.28.

[185] *De Trin.*, 15.12.22: "quod est uerbum linguae nullius, uerbum uerum de re uera, nihil de suo habens sed totum de illa scientia de qua nascitur."

through the *cogito*, one can know that one is thinking without knowing that this thinking is directed toward a definable body of knowledge, that is, knowledge which is acquired over time. As an extension of this viewpoint, Augustine's answer to the ancient dialogue would seem to be that such conversation cannot teach us anything certain about ourselves, just as, in *De Magistro*, he argues that words cannot teach us anything about things we do not know beforehand. The ultimate teaching is through history: this takes place personally through the implantation of God's image and likeness in every person, and collectively through the working out of a providential design in history itself, through which God's inner design for creation is realized.

In moving from book ten to book fifteen Augustine thus suggests that the problems of the soliloquy and the *cogito* are related. The literary genre of self-address and the logical proof of self-existence are mutually supportive. In the opening chapters of book ten, as noted, he further asks why the mind was initially advised by the Delphic oracle to gain self-knowledge. This takes him back to the original question of the dialogues – how is one to live one's life, and what sort of mental discipline is to accompany this endeavor.[186] His answer to this perennial question is that the mind should devote its thinking to itself and as a consequence live according to its nature,[187] which, for a Christian, means giving life a structure of order (*ordinari*) under God. It is possible for the individual to perceive and to be inspired by the higher intrinsic beauty of God's nature; however, in order to profit from this aesthetics, it is necessary for the mind to remain (*stare*) with God, that is, to focus its attention on unchanging interior values. This is not a question of the mind becoming divine, since only God's mind is sufficient in itself (*qui solus sufficit*), but of a meditative self-awareness, which is a temporary foretaste of things to come. It is not enough, therefore, for the mind to know itself (*se nosse*); it also has to give some thought to itself (*se cogitare*).

The notion of self-care which is raised in this statement is of course an important and much studied theme in late classical thought. Augustine's approach falls outside the framework of ancient thinking in one important respect, namely in introducing the modern view that a plan for living cannot be dissociated from a philosophy of language. His *cogito* is a defining feature of his conception of the self, but, lacking the soliloquy, it

[186] Cf. Ayres, "The Discipline of Self-Knowledge," 280–287, with thoughtful remarks on Augustine's relationship to Marius Victorinus and Plotinus.

[187] *Ibid.*, 10.5.7: "Credo ut se cogitet et secundum naturam suam uiuat."

cannot be a component of self-care. For, in his view, the latter is a developmental issue, which is inseparable from personal narrative and historical experience. Moreover, as a consequence of his interpretation of Genesis, in the beginning is not the fact of self-existence, but its enabling device, the speaking voice. This is the logos of self-experience, which, in *De Trinitate*, Augustine traces to the foundations of cognition. In the last analysis it is the imposition of language on the *cogito*, rather than vice versa, which separates Augustine from Descartes. For, in the mature thinking of the bishop of Hippo, even the proof of the self's existence is not a proof of anything until it is uttered. And, in his conception of the soliloquy, he seems at times to be trying to tell us that the frail instrument of words is the only thing that the maker has left us with in order to carry on an ethical discussion within ourselves.

CHAPTER 3

Order and freedom

Da quod iubes et iube quod uis.

Conf., 10.37.60

INTRODUCTION

In Augustine's writings ascetic, mental, or spiritual disciplines, such as the soliloquy, are constrained by predetermined forces, whose ultimate source is divine. Two of these forces are discussed in detail in his early writings, namely natural and historical laws. In this chapter Augustine's treatment of these subjects is taken up in a pair of works from the first years of his literary activity: *De Ordine*, composed in 386–387, and *De Libero Arbitrio*, begun in 387–388 and completed by 395.[1]

These works confirm the direction for Augustine's soliloquies which has been suggested in Chapter 2. In the course of this discussion I attempted to show that there are two trajectories in his thinking on the topic of such spiritual exercises. First, he frames his discussion of the *cogito* within a narrative design which includes his personal life history as well as the history of civilization. Secondly, as he proceeds, Platonic, Neoplatonic, and Stoic approaches to the problem of personal improvement, which stress the autonomy of the self, are replaced by a dependent notion of the self based on biblical teachings, in particular those of Paul.

This transition from an autonomous to a dependent notion of the self is well illustrated by a reading of *De Ordine* and *De Libero Arbitrio*. In *De Ordine*, Augustine is largely psychological and philosophical in his thinking about the self. In the ascetic scheme of this dialogue, the mind, ascending upwards, overcomes the senses, and the self, partially freed from physical and temporal constraints, attempts reunion with its divine source.

[1] *De Ord*. was composed in the interim between *De Beata Vita* and *C. Acad*., books 2 and 3; *De Lib. Arbit*. was completed by 395, by which time a copy had been sent to Paulinus of Nola; *Ep*., 31.7.

In *De Libero Arbitrio* the comparable context for the discussion of the self is narrative (book one) and historico-biblical (book three). The vertical movement of the soul, which is typical of Augustine's Neoplatonic speculations, is subordinated to a horizontal perspective in which the solutions to problems involving the self are sought within a predetermined temporal framework that is unalterable by human agents. Thus, having attempted to overcome temporality by means of philosophical methods in earlier dialogues such as *De Ordine*, Augustine adopts a theological perspective in *De Libero Arbitrio*, recognizing that the concepts of the self and time are indissolubly connected. It is this connection, rather than the earlier projects for transcending temporal constraints, which now offer the only valid point of departure for philosophical inquiries into the self. In this dialogue Augustine also proposes that, while freedom of choice is a philosophical issue, it works itself out in human lives within narrative contexts.

A related theme which is taken up in this chapter is the rôle of cumulative and progressive knowledge in creating the conditions for self-improvement. One of the assumptions of classical approaches to the self in Platonic thinking is that such betterment comes about through the soul's education, and that this takes place chiefly through the application of rational methodologies, such as the external dialogue. Here again, *De Ordine* and *De Libero Arbitrio* present different approaches.

In *De Ordine*, the purpose is to discuss a concept which is essential, in Augustine's view, for any sort of progress in understanding, namely order. The topic is taken up in scientific and moral contexts in book one and examined as a component of two schemes for self-progress in book two, namely the practice of the ascetic life and the study of the liberal arts. Although attention is drawn to the limits of reason throughout books one and two, the argument in *De Ordine* nonetheless proceeds along the lines suggested by the traditional accumulation of knowledge in philosophy, in which conclusions are reached by means of deductions. In book one, Augustine repeatedly complains when his students introduce irrelevant questions or indulge in personal matters which fall outside this type of inquiry.

De Libero Arbitrio initially gives the impression of being organized in a similar way. In book one Augustine and Evodius develop their positions in a logical fashion and reach their conclusions after the elimination of alternatives. Evodius even proposes on two occasions that the discussion should proceed from first principles without

preconditions for the arguments.[2] Yet, despite this gesture in the direction of the rational dialogue, the possibility of progressive or advancing knowledge is only entertained in this book, where the limits of temporal law are outlined, and in a single section of book two, where Augustine turns to the problem of the internal sense. In the remainder of book two and in book three the dialogue lays the basis for an inquiry into the foundations of wisdom and happiness in which progress by means of the accumulation of knowledge appears to be of limited practical use. Augustine discredits such knowledge, which he associates with the senses and with sensory perception, as he does in *De Ordine*, but instead of proposing a philosophical solution, as he does at the end of that dialogue, he opts for guidance on moral choices based on authoritative teachings, which includes an appreciation of their latent, symbolic, and historical meaning. In comparing the two dialogues, therefore, it is possible to advance the view that purely philosophical reasoning along Pythagorean/Platonic lines is replaced by the interpretation of a single instructive text, which is thought to be the oldest, and therefore the most reliable source of instruction on the ethical issues under consideration.

The question of narrative enters the discussion in the two works through the analysis of personal and non-personal stories. This is an adaptation of the Augustinian spiritual exercise, which, as noted, frequently makes use of literature in the solution of ethical problems. Differing from Platonist writers, Augustine asserts the value of literary narrative in philosophical and theological analysis in both *De Ordine* and *De Libero Arbitrio*, considering some pagan and all biblical stories to be useful for moral instruction. Also, he is convinced that there is a "theory" implied in such narratives which can be analyzed in philosophical terms, to which I turn in the next chapter.

The treatment of narrative begins in *De Ordine*, where it is proposed that mortals lack the ability to understand permanent types of order because their modes of analysis are temporal in foundation. This argument is reused in book one of *De Libero Arbitrio*, but in this dialogue the question of narrative shifts from the meaning of stories that one is told (or merely witnesses) to the meaning of stories in which one is an active participant. The critical poles of interpretation in the later dialogue consist

[2] E.g., *De Lib. Arbit.*, 1.3.6; on reasoning from first principles see the section in this chapter on "Will, Emotion, and Legal Stories."

in history and predetermination. Put simply, in divine perspective history does not really exist as a sequence of events, since what takes place over time for mortals is experienced all at once by God. It follows that divine predestination is not clearly understood by mortals, since it is designed in a non-temporal mode which is alien to their understanding of time. In divine view, therefore, it is predetermination that accounts for events, whereas in human view it is history. Destiny is to history what eternity is to time.

In *De Ordine*, it is likewise proposed that mortals do not understand the workings of nature because their accounts *describe* from the outside what can only be *explained* from within. This approach is taken up again in *De Libero Arbitrio*, especially in books two and three, in which Augustine discusses the *cogito*, sense perceptions, and the existence of God. In both works he proposes that the only way to overcome this limitation is to turn one's attention from external to internal order, and to begin the investigation with introspective experiments into the ordering principles in humans themselves. He is convinced that the workings of the mind can be examined by means of such controled observations; and, because our minds reflect a permanent principle, imprinted there by God, this "seeing" into ourselves can provide access to a superior form of knowledge that descends from above. Such investigations are conceptualized on a scale that runs from simple insights, which are organized by analogy with sight (*intueri*) in *De Ordine*, to the consideration of the way in which we "see" such notions as wisdom and beauty in *De Libero Arbitrio*. In the later work, disciplined introspection, through which the understanding of such matters is achieved, is shown to differ from a range of involuntary sensory impressions that result in changed interior states, such as occur for example in visions, dreams, and hallucinations.[3]

These topics fall within the range of inner dialogue, on which the subjects taken up in these two works furnish Augustine with an extensive laboratory for his investigations. He concludes from these thought experiments that there is one type of order that governs nature's laws and another that governs human thought and expression. He asks why mortals have been endowed with the capacity to understand the latter variety, which seems to be as persistent a feature of their intellectual makeup as the capacity for speech. His answer is that this reconstructed patterning of events is a way of coping with the ubiquity of moral disorder in the world in which they live. He is aware that evil has the potential to frustrate human efforts to achieve happiness, even in the presence of virtue, and he allows that this

[3] *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.1.2–5.

sometimes happens through the random occurrence of good or bad events.[4] But the presence of evil in the world does not justify the view, popularized in Manichaeism, that such imperfection was born in earthly creation and therefore constitutes an ineradicable negative force in the universe. Nor does Augustine adhere to the Platonic doctrine, based on the *Timaeus*, according to which evil represents an original and persisting fault in primal matter.

De Ordine is the most detailed discussion of these themes in his early writings.[5] In the preface to the dialogue he tells us something about the setting in which the preparatory conversations took place, and these too reflect his interest in replacing outer with inner dialogue. The arrangement consisted in a study community that combined elements of a philosophical school and a monastic enclave. The location, as noted, was a borrowed villa some distance from Milan, where, in the company of students, friends and relatives, Augustine was free to pursue a number of ethical questions,[6] including, it would seem, the ethics of teaching itself. The need for change was symbolized by the lung ailment that afflicted him during his last semester as professor of rhetoric, in spring 386.[7] When he moved to the country, he stopped speaking in one way, *ex cathedra*, and began speaking in another, through seminars, dialogues, and interior conversations. These discussions were taken down by secretaries, and the record, after correction and revision, became the "dialogues" as we know them.[8]

[4] See Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck* (Cambridge, 1981); cf. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (London and Cambridge, MA, 1985). Augustine may have been attempting to fill in a gap in the Stoic sources that he knew, which were "particularly sketchy on the problem of evil"; Harry Hine, "Seneca, Stoicism and the Problem of Moral Evil," in D. Innes, H. Hine, and C. Pelling, eds., *Ethics and Rhetoric*: *Classical Essays for Donald Russell on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (Oxford, 1987), p. 98. For an excellent review of these issues, see Suzanne Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 2–9; on Stoic ethical decisions, see A. A. Long, "The Early Stoic Concept of Moral Choice," in *Images of Man in Ancient and Medieval Thought. Studia Gerardo Verbeke …* (Louvain, 1976), pp. 77–92.

[5] Important discussions of *De Ord.*, include Ilsetraut Hadot, *Ars libéraux et philosophie dans la pensée antique* (Paris, 1996), chapter 4 (pp. 9–136), dealing with book 2; Virgilio Pacioni, *L'Unità teoretica del "De ordine" de S. Agostino* (Rome, 1996), with insights, as noted, into the dialogue's use of Stoic logic, pp. 42–52, 123–125, and especially pp. 188–193. Literary questions are taken up by A. Dyroff, "Über Form und Begriffsgehalt der augustinischen Schrift De ordine," in *Aurelius Augustinus*, ed. M. Grabmann and J. Mausbach (Cologne, 1930), pp. 15–62 and H. H. Gunermann, "Literarische und philosophische Tradition im ersten Tagespräche von Augustinus 'De ordine,' " *RA* 9 (1973), 183–226. On the concept of order in Augustine's early writings a useful guide is J. Rief, *Der Ordobegriff des jungen Augustinus* (Paderborn, 1962), pp. 1–40; on the notion in *De Ord.*, see also W. Hübner, "Der 'Ordo' der Realien in Augustins Frühdialog *De ordine*," *REA* 33 1987, 23–48.

[6] *De Ord.*, 1.2.5.

[7] Cf. *De Beata Vita*, 1.4; *C. Acad.*, 1.1.3; and *Conf.*, 9.2.4, recalling the symbolic significance Augustine attached to illness, which prevented his early baptism; *Conf.*, 1.11.17.

[8] *De Ord.*, 1.2.5: "adhibito sane stilo, quo cuncta exciperentur."

Augustine's chest pain[9] appears to have been reduced when oral debates were complemented by written records. Outside influences were minimized and students' minds were focused on the matter at hand. Along the lines sketched in the *Soliloquia*, most ascetic and spiritual exercises involved reading and writing.[10] The speakers in the dialogue knew that their words were being written down; as a consequence, they sometimes but not always spoke with care, thinking that caution was preferable to contention.[11] Texts supplemented words: persons seeking enlightenment through introspection abandoned a plethora of sensory signs, including their own speech, in order to retreat into themselves, and hence upwards to God. Secretaries, written texts, and revisions were ways of putting limits on emotionally charged statements, clarifying conclusions, and obviating the need for repetition.[12] The existence of transcripts helped to create a group of readers outside Cassiciacum who were drawn to Augustine's teachings, as were the recipients of Epicurus' letters many centuries before.[13] Despite oral methods, the study habits generated at the villa were thus conveyed to others.[14] A relationship evolved between the texts brought for the occasion, such as Vergil and the Bible, and those created by the occasions, which circulated as transcripts. It is within these sedimented writings rather than by means of the voices of the participants alone that the meaning of the soliloquies in the Cassiciacum dialogues is gradually revealed.

DE ORDINE

Book One. The action of *De Ordine* begins with an inner dialogue, at 1.3.6.[15] Augustine, speaking to his readers, relates that on a certain night he woke up, as was his habit, and went over silently with himself what was

[9] Cf. *ibid*., 1.10.30, where irritation, real and symbolic, (*stomachari*) is associated with Milan.

[10] E.g, *De Ord*., 1.3.6, where Augustine speaks of the silent gaps between the spoken words of the conversations as being filled by written texts, either those brought for the occasions or those resulting from them.

[11] *Ibid*., 1.2.5: "Cum enim nonnulla loquendi cura detinerer, nulla inter disputandum inrepebat immoderata contentio."

[12] *Ibid*., "Simul etiam, ut, si quid nostrum litteris mandare placuisset, nec aliter dicendi necessitas nec labor recordationis esset."

[13] See Carlo Diano, "La philosophie du plaisir et la société des amis, in *Studi e saggi di filosofia antica* (Padua, 1973), pp. 353–371.

[14] This was the case even if the dialogues were read orally. Another reason, not mentioned, was to preserve their logical organization; see *De Ord*., 1.7.20, where Augustine compliments Licentius on a new inspiration but notes: "Simul et tacendum est, ne tanta bona tua, Licenti, absorbeat obliuio. Quando enim nostrae litterae non sibi haec mandari flagitent?"

[15] There is no break in the style of the text between the end of the letter to Zenobius (1.2.5) and the beginning of the dialogue marked by the description of the soliloquy (1.3.6). This is another indication that Augustine, like Seneca, saw his letters as a way of talking to himself as well as to others.

on his mind.[16] The scene is not so different from *Soliloquia* 1.1.1, except that in this case he has no doubt that he is talking uniquely to himself.

These nightly conversations appear to have been a frequent occurrence (*de more*) and they were normally divided into two phases: one was concerned with discovering truth (*amor inueniendi ueri*), the other with a wide range of specific issues that entered into his thoughts (*quodcumque cogitarem*). Augustine is also clearer than in the *Soliloquia* on the psychological effects of repeated soliloquizing. He notes that even when he had nothing more to say to himself his mind refused to shut down, and continued its reflective activity. It is possible to think of this as his mind's "unquietness," which he deplores in the memorable opening phrases of the *Confessions*, where once again he is in internal conversation with himself.

His soliloquies at Cassiciacum began after the evening meal, when it was his custom to remain alone and to engage in an inner dialogue which was usually an extension of the afternoon's debate. This conversation was continued in bed, sometimes well into the night, as suggested by the opening statement of *De Ordine* as well as by letter 3. Augustine did not like to be disturbed during his evening reflections. He advised his students, once their meal was finished, to spend their leisure hours doing something other than what they had done during the day. Thus occupied, they had no opportunity to take his attention away from himself (*a me ipso auocari*), i.e., to disturb his thinking. Do we catch a glimpse here of the irritable professor, hoping to escape from his students and to have a few moments for himself, as he describes Ambrose in a pastoral context at *Confessions* 6.3.3–4? Or is he merely suggesting, as he himself says, that his junior colleagues might in this way acquire the habit of allowing their minds to be at home in their own company (*apud sese habitare consuefacerent animum*), as he so evidently had done for himself.

While he is musing on such topics, Augustine's attention is diverted by the sound of water flowing behind the nearby baths, where the group often held their debates on rainy days.[17] His attention is thereby shifted

[16] *De Ord*., 1.3.6: "Sed nocte quadam, cum euigilassem de more mecumque ipse tacitus agitarem, quae in mentem nescio unde ueniebant." It would be useful to know how this part of the dialogue was recorded, since it is doubtful that the secretaries of whom Augustine speaks elsewhere (e.g., 1.2.6; 1.4.14; 1.7.20, etc.) would be present at this hour in the shared sleeping quarters. At *De Gen. ad Litt*., 12.30.58, Augustine speaks of the habit of turning over problems in the mind, both awake and asleep. On the symbolism of night/day and hearing/seeing, see Wolfgang Hübner, "Der *ordo* der Realien in Augustinus Frühdialog *De ordine*," 32–48.

[17] On the rôle of the site in the staging of the dialogues, which follows a Ciceronian model, see Therese Fuhrer, *Augustin Contra Academicos* (Berlin, 1997), pp. 12–14, supplemented by Philip Burton, *Language in the "Confessions" of Augustine* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 35–62.

back from his personal interior dialogue to the collective exterior dialogue which was the official form of instruction at Cassiciacum.

This change in orientation marks the point of introduction of a series of miniature narratives in book one, and it is through these that Augustine eventually questions the ability of human agents to understand either natural order from the outside or even to understand fully the narrative order in which they take part.

He had listened to the noise in the drain night after night, as he lay in bed, and on this occasion he noticed it was louder than usual.[18] But he had no acceptable explanation for the change in intensity. The two other major participants in the conversation in book one then reveal that they too are lying awake in the sleeping quarters which they share with their mentor. One of them, Licentius, strikes the side of his bed with a piece of wood to frighten a curious mouse.[19] He is disturbed by the sound of the water's irregular flow, but not because he is engaged in an inner dialogue. He is an amateur poet, and, despite the distraction, he is attempting to compose quantitative verse in the dark.

When questioned on the matter, he suggests that the conduit is partly blocked by the autumn leaves, which gradually accumulate each year until the pressure is released. Thus, the water flows slowly for a while, because the aperture is small, then more rapidly, as it opens. The other member of this trio, Trygetius, who reveals that he is awake, agrees with his friend's explanation of the noise. Augustine realizes that the members of his entourage who have remained at Cassiciacum (after the return of Alypius and Navigius to Milan) have formed the habit of nocturnal vigils. These may or may not be supplements to the external dialogues in which the group takes part during the day. But the rudiments of the method of interior self-inquiry which he hopes to teach his students is clearly taking shape in their minds.[20]

Augustine is interested in Licentius' account of the clogged drain as an example of natural order that gives the appearance of disorder. However, let us note in passing that he seems to disagree with his pupil's habit of

[18] For the third time in the space of a few minutes, the non-habitual thus enters his mind as a way of focusing his attention; cf. *Conf.* 8.12.29.

[19] Licentius was some fourteen years younger than Augustine and possibly his cousin; *Ep.*, 26.3. For a useful review of their relationship, see Gustave Bardy, "Un élève de Saint Augustin: Licentius," *L'Année théologique augustinienne* 14 (1954), 55–79. On the possibility that the reference to mice may have Stoic origins, see H. H. Gunermann, "Literarische und philosophisches Tradition," 186–189.

[20] Ironically, in darkness: perhaps a subtle criticism of Manichaean cosmology, which contrasted darkness and light, or a distant echo of Plato's metaphor of the cave.

creating an artificial order of discourse for himself by means of his incessant versifying.[21] Can his protest be taken seriously? Not entirely, in my view, because, despite his objections, it is humanistic activity,[22] although not precisely this type, which is the hidden focus of discussion in book one and the overt centre of interest in book two, as becomes clear. In book two Augustine concludes that humans cannot explain natural order, but, through the practice of the liberal arts, they can arrive at some understanding of narrative order within themselves. One of the purposes of book one is to distinguish between these types of order, which, he is convinced, involve different sorts of causality.

At this point in the dialogue Licentius notes that his master is devoting his time to something arguably more trivial than even his versifying, namely the villa's plumbing. But his wit is wasted on Augustine, who suggests that such minor phenomena are often worthy of attention if they help us account plausibly for something that takes place, or at least seems to take place, outside the laws of nature. Licentius observes that order may be present in nature but unperceived by humans, which is in fact Augustine's view, to be revealed later in book one; however, here he refuses to pursue the matter further, and somewhat resentfully asks his mentor to leave him alone and let him get on with his literary experiments, which are his chief diversion in life (1.3.8).

In the subsequent chapters of book one the topic of order is tackled from a number of angles: hidden causes (1.4–6), divine origins (1.7), and, with dawn's arrival, with the help of philosophy and the liberal arts (1.8). These separate paths of inquiry lead in a single direction, namely to God, as the ultimate source of order (1.9). Toward the book's end Augustine wearies of his companions' dithering and turns with relief to Monica, whose conception of orderliness combines faith and common sense (1.10–11).

In all of this nothing is accomplished beyond a tentative definition of order, possibly derived from Cicero,[23] which will be expressed in a more complete form in *Contra Faustum*.[24] But, to return briefly to these chapters, let us note that Augustine says important things about the perspective in which he views the issues in a series of discussions that begin at 1.3.9, when Licentius quotes a line from Terence to illustrate the obvious

[21] Cf. *C. Acad.*, 3.1.1, where Trygetius is noted as a reader of Vergil, while Licentius spends his leisure hours composing verse.

[22] Cf. Catherine Conybeare, *The Irrational Augustine* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 95–98, for a slightly different but convincing interpretation of this section of *De Ordine*.

[23] *De Ord.*, 1.10.28; cf. 2.1.2; both drawing on Cicero, *Hort.*, ed. Grilli, fr. 23–24.

[24] *C. Faust. Man.*, lib. 22, c. 27: Lex vero aeterna est ratio divina vel voluntas Dei, ordinem naturalem conservari iubens, perturbari vetans."

point that he has lost his way.[25] Augustine responds with a quotation from the *Aeneid* on order's lofty origins,[26] and with his student in mind observes that insights into such matters are not normally found in poets but in sages.[27] The initial step in acquiring wisdom on such matters is by implication the abandonment of literature – at least so it seems – in favor of philosophy, and this philosophizing is begun through a Socratic admission of ignorance. But let us note that in a sense this admission has already taken place, since the three have formerly agreed that they have hypothesized about the reasons for the water's irregular flow but are not sure that any of their explanations is correct.

What has been concluded? First, it is clear that there are a number of different causes of order.[28] Also, our understanding of natural order consists in generalizations based on the observations of specific instances.[29] Finally, natural laws, from which these specific instances of order arise, stem ultimately from a single source (1.5.14).

[25] *De Ord.*, 1.3.9, where there is a subtle interplay of two silences, which effectively reorient each speaker's attention back within himself. Licentius, once provoked, again tries to divert Augustine's attention, responding to his implied criticism of his poetic compositions with a quotation from Terence, *Eunuchus* 5.6. The quotation is made in two parts and the meaning of the line is changed. The first part of the quotations reads, "I, by my own disclosure, miserable as a mouse (*Egomet meo indicio miser quasi sorex*), while the second part states, "I am lost today" (*hodie perii*). The first sentence refers to the outward signs of the interior life, which is a major theme of book 1, as well as to the theme of attention. The second sentence is a summary of what Augustine and his students have been discussing in their nocturnal conversation, namely how one can become lost to oneself through lack of self-care. Licentius, now contrite, concludes this exhibition of erudition by admitting that Augustine has recently taught him how to combat his inattentiveness toward himself. But this too is only half serious, since his mind is brought back to the meaning of his master's words by the sound of a stick hitting his bed, by which the offending mouse is frightened away.

[26] This is a deliberate misquotation of the celebrated invocation to Apollo that precedes Aeneas's battle with Mezentius, the father of Lausus, at *Aeneid* 10.875. The heroic context of the original, distantly echoing Homer, is replaced by a Christian orientation that stresses the future and interior life of the mind; 1.4.9: "'Sic pater ille deus faciat.' Perducet enim ipse, si sequimur … qui dat modo augurium nostrisque inlabitur animis." On Augustine's quotations from Vergil in *De Ord.*, see Gunermann, "Literarische und philosophische Tradition," 189–195.

[27] *De Ord.*, 1.4.10: "ueritas, cuius uates sunt, quicumque possunt esse sapientes." In this reworking of the original, allegory replaces mythology, while moral virtue takes the rôle allegedly played by pagan sexual vice.

[28] These include the means by which the water is conveyed and its functions along the way, such as drinking, washing, and sanitation. Even the falling leaves that allegedly block the channel contribute indirectly to this orderliness, since the explanation of their effect has to do with the regularity of seasonal changes. The orderliness of the flow is also a by-product of the trees' location, the number and place of the branches, the weight of the leaves, and even the air that bears them to the trough. Augustine's point is that there is no end to the list of potential causes that one can attribute to the water's stoppage, but no single one of them or any combination is the whole story.

[29] In contrast to the Platonic scheme that he proposes elsewhere, Augustine here appears to argue in favor of the Aristotelian position, namely that our knowledge or the causes or sources of things begins with sense perceptions.

Licentius introduces the standard Academic objection that nothing is known for sure. He says that he has new thinking to bring to the question (1.4.10), but, disappointingly, is unable to put his thoughts into words (1.6.16). Before turning to the significance of this remark, let us note that there are three stages in the evolution of the conversations on the topic of order (if one overlooks some evidently unproductive suggestions), and these can be said to constitute the chief theme of book one. The first of these takes place in the darkened bedroom, when it becomes evident that each of the residents is known to himself only through the activity of his mind – a triple illustration of the *cogito*. The second occurs at the end of chapter 6, when Augustine reintroduces the soliloquy: he announces to his readers that while others are speaking aloud he is "marveling silently" to himself: *tacitus miror*. The third consists in the more general problematizing of exterior language, which takes place over several chapters and has implications which go beyond the discussions in book one. In these reflections Augustine suggests that our trust in language is tantamount to a type of "enchantment," since, as Licentius illustrates, we can be persuaded, even seduced, by the rhetorical beauty of our words, and yet hold the view that words are incapable of fully expressing our thoughts.[30]

It is the last of these problems that is framed as an inner dialogue. Questions are asked and responses given, as if the mind were talking to itself; however, on this occasion without the assurance that reason will eventually reach a conclusion by the elimination of unnecessary alternatives.[31] Moreover, these thoughts link up with Licentius' already mentioned sense of verbal inadequacy before the philosophical problem of order. In this aside Augustine is in fact suggesting that there is a close connection between our assumptions about the capacity of language to express our thoughts and the dialogical method by which this thinking takes shape.[32] In view of Licentius' difficulty in saying what he has in mind, there now appears to be a cognitive hiatus, one that not only applies to his student, but which more generally separates the verbal discussions that take place in the group from internally ordered discourse, whose value is presumably a superior form of self-instruction. The thinking that underpins this position is as yet unclear, but Augustine's reasoning will be spelled out in book two.

At the end of 1.6, after these issues are clarified, Augustine expresses his admiration at Licentius' conversion to philosophy,[33] or should we say, his

[30] *Ibid.*, 1.6.16: "Quomodo id [malum] explicem nescio." Cf. *De Trin.*, 9.12.18.
[31] E.g., *Conf.*, 10.5.9; 10.8.13; 10.10.17; 10.11.18; 10.15.25.
[32] E.g., *Conf.*, 1.8.13.
[33] *De Ord.*, 1.7.17: "Ego mirabar et tacebam;" cf. 1.6.16.

move toward the "exercises" involving inner dialogue in which he envisages a profitable sort of philosophical endeavor. A part of Augustine's pleasure at this event arises from his observation of the emotional changes taking place in his young friend as he proceeds from internal disorder to an apparent (if not real) orderliness of thought. His student's tranquility contrasts with the emotions expressed by both Augustine himself and Trygetius in their common bedroom, which were evidently by-products of open dialogue.

These ups and downs form a pattern in book one, whose logic, Augustine suggests, is as imperceptible from the outside as the cause of the water's irregular flow. There are a number of examples of this apparent disorder. At 1.5.14, Licentius leaps from his bed with joy when he is satisfied that God governs the world, but afterwards he appears disgruntled when Augustine points out that the problem of order is not as straightforward as he makes out (1.6.15). He is fearful when he thinks Trygetius has successfully challenged his ideas and lapses into moody silence after a faint-hearted reply: his companion only reenters the debate when he is assured that he has overcome his momentary "inebriation" (1.7.17–18). After his strenuous defence of God's justice, he takes to his bed, claiming that Trygetius has provoked him to overstatement (1.7.19); then he triumphantly states that he is no longer interested in writing verse (1.8.21), even though Augustine approves of his literary activity as a preliminary stage in focusing his thoughts (1.6.3). He rejoices while his master weeps during prayers at dawn (1.8.22): he does not recover his calm until the conversation begun the night before comes to an end and his conversion to philosophy is explained within the trinitarian formula of seeing, believing, and understanding (1.8.23). But he is not tranquil for long and grows peevish when questioned by Augustine on the following day (1.10.28).

The turning point in the discussion is 1.7–8, when Licentius and Trygetius arrive at an impasse in the purely philosophical aspect of the debate. Tensions rise, and Augustine is obliged to intervene; but, instead of addressing the issue at hand (how a good God can condone evil), he reports that Zenobius, to whom *De Ordine* is dedicated, was also concerned with this question and, as noted, sent his inquiry in poetic form.[34] Augustine's purpose is not to draw attention to the expression of philosophy in verse, which was a well-established tradition, but to suggest

[34] For a suggestion concerning this work, see F. Dolbeau, "Un poème philosophique de l'Antiquité tardive," *REA* 42 (1996), 21–43.

that literary activity can play a part in establishing an orderly style of life (1.9.27).

This is clearly a reversal of Augustine's earlier position, and is noted by Licentius, who was criticized for versifying. It was Augustine's reiterated comments which forced him to give up poetry for philosophy. In retrospect, he notes, he looks upon his efforts at poetic composition as a type of emotional engagement and on abandoning them, he has discovered a new source of freedom, which permits him to distance himself from the artificial feelings that his own words have aroused. (This lesson in ascetic self-control is not lost on Augustine, who incorporates it into his discussion of the liberal arts in book two). Licentius' change of heart is described in terms that suggest the same sort of "conversion" that his mentor underwent at age nineteen, on reading Cicero's *Hortensius*. Philosophy, he states, is "something … which has provided me with a different beacon, one that shines brightly from afar – I don't know what it is. It now seems to me that Philosophy is more beautiful than Thisbe, Pyramus, Venus, Cupid, or other loves" (1.8.21).

However, in the dialogue's next scene, the literary element enters the discussion from a different angle. This concerns the collective interpretation of a narrative. Augustine and his friends have spent a part of the day rehashing the problems that kept them up most of the night; they have risen, prayed, and deserted their comfortable meadow because of poor weather. As they take shelter in an enclosure, they notice a cockfight taking place. Augustine utilizes this encounter to reemphasize the rôle played by unseen laws, to which he has alluded twice. If such apparently disconnected violence is to make any sense, he proposes, its meaning has to arise within a large scheme of things.[35] This, as it turns out, is his final answer to the problem of evil, which is *De Ordine*'s subtheme; and reviewing this scene in book two, he places it among those manifestations of nature which are indecorous but necessary for the establishment of the bigger context. On this view, the defeated bird is reduced to a state of abjection; yet, by this means the onlookers are given an illustration of something majestic – the meaning of mortal combat (2.4.12).

Just as the group of friends are drawn from things of the mind to those of the senses during the fight itself, he suggests, reason demonstrates the superiority of the mental over the physical by convincing them that the battle's violence has its own rationale (1.8.25–26). Augustine intellectualizes

[35] Cf. *Phaedo*, known to Augustine, where, Plato states (118a): "If the cock crows twice, a person in error comes to his senses."

this dimension of change by suggesting that, as in the case of the water's flow, we cannot base a judgement about its cause on what we observe. The cockfight also repositions his thinking in another respect, suggesting that we not only observe but interpret what is taking place. The combat, unlike the water in the drain, acquires its meaning from the way in which we make sense of the entire scene after it is related, and this involves both the fight itself and the potentially differing reactions of the observers. This, in turn, is a symbol of the distinction between natural and literary order, proposing again that it is the latter alone with which humans interact. Finally, the cockfight sums up the way in which Augustine views intellectual battles involving exchanges of words: they acquire meaning after the sound and fury are finished, and what has been said can be thought about in tranquility.

In sum, the natural order is something that we may or may not understand, just as we do not perceive the inner logic of a cockfight, but the moral order is accessible to all of us, no matter what our level of education, through reflections on the narrative dimensions of our actions. The one type of order is found in the world, the other in our minds, by means of rational interpretation. A similar comparison is explained in simpler terms at *Contra Academicos* 1.1.1, where Augustine tells Romanianus, to whom the dialogue is dedicated, that what we call an act of good fortune is in fact something that takes place by means of a hidden order (*occulto … ordine*): we understand through our own reasoning that this is the sort of situation in which "nothing is fitting or unfitting in a part which is not fitting or suitable for the whole."[36] The connection between this sentiment and the workings of the mind as it is envisaged in book one of *De Ordine* is spelled out much later at *De Trinitate* 9.4.7, where, speaking of the nature of love, Augustine observes:

> Perhaps the mind … is a whole, and its parts are as it were the love by which it loves itself, and from these two parts that whole is composed … [For] no part embraces the whole of which it is part; but when the mind knows itself as a whole, that is, knows itself perfectly, its knowledge extends through the whole of it; and when it loves itself perfectly, it loves itself as a whole, and its love diffuses itself through the whole.

In *De Ordine*, the question of the parts and whole arises as a hermeneutic principle in connection with personal narratives leading to ethical goals, and these, as Augustine explains elsewhere, have their origin in love. It is

[36] Cf. *C. Acad.*, 1.3.9, where a person is defined as *beatus* if he or she lives in harmony with the one part of the mind which governs the other parts, namely reason.

in this sense of the interconnectedness of things that Augustine speaks of another type of hidden order, which leads us to God, if we adhere to its principles during our lives: *Ordo est, quem si tenuerimus in uita, perducet ad deum* (1.9.27). This, in fact, is what Augustine tells Romanianus in slightly different terms toward the end of his dedication of *Contra Academicos*, when he states that the equally hidden force of providence will, through philosophy, arouse what is divine in him (*quod in te diuinum*, 1.1.3), namely reason.

In these passages Augustine uses the notion of natural order as a backdrop to illustrate what he means by moral, ascetic, and interpretive order. The purpose of the open dialogue in *Contra Academicos* and *De Ordine* is not to find a solution to the problem of order, but to chart the stages of an intellectual journey that leads from outer to inner conversation and from there to an appropriate philosophy for themselves, in which there is a type of emotional and intellectual ordering at work. As Trygetius observes at *Contra Academicos* 1.5.13, echoing his thoughts, the only right way of life is the pursuit of wisdom. Far from solving problems, therefore, the external debate in *De Ordine*, like the conversation in *Contra Academicos*, reminds Augustine's students that there are many things they do not know: the recognition of their ignorance is the important thing, both as an incentive for humility and as a rationale for leading a virtuous life. This sequence of events is compared to a story which links writers in a chain of events in which the beginning and the end are unknown: *scriptorum quasi uincolo* (*De Ord.*, 1.9.27).

From the point at which these connections are made, the question of order becomes involved with the appropriateness of the type of order with which they have carried on their conversation. This phase of the debate reaches an important turning point at 1.10, where Licentius is asked to give his own definition of the subject under discussion. Wary of Augustine's comments (1.9.27), he reluctantly proposes, as noted, that order is the principle by which all things established by God are set on their respective courses.[37] When Trygetius points out that the inventor of universal principles would thus be subject to one of them,[38] Licentius offers the example of Christ, whose appearance on earth made him obedient to physical laws, even though, as God, he was unaffected by them. Augustine is distressed

[37] *De Ord.*, 1.10.28: "Ordo est … per quem aguntur omnia quae deus constituit."

[38] Cf. *Conf.*, 11.5.7, where a similar argument is used to reject the notion that God, as creator of all things, can be considered an artisan, since someone or something would have had to create him.

by this display of cleverness and concludes that his joy at his students' conversion to philosophy was premature (1.10.29). In his view they have mistaken logical for spiritual progress.

There is one further episode in book one, which brings the drama to an appropriate close. The major player is Monica, who has not taken part in the previous discussions.[39] She appears at 1.11, asks where the trio are at this point in their thinking, and offers both a narrative and philosophical conclusion to their meandering discussion. Her intervention is made to seem unrehearsed. But Augustine requests that her question be taken down, despite his awareness of the potential embarrassment that can arise when debaters in an open forum do not think before they speak.[40] Monica reacts to this well-intentioned gesture by stating that she does not know of a philosophical dialogue in which a woman has played a significant role.[41] Augustine responds to this feminist jibe by dodging the gender issues and instead describes his ideal reader as someone with whom he can enter into dialogue, as he does with himself: *me tecum philosophantem*.

It would be possible, of course, for Monica to be one of his readers,[42] but as he sees matters she has a more important rôle to play. For this reason she is never pictured reading in his early works (although she occasionally listens to the readings of others). The purpose of her staged entries, here as in the *Confessions*, is to offer Augustine's audience at Cassiciacum and elsewhere an alternative to the proposed model of ascent through study. Like St. Antony, whom he clearly admired, she acquires the essentials of religion without the need for book-learning.[43] It follows that on Augustine's scale of values the acquisition of knowledge by means of reading, i.e., teaching through words, occupies a lower place than direct instruction without the need of words. Augustine's views on this occasion link up with *De Magistro* 14.45–46 and *De Trinitate* 14.7.9, where it is likewise suggested that dialogue can yield something more profitable than words. And, needless to say, at the basis of Monica's enlightenment is not words, but the Word.

The preface to *De Beata Vita*, Augustine's first reflection on this theme, thus falls into place within his early attempts to discuss the acquisition of

[39] Cf. Conybeare, *The Irrational Augustine*, pp. 95–138, who provides a full discussion of Monica's rôle in *De Ordine* within the dialogue's dramatic setting.

[40] E.g., *Sol.*, 2.7.14; *De Ord.*, 1.10.30.

[41] *De Ord.*, 1.11.31; forgetting Diotima in the *Symposium*.

[42] Augustine's potential readership is broadly conceived by late ancient standards and includes not only freemen but also cobblers versed in philosophy and even women!; *De Ord.*, 1.11.31.

[43] *De Doct. Christ.*, prol., 4.

ethical knowledge. It would appear that the sea journey toward "the port of philosophy" in this metaphorical account passes many obstacles, among them books, which can create false expectations for the "sailors" and even hinder their passage to their desired destination, the possession of wisdom. In that dialogue, as in book one of *De Ordine*, Augustine grants that it is necessary for some people, him included, to study the works of their intellectual predecessors (*maiores nostri*). However, unless they are in the right frame of mind, the knowledge acquired by these studies will not permit them to pass beyond what is described in *De Beata Vita* as a "mountain," representing pride, which bars the passage of the ships heading to their chosen port. This is essentially the lesson that is taught by Monica's intervention in *De Ordine*. She reinforces Augustine's criticism of needless wrangling at 1.10, and, detached from the discourse, surveys the scene of the verbal battle, in which little has been accomplished. She is a potent symbol of *docta ignorantia*, which is, as noted, the certainty we have that there are matters on which we cannot hope to attain certainty.[44] Of course her naïveté is only apparent. Recall that, at *De Beata Vita* 2.7, it is her Socratic questioning, and not that of Augustine's students, which leads to the single intellectual achievement of the dialogue, namely the recognition of the *cogito* as the source of knowledge concerning self-existence.

To summarize: I have been following parts of *De Ordine*, book one, scene by scene, and I have deliberately adopted a literary rather than philosophical style of analysis, since this permits us to appreciate the formation of Augustine's thinking about instructive narratives by means of a series of interlocking stories involving his students, friends, and relatives as they effectively proceed over one night and the following day. There are two conclusions that can be drawn from this analysis. First, although Augustine occasionally uses soliloquies as spiritual exercises in book one, their primary function is to illustrate the possibility of inner dialogue on a variety of themes that are less adequately handled, in his opinion, by exterior dialogue. In this respect the soliloquy is a literary form as well as a critical instrument of thinking.

Secondly, it is clear that Augustine does not view soliloquies as functioning autonomously in relation to the problems that are under scrutiny but rather as meditative interludes which accompany, and attempt to explain, the unfolding of a series of events in time whose order and meaning are not apparent. As one scene succeeds another in book one in

[44] *Conf.*, 12.5.5.

no logical or narrative order, the reader has the impression that, if there is a method of explanation for what is taking place, it must arise outside the actual presentation of phenomena, which appears to be unplanned. This is precisely Augustine's second lesson concerning narrative. We perceive an order, and can intellectualize about it, but we do not perceive its underlying causes. Soliloquies can help us understand this lack of understanding but in themselves soliloquies do not explain anything either. Like the external dialogue, they remain imprisoned within the order of words.

Book Two. With these thoughts in mind, we may turn profitably, if briefly, to a reading of parts of *De Ordine*, book two. In approaching this segment of the dialogue, it is helpful to look forward to Augustine's description of his failed secular mental ascent at *Confessions* 7.10.16, which in some respects parallels what he says about the limitations of external and internal dialogue in book two. Recall that the meditative and mystical experience in book seven of his autobiography is followed by a lengthy internal dialogue, in which the relative merits of the Bible and the *libri Platonicorum* are weighed. The soliloquy first acts as a framework for Neoplatonic elevation and then supersedes it as the book's major instrument of intellectual inquiry. The precedent for this transition from mental ascent to interpretive soliloquy is found in book two of *De Ordine*, which was written a few months after the experience described in the *Confessions* actually took place. As this dialogue's participants attempt to overcome their senses and proceed upwards mentally and spiritually, they are similarly engaged in conversations about themselves, within themselves, and before God.

In all of this Augustine is saying to us, as his readers, that mental ascent, whatever its source, can give us an illusion of progress, but sober talk within ourselves, provided it is honest talk, ultimately destroys that illusion. There is no such thing as progress through knowledge, or progressive knowledge, in his outline of the ascetic life. This is the message that is clarified after 2.7.24, when the exterior dialogue comes to an end. The remainder of *De Ordine* is a monologue which concludes with soliloquies by Reason (2.12.35 ff.) and Soul (2.18.48 ff.), whose value is largely allegorical.

As a consequence of this development, the dialogue in *De Ordine* may be said to begin and end in interior dialogue. The intervening arguments, which take place in open dialogue, are unsuccessful attempts to tackle the main theme, as defined by Augustine: this consists in understanding the nature of order in the soul and in God (2.18.47). In the *Soliloquia*, where a similar aim is envisaged (1.2.7), there is a hierarchy of discourses in which the open dialogue has its appropriate place, whereas in *De Ordine*

dialogue yields to monologue and finally to indeterminate interior conversation. It is only when Augustine approaches wordlessness, as he does at the end of Reason's allegory in book two, that deeper insights are on the horizon, just as, at Ostia, in the company of Monica, a vision of life after death occurs during silent communication between souls.

The genre of the soliloquy makes its appearance in book two of *De Ordine* in the form of a philosophical topos, namely a debate on the nature of wisdom and folly with a fictive *sapiens*. Augustine asks how a virtuous person can remain in this state of mind in view of worldly temptations and the inevitable inroads of time and habit on his resolve. Moreover, if God encompasses everything, as the debaters have concluded in book one, why should not *both* wisdom and folly be "with God"? Alypius, having recently returned from Milan, is asked to comment on this difficult problem and suggests a Stoic line of attack, whereas Augustine, reiterating letter 3, states that as long as a person remains ignorant of Folly's nature he cannot hope to escape from her grasp (2.38–2.39).

The result of this interchange is a dialogue within a dialogue – still another soliloquy. It is of course not any sage with whom Augustine is debating within his thoughts, but the figure of the Academic, which is familiar to his students from *Contra Academicos*. If such a person were to offer the group instruction on folly, he would presumably have to be approached before he acquired wisdom. For he can no more explain what folly is, once he has become wise, than a fool, satisfied with his situation, can account for its opposite. What is needed is something like the Platonized Christ of *De Vera Religione*, that is, an *alius magister*, who is able to rise above both positions and view them objectively.[45] The fictive sophist finds the idea attractive, since such an instructor would be at once wise and foolish, i.e., divine.

Augustine portrays the tranquility of Alypius as the alternative to the noisiness of open debate in which he and the other speakers have taken part on this and other themes since their introduction in *Contra Academicos*. His friend's entrance into the conversation, albeit reluctantly, also illustrates a feature of Augustine's early writings in this form: they are all in some sense dialogues with himself, and, as such, soliloquies. The interlocutors may be historical or fictional (or some combination of the two) but they derive their intellectual vitality from Augustine's thinking.

Alypius asks whether he has not been esteemed up to this point in the proceedings for his discreet silence, implying that there is no very good

[45] *De Ord.*, 1.11.31: "magistrum alium quaereremus." This, of course, can only be Christ, as suggested at *De Vera Rel.*, 2.2, ff.

reason for interrupting it based on anything that has transpired in the open discussion. The reader recalls that it is the silence of a soliloquy that is interrupted at 1.3.8 by the irregular flow of water in the drains: the disorder can now be recognized as a symbol of the open dialogue itself, just as Augustine's chest pains, which drove him to Cassiciacum, represent the futility of the rhetorical games played in Milan. It is in this context that Alypius complains that his peace and quiet have been disturbed: *Sed inrupta iam quies est* (2.3.8). He associates such restlessness with the introduction of oral debate. In his view, the alternative is concentrated study and meditation, by which, he notes, he earlier discovered the errors of the sceptical Trygetius (2.3.10).

In support of this view let us observe that nothing the group has said so far has got them to the heart of the problem: why the actions of a fool, although committed in ignorance, cannot be part of some grand scheme of order that is relevant but unperceived, like the water flowing through the drains in book one. And, if this is possible, why cannot evil be included within divine order too, as proposed contentiously in the earlier discussion?

Trygetius now makes a contribution to the debate and does so somewhat inadvertently, as he did in the anecdote about attention in *De Beata Vita*. He observes that the bits and pieces of a fool's life are meaningless in themselves, but they have their place in the big picture: this is governed by providence, about which the fool knows nothing (2.4.11). Recall that this is what Augustine said about the drainpipe and the cockfight, and what he will say later about the liberal arts. On this view, order cannot be attributed to the putative fool, since he is unaware of the larger context of his actions. Other examples are provided of people who engage in actions that have local meanings, for instance, hangmen and prostitutes (both reused in book one of *De Libero Arbitrio*). The discussion is extended to solecisms and barbarisms, as stylistic equivalents of these observed disorders, and to false judgements and conclusions. The lesson of book one is reasserted: In all such cases, the sense of disorder originates in us and we have no convincing evidence against the Sceptics that it exists in the external world.

Augustine contrasts these examples with what takes place in organized disciplines, such as music, geometry, and astronomy, where order is established by fixed numerical ratios which permit one to move from the particular to the general and vice versa.[46] In his dedicatory letter to

[46] *De Ord.*, 2.5.14. The point is amplified in *De Mus.*, 1 and 6, where the principles of symmetry are elaborated; see Chapter 4.

Zenobius, he likewise notes that the soul, when it has returned to itself, focuses on one mental object rather than on many sensory objects. In this respect, the soul can be compared to a circle, in which every point on the circumference is equidistant from the centre. It is possible to divide a circle infinitely by means of radii, but each of these radii at its furthest point from the centre will be the same length. The circle thus forms a perfect image of the manner in which the soul has the potential to be both one and many.[47]

Disciplines of Body and Mind. This is a fitting figure with which to introduce the monologue which follows. The only interventions in later chapters are by Alypius at 2.10.28 and 2.20.54, neither of which seriously interrupts Augustine's train of thought. In any case, by now the gist of what he has to say is in his students' minds. The liberal arts are indispensable for studying philosophy but of limited use in the quest for wisdom. They provide a vehicle for mental ascent up to a point, but ascent is only a part of the journey toward the contemplative life, as now envisaged: means rather than goal. Even those who have been uplifted through the *artes* remain unsure of the meaning of the network of events in which they are caught up: there are too many variables, too few certainties. Living a good life evidently requires virtue, reinforced by education, as well as confidence in how things will turn out – a confidence only faith, not the *artes*, can teach (2.5.15). In attempting to make sense out of events, we frequently make use of reason; but when reason fails, as inevitably it does, in the face of metaphysical difficulties, we turn to authority in the form of confidence, or assumptions, about how things will turn out.[48] Hermeneutical understanding, based on authoritative "horizons" of understanding, is preferable to pure rationalism because, in the end, our lives are not governed by rational principles which are arrived at by means of dialogue but by historical laws whose principles lie beyond our rational capacities.

[47] *Ibid*., 1.2.3. Augustine returns to this model at 2.5.14; a more elaborate set of connections between numerical ratios and narrative types is suggested in *De Mus*., 6. The source is Plotinus, *Enn*., 1.7.7.

[48] The argument anticipates central themes in contemporary hermeneutics; see Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. and ed. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York, 1975), pp. 241–253. In this section of *De Ord*. it is important to distinguish between literary authority and the more general problem of reason and authority; for a general review of the issues, see Frederick E. Van Fleteren, "Authority and Reason, Faith and Understanding in the Thought of St. Augustine," *Augustinian Studies* 4 (1973), 33–71; more recently, Conybeare, *The Irrational Augustine*, pp. 144–165. On the possibility that authority in Augustine's early writings may have Varronian roots, see Vivien Law, "*Auctoritas*, *consuetudo*, and *ratio* in St. Augustine's Ars grammatica," in *De ortu grammaticae. Studies … in Memory of Jan Pinborg*, ed. G. L. Burkill-Hall *et al*., (Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 194–199.

The transition in thinking is similar to what is spelled out three years later at *De Magistro* 11.37, where, in another context, the illusions of open discussion are likewise abandoned. Here, in contrast to the argumentative Adeodatus in that dialogue, Augustine envisages his students' inherent love of *ordo* as being expressed by a group of intellectual *inordinati* (2.7.24). Also, in *De Magistro* the issues are taken up in an entirely oral and linguistic mode, whereas in *De Ordine* Augustine looks forward to the presence of readership in later works, such as the *Confessions*. Dialogue and soliloquy are not contrasted as forms of discourse arising outside and inside the mind, as in the *Soliloquia*, but as oral and written communication intended for different audiences: these are symbolized respectively by his students, as ideal listeners, and by Zenobius, as implicit reader (2.7.23).

The living audience perpetuates the traditional view that the philosophical dialogue is spoken and spontaneous: the readers present a more accurate view of the way in which such conversations take place within the genre of the late ancient dialogue, which, as noted, is usually written, rehearsed, and accompanied by supporting material. The oral elements in book one of *De Ordine* can even be seen as an example of historical nostalgia; the inner interpretive dialogue, which begins midway in book two, presents a more realistic view of the state of philosophical discourse by the late fourth century. The invented nature of the open dialogue is symbolized by its chief fictional character – Augustine. When the monologue begins this character disappears: the fictional and historical Augustines become one, and we hear only Augustine's voice, which, as noted, is throughout the dialogues a symbol of duration. The theme that predominates after 2.7.24 is the ambivalent rôle of discourse in the soul's education.[49] This is merely to restate the dialogue's central thesis concerning the problem of words in another way. As two Augustines give way to one, the dialogue yields to the soliloquy.

Appropriately, therefore, Augustine begins this segment of book two with an account of learning to speak, read, and write.[50] This is a paradigm for the distinction between what is impermanent and permanent in the search for wisdom and happiness and, by analogy, a clue to his solution to the problem with which *De Ordine* begins, namely the difference between physical and moral order. Physical order is like grammatical rules, which do not change; moral order is like learning to speak, which requires a

[49] On the possible link with the discussion of reason and language in Plato, *Philebus* 18b-d, see Ilsetraut Hadot, *Arts libéraux et philosophie dans la pensée antique* (Paris, 2006), pp. 110–111.

[50] Cf. *Conf.*, 1.8.13.

combination of rules and training.[51] In language learning, we adopt correct grammar; in our lives, we correct our errors through our attempts to adhere to "the very law of God, which, abiding eternally with him, steady and unshaken, is transcribed, so to speak, onto wise souls."[52] On this view, we ascend through disciplines as we move upwards on the scale of moral behaviour. The *disciplina* of learning imposes a twofold order on its students, one part of which pertains to their way of life, the other to their instruction.[53] But the conquest of evil within ourselves requires the continual assertion of the will in favor of higher knowledge and insight. The will, thus introduced as the motor of stability, assumes the major rôle in making moral decisions in *De Libero Arbitrio*.

In an attempt to give this doctrine a narrative context, Augustine configures imaginary students, who, proceeding from *adulescentia* to *iuuentus*,[54] acquire virtues and ascetic attitudes which reject materialism, the attractions of the senses, and other forms of worldliness[55] in pursuit of a contemplative frame of mind (2.8.25). Their education is guided by authority and reason;[56] the one, he argues, having priority in historical time, the other in considerations of philosophical reality.[57] Youth is led upwards, following *uitae optimae praecepta*.[58]

[51] For a comparable view, see *De Mus.*, 1, where it is asked whether knowing how to play an instrument involves *scientia*.

[52] *De Ord.*, 2.8.25; cf. *Conf.*, 1.18.29. Note that this is not a question of understanding but obedience; cf. Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982), p. 80.

[53] *De Ord.*, 2.8.25; cf. Cicero, *Hort.*, ed. Grilli, fr. 23–24. This may be Augustine's tacit answer to the different definitions of man in book 2, one defining man as a "rational mortal animal" (2.11.31), the other assuming that rationality is attained through the ascent of the soul.

[54] Although later "conversion" is not excluded; *ibid.*, 2.8.25; in the latter case, Augustine notes, "intra aetatem senatoriam … uel certe intra iuuentum." By the time he wrote, young senators from the provinces were numerous.

[55] His putative students avoid the pleasures of sex, food, dress, and games; also the temptations of sloth, jealousy, fame, power, praise, and gain. They do nothing unmanly or foolhardy, are not angered by others' faults, correct their imperfections, and are forgiving rather than hateful or vengeful. Their love of their masters is so great that direct commands are superfluous: *Nemini faciant, quod pati nolunt* (2.8.25).

[56] *De Ord.*, 2.9.26; on this much discussed passage, see the article on "authority" by K.-H. Lütcke, in *AL*, vol. 1, pp. 498–510, with an ample bibliography, pp. 509–510, including the author's influential studies of the issues.

[57] *Ibid.*: "Tempore auctoritas, re autem ratio prior est." For a discussion, see Goulven Madec, "A propos d'une traduction de *De ordine* II, v, 16," *REA* 16 (1970), 179–186; cf. Nello Cipriani, "Le fonti cristiane della dottrina trintaria nei primi Dialogi di S. Agostino," *AUG* 34 (1994), 253–313. Cf. Virgilio Pacioni, *Agostino d'Ippona*, for a logical analysis. Authority is preferable to reason for the young in years and mentality; they presumably provide a model for the uneducated multitude; *De Ord.*, 2.9.26, assuming that "bonorum auctoritas" refers back to "passunt mentem bonam" at 2.8.25. Here, *imperitus* refers to practical rather than intellectual skills, or to a combination of the two. A fuller explanation awaits the allegory of Reason, 2.11.30, ff.

[58] On this topic, see Nello Cipriani, "Il rifiuto des pessimismo porfiriano nei primi scritti di s. Agostino," *AUG* 37 (1997), 114–117; 138–139.

But authority is also a narrative principle in book two of *De Ordine*, since it teaches, as Christ taught, through the example of humility. This dimension of authority is presented in an allegory in which *Auctoritas* is said to deceive human senses while transcending them and to lead to higher knowledge while demonstrating that she has lowered herself to do so.[59] *Diuina Auctoritas* is a teacher who pays close attention to the reception of her words and to the subsequent reaction of her students. She thus becomes an incarnational exemplar of humility, whose mysteries provide guidance for the discipline into which Augustine's students are being initiated (2.9.27). Authority is necessary to realize this *uitae imago*, as Alypius calls it, since the mind frequently yields to the dictates of the body. As a result, men and women are not capable of leading a superior life without divine aid: *sine diuina ope* (2.10.28).

Speaking in 387, Alypius may have had Augustine's personal failures in mind, concerning which he was well informed.[60] The question is difficult for Augustine to handle because he has wavered on the subject of divine assistance in conversation with Licentius at 1.8.22. But he cannot agree with a rigid conception of divine authority either. This is because the rules for living (*praecepta uiuendi*) about which he has been speaking are not his invention; they are based on authoritative writings,[61] for which he is merely an interpreter. He is a guide, and such guidance, he reminds us, is usually personal, as in the case of Alypius himself.[62]

In light of this problem, a second allegory is introduced at 2.11–15; its purpose is to chart the functions of the liberal arts in the achievement of the personal ascetic life. This narrative chiefly concerns the ascent of Reason, and effectively continues the conversation that was cut short between *Ratio* and Augustine in the *Soliloquia*. As in *De Immortalitate Animae*, reason is the means of discovering order as well as the principle of order.[63] We are thus able to reason without knowing fully what

[59] *De Ord.*, 2.9.27; however, having said this, I am not convinced that Augustine fully resolves the tension between *ratio* and *auctoritas* in his dialogues. Until the writing of *De Doctrina Christiana* in 396, he seems to have in mind a series of specific situations, from which generalities arise, rather than a global approach to authority.

[60] *Conf.*, 6.10.16.

[61] *De Ord.*, *loc. Cit.*, where *paene diuinorum libri* suggests philosophy rather than scripture.

[62] *Ibid.*: "ut ego tibi uerborum, tu mihi rerum magister effectus sis." The point is not merely rhetorical, since, by this time, Alypius had adopted the chaste lifestyle which Augustine still wished to postpone. These precepts are associated with Pythagoras, who was the subject of a revival in the third century; see D. J. O'Meara, *Pythagoras Revived*: *Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 9–29.

[63] *De Imm. An.*, 2.2.

reason is.[64] To overcome this difficulty, it is necessary to distinguish the rational (*rationale*) and the reasonable (*rationabile*), the latter incorporating an element of authority.[65] Also, in Augustine's enumeration of reason's qualities, two senses play important parts, the eyes and the ears, representing, respectively, *factum* and *dictum* (2.11.32). Based on the criteria of the one or the other (or both) we feel justified in stating that something we have seen or heard exhibits rationality,[66] e.g., a building or a song. This is the type of order that typifies the artful works of humans,[67] and it is conveyed, not by the senses themselves, but by means of signs, as in the case of the mimetic arts[68] like acting, where the stage-player's gestures are signals for the reaction of his spectators. Therefore, "the sense" means one thing, "through the sense" another. Beautiful movement delights the sense, but only the significance of movement pleases the mind (2.11.34).

How can we sum up Augustine's argument here in the light of what he has said in book one? A clue is found at *De Ordine* 2.12–14, where Reason concludes the task that she set herself in the *Soliloquia*[69] and expands her rôle to include virtually everything that makes use of reason. But this is reason as viewed in a new perspective, namely that of communication.This is *ratio communis* based on words which are assigned to things so that people can make use of hearing, so to speak, as an agent, negotiator, or interpreter (*quasi interprete)* between minds and things. This conception is comparable to the notion of the *sensus communis* in book two of *De Libero Arbitrio*, by which sense impressions are brought together before being passed on for judgement by reason

[64] *De Ord.*, 2.11.30.

[65] The rational is anything that uses, or is capable of using, reason; the reasonable is all that is done or said according to rational principles. The figure of Reason divides the topic into the faculty of reasoning in the soul and the things that are brought about as a result of this reasoning. The plan for the baths at Cassiciacum is an example of *ratio*; the baths, or the conversations taking place there, are examples of *rationabilia*; 2.11.30–31.

[66] But reason does not apply to smell, touch, or taste. In these senses, the rational element that gives rise to the appropriate response is in the object sensed; 2.11.33. The discussion of the *propria* of the senses is completed in book 2 of *De Lib. Arbit.*, discussed below.

[67] *De Ord.*, 2.11.34: "Quod late patet ac paene in omnes artes operaque humana diffunditur." According to P. and I. Hadot, this statement combines the non-corporeal notion of reason in Neoplatonism with the corporeal notion in Stoicism, which enabled the latter to include rhetoric and dialectic as divisions of philosophy; see Pierre Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris, 1968), pp. 485–488 and I. Hadot, *Ars libéraux et philosophie*, pp. 107–108.

[68] Cf. *Sol.*, 2.10.18.

[69] Cf. *De Mus.*, 6.10.25–26. The most thorough discussion of this outline and its sources is I. Hadot, *Arts libéraux et philosophie*, esp. pp. 101–130; on the gendered aspects of *ratio*, see Conybeare, *The Irrational Augustine*, pp. 144–162.

and the internal sense.[70] In *De Ordine*, "common reason" coordinates both the interpretation of linguistic sense-impressions and the working out of forms of expression based on those impressions. At the first level Reason distinguishes sounds, and gives each sound a specific letter (incidentally creating the professions of record-keeping and accounting); at the second, she works out the relationship between grammar and literacy (*grammatica, literatio*). After separating consonants and vowels and classifying the parts of speech, *Grammatica* recognizes the existence of literature (*letteratura*), that is, the types of discourse that are recorded in writing. This is artificial memory, out of which history is born.[71] It is only after the establishment of the linguistic arts that we hear of dialectic and rhetoric (2.12.35–2.13.38). In the classical debate between Isocrates and Plato, Augustine votes decisively for the former.

After the invention of grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric, Reason wishes to be seized and transported to the contemplation of divine matters,[72] as did Augustine, as a budding student of the liberal arts. But she is prevented from doing so by the Senses, just as he yielded to their seduction in Carthage and Milan. When Reason glances in their direction, she hears a great cacophony as Grammar, Dialectic, and Rhetoric lay claim to a unique truth that she has presumably brought into being through language.[73] Reason is able to distinguish between the sound (*sonum*) and the sign (*signum*), that is, between the sensory and the mental. She realizes that the ears deal with sounds of three types, vocal, instrumental, and percussive and, as she reiterates in *De Musica*, book one, she recognizes that these sounds have little use in communication unless some sort of order is imposed.[74] She studies metrical feet and word accents, resulting in the invention of poetry.[75] From the ears she advances to the eyes, discovering two further branches of learning, geometry and astronomy. She appreciates the beauty of heaven and earth, which is made comprehensible

[70] For a discussion of the internal sense, see part two of this chapter.

[71] Cf. *De Quant. An.*, 33.72.

[72] *De Ord.*, 2.14.39. Augustine contrasts this sudden desire with the slower, methodical progress of Reason *studiis liberalibus disciplinisque*; 2.13.38. At 2.15.43, the same verb is used to describe the possibility of her relapsing into the senses. For suggestive remarks on Augustine's vocabulary for dealing with the liberal arts, see Philip Burton, *Language in the "Confessions" of Augustine*, pp. 63–87.

[73] It is tempting to compare this backward glance to Augustine's wistful recollection of sensual pleasures, which is similarly the subject of allegory at *Conf.*, 8.5.11–12; 8. 11.26.

[74] Cf. *De Mag.*, 1.l and *De Mus.*, 1.

[75] Such relationships, based on number, are permanent, whereas the sounds of words, entering the mind through the ears, are impermanent: they proceed from the present to the past and

through mathematics. She even comes to believe that universal truth is disclosed by means of numbers (2.15.42–43).

At this point it is useful to recall that this speech is a soliloquy by Reason that takes place within a monologue by Augustine, who is in fact addressing his students. Her lecture completes the soliloquy with which book one begins. Within *De Ordine*, internal dialogue thus acts as a framework for ascent, and the external and internal dialogues are both part of a lived narrative. These dialogues are enacted in one way at Cassiciacum, as the discussions take place overnight and on the following day, and in another way in the mind of Augustine, whose thoughts are proceeding inwardly between the period of the soliloquies that begin and end the work. Through these discourses he tells a story of the soul's progress in which no progress is actually made. In this respect, authority is a better teacher than reason, freer from illusions and closer to the life-narratives in which, Augustine believes, our moral principles are unfolded.

Those who reach this conclusion are *eruditi*, since they bring together in unity what is spread about in various branches of learning (2.16.44).[76] The erudite person has both ascetic and philosophic motives. On the one hand, he resists false images, transitory things, and the passions, and by fleeing these, lives a life of moral purity; on the other, he engages in the program envisaged in *De Ordine*, through which he arrives eventually at the *via negativa* – the knowledge of God through what he is not. This conclusion is the logical converse of the *cogito*, insofar as it does not argue from the presence of consciousness to the self's existence, but from the existence of the soul or self to the divine origins of consciousness. As a consequence, the study of the liberal arts, which is so clearly praised, has limited goals, namely the understanding of the customs and usages of a person's way of life (*ad usum uitae*) and the disciplines of cognition and contemplation (*ad cognitionem rerum contemplationemque*, 2.16.44).

Augustine thus reframes the contrast with which he concluded book one. The ideal student is someone with a good mind, maturity, and the habit of leisured but passionate study, but direct ascent is reserved for a different sort of individual, who, like Monica, bases herself on faith rather than erudition. She is able to confound philosophers when she wishes,

are recognized in the present because they are temporarily imprinted on the memory; *De Ord.*, 2.14.41.

[76] As a statement about communication, this assertion can be compared to Augustine's distinction between *disciplina naturalis* and *rationalis* at *De Vera Religione* 16.32, etc., in which a program of lower and higher religious enlightenment is likewise put forward; on this question in general, see my study, *Augustine the Reader*, pp. 187–188.

as did St. Antony, but for her studies nonetheless remain an impenetrable forest: *rerum immensa quaedam silua* (1.17.45). Her example teaches that an unschooled soul can rise above the body and reach great heights within itself.[77] Augustine follows a lower road, the *ordo studiorum sapientiae* (2.17.47). He hankers after self-knowledge, in order to know happiness in the here and now, and knowledge of his origin, in order to learn something about ultimate happiness.

The final speaker in *De Ordine* is, appropriately, *Anima*, the human soul. Now devoted to the study of philosophy, she inspects or examines herself, and, through the instruction she receives, is persuaded that she and Reason possess each other (as do Augustine and Reason in the *Soliloquia*). Recognizing, as well, that the highest form of reason is number – that reason, as noted, is nothing else but number – she speaks to herself, explaining that the power of reason consists in precisely the activity that Augustine has just described, namely the capacity to analyze and synthesize by means of an inner hidden activity, through which many become one (2.18.48). Soliloquizing is thus reunited with logical progress through rational dialogue. It is by means of this combination that the purified soul is permitted to see God, who is the unique source of truth. But this vision is a metaphor for unfinished spiritual enlightenment, just as the words with which we attempt to describe such an experience are inadequate, as Licentius earlier emphasized. The ending of *De Ordine* is an early warning sign of the negativism of the bishop of Hippo's doctrine of grace, which reimposes a different sort of order on his thinking.

DE LIBERO ARBITRIO

The expansion of narrative

Augustine's other major contribution to the theme of soliloquy, order, and freedom in his early writings is found in *De Libero Arbitrio*. This work completes the transformation of hierarchical schemes for personal advancement in the earlier dialogues, in particular in the *Soliloquia* and *De Ordine*, replacing them with an existential alternative that is articulated within the opposites of human free will and divine predetermination. By way of introduction to my discussion of this work, it is necessary to consider briefly the status of narrative in the dialogue and its relationship to Manichaeism and Pelagianism.

[77] *Ibid*., 2.17.45. Her major demonstration takes place in the "vision at Ostia", a few days before her death; *Conf*., 9.10.23–25.

Narrative. One of the innovative features of *De Libero Arbitrio* concerns relations between legal and literary narrative.[78] In book one Augustine becomes the Western pioneer in the philosophical analysis of legal cases as stories. He recognizes the rôle of factual evidence, as well as the part played by the judicial interpretation of statutes; however, his chief interest, as in his theory of signs, lies in the range of ambiguities and uncertainties that occur in the stories themselves, as they are related before a tribunal.

In the final analysis this tribunal is God, but within book one it is presented as the dialogue's implied or ideal reader/thinker,[79] who judges the cases in question in accordance with accepted rules for submitting evidence within the norms of codified legal statutes as well as within an interpretive framework for emplotted narratives that is worked out in a number of early writings (including book six of *De Musica*, discussed in Chapter 4). In the light of these parameters, Augustine concludes that a judgement in a case in which the evidence forms part of a narrative has to be based on the facts in question as well as on the plausibility of the story in which they are found.

Augustine thus anticipates the contemporary view that "law stories are narrative in structure" and "inherently rhetorical in aim."[80] He recognizes that legal stories are never completely fictional; yet at the same time these stories share an important quality with invented tales, namely the situating of human experience within the category of "what if."[81] The presence of literary elements creates a region of doubt within the law's claim to represent impartiality or objectivity, even though judging tribunals operate through rules of law which are independent of individuals' interpretations. Augustine argues that there are no humanly invented laws that are entirely free from such narrative influences, since humans, as creators and practitioners of these laws, are subject to the temporality which is their principle of organization.

As we advance from book one to books two and three, it becomes clear that this view is presented in *De Libero Arbitrio* by means of the contrast between two sorts of stories, namely those which arise independently from a single teller and those which are told by one or more persons and are interconnected with other stories. In book one, adultery and murder are

[78] Jerome Bruner, *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life* (New York, 2002), pp. 37–62.
[79] Possibly under the influence of Augustine, Petrarch, in the preface to the *Secretum*, makes Truth, representing the reader, the judge of the arguments brought for and against the use of literature in teaching ethics.
[80] Bruner, *Making Stories*, p. 43. [81] *Ibid*., 48–49, 51.

illustrated by brief exemplary narratives, which are considered to be independent; however, in book three the problem of evil is discussed against the background of a single archetypal narrative, namely the account of the fall of man in Genesis, which is, in Augustine's view, interconnected with all later moral narratives. As a consequence of this distinction between types of stories, individuals make decisions in book one in the context of personal, social, and legal constraints, whereas in book three, freedom of choice is taken up within the framework of an overarching narrative unaffected by individuals, and their actions are considered to be prearranged within a historical scheme. Augustine thus abandons the telling of stories one by one, as personal or independent narratives, and tells them instead as chapters of a story, as if they formed parts of an interconnected, non-personal chain of events. As a consequence, ethical judgements about any one story are related to judgements in another. And causality is shifted from the local to the universal level.

These approaches to stories reflect different dimensions of Augustine's narrative theory: the context of the one is literary, while the other is theological.[82] In a literary context his interest in narrative is concerned chiefly with interpreting subjective experience. This experience is understood as a sequence of sensory and mental events, and the meaning of those events is established by means of reason and memory, as I suggest in the next chapter.[83] In a theological context Augustine is concerned less with describing subjective experience than with objective levels of meaning, i.e., meanings which can be shown to be in stories, if they are interpreted according to certain established rules. These meanings can arise in separate types of stories, as in books one and three; but Augustine also considers the possibility that different levels of meaning, moving from the literary to the theological, can characterize a single narrative, as in the case of the book of Genesis. Within this hierarchy, in the latter type of story one moves in his view from the literal to the non-literal level of interpretation. Within the non-literal dimension, there is another important distinction, which separates *scientia*, as *res narrandae et utendae* (things to be narrated and used) and *sapientia*, as *res contemplandae et fruendae* (things to be contemplated and enjoyed).[84]

[82] The alternative, which is discussed at length in the literature on *De Libero Arbitrio*, is to consider the differing views in the work as "early" and "late." For a review of this approach, which is not utilized here, see Simon Harrison, *Augustine's Way into the Will: The Theological and Philosophical Significance of "De Libero Arbitrio,"* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 21–24.

[83] As argued, *inter alia*, in book six of *De Mus*.

[84] Basil Studer, "Zur Bedeutung der Heiligen Schrift in Augustins De Trinitate," *AUG* 42 (2002), 138.

In his exploration of inner narrative landscape as an ineradicable features of subjective experience, and in his consideration of historical consciousness as an aspect of that experience, Augustine presents a personalized version of thinking about narrative that is later associated with the phenomenological tradition, in such writers as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Hans Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur. Broadly speaking, he proposes that the transformation of the subjective awareness of time involved in narrative thinking is something inescapable within the inner understanding of human experience. In this respect, his view of narrative has much in common with that of Dilthey, although he disagrees with the latter's view that such understanding pertains to human experience alone, since, as he sees it, the whole of divinely inspired creation is narrative in shape and "speaks" to us, as observers, concerning its temporal origins and structure.[85] Augustine also antedates the hermeneutical approach to narrative found in Gadamer, Ricoeur and other writers in this tradition since the eighteenth century in envisaging his approach as a branch of the discipline of biblical studies. His finest expression of this belief in the phenomenological nature of narrative is found in books nine to fourteen of *De Trinitate*, where he discusses "the presentness of the past" as a dimension of triadic relations in human psychology.[86]

Manichaeism. In addition to introducing advanced notions of narrative into legal thinking, book one of *De Libero Arbitrio* marks a turning point in Augustine's consideration of the moral implications of Manichaeism,[87] in particular its position on narratives describing the theological origins of evil.

He retains the dualists' view of the transitoriness of human experience, which he merges with Platonic and Neoplatonic distrust of evidence based on sense perceptions. However, he rejects the Manichaean explanation of this impermanence, which is that it is brought about by the unfortunate intermingling of darkness with light in the formation of the universe. According to these doctrines, it is the imprisonment of particles of inert, shapeless matter in human bodies and souls which causes individuals to obliterate their inherent knowledge of their true selves. In the Gnostic variant of dualism (which Augustine might have heard about in Africa),

[85] *Conf.*, 10.6.9.

[86] Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 101–111.

[87] The first book of *De Ord*. is entitled in some manuscripts, *Unde Malum*, a phrase that has Manichaean associations; see Richard Lim, "Manichaeans and Public Disputation in Late Antiquity," *RA* 26 (1992), 253; cf. *De Duobus Animabus* 10, (*CSEL* 25, 63): "unde malum."

the self's unity is restored by means of a messenger from the supreme being, who offers men and women a comprehensive understanding of their mythical origins and subsequent peregrinations.

In Manichaean theology the fall and salvation are predetermined by means of a cosmic process in which the decisive events have taken place well before individuals' births. Mortals, therefore, are relieved of personal responsibility for the origin of evil. Living an ethical life chiefly presupposes the acquisition of a certain kind of knowledge: this is a process of intimate revelation by which men and women are detached from contaminating material considerations and gradually regain the freedom of a purely spiritual existence. A part of this process consists in gaining an understanding of the cosmological myths that underpin Manichaean principles. As a consequence, in the African Manichaeism with which Augustine was acquainted it is a combination of revealed knowledge and interpretive illumination that jointly affects the moral life rather than personal decisions taken with freedom of choice.[88]

Augustine opposes the Manichaean view of these issues in *De Ordine*, without however finding a satisfactory alternative in classical philosophy or Christianity beyond the commitment to educated asceticism in which the mind is preferred to the body. Also, in the last analysis, although he rejects Manichaeistic determinism in this dialogue, the views on ethical matters expressed here and elsewhere in his first four dialogues are based on a no less inflexible dualism which identifies freedom of choice at the highest level with a divinely planned rational universe. A more deliberated answer to both Manichaean and pagan types of prognostication is worked out in books two and three of *De Libero Arbitrio*.[89] These writings break decisively with Platonic and Neoplatonic views on human responsibility, in particular with those of Plotinus and Porphyry, which stressed, respectively, the progressive understanding of the order of being through philosophy and the practice of ascetic rites of purification in achieving such higher knowledge.

Despite these and other innovative features, Augustine's argument for and against narrative in *De Libero Arbitrio* is not presented in as well-organized a fashion as he would have liked.[90] Nonetheless, there is, I believe, an envisaged design in the work, in which book two provides a connection between books one and three by taking up some of the factors

[88] Cf. Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity*, pp. 100–101.

[89] Echoed at *De Doct. Christ.*, 2.19.29–2.23.36.

[90] *Retr.*, 1.9. Much of what we know about Pelagianism, as well as African Manichaeism, is based on Augustine's accounts. If Augustine's reconstruction of Platonism and Neoplatonism is a guide,

affecting the certainty or uncertainty of ethical decisions.[91] The theme of certainty is represented by means of the proofs for the existence of the self and God, which are found respectively at 2.3.7 and 2.15.39.[92] Uncertainty is discussed by means of the interior sense in a lengthy aside which effectively extends what is said in earlier writings concerning the unreliability of sense perceptions and includes for the first time an analysis of the mind's integrative capacity. The *sensus interior* thus mediates between the external senses and interpretive reason; similarly, in books one and three, the rational faculty of interpretation mediates between particular ethical narratives, which affect our daily decisions, and the universal narrative of the Bible, which affects us all.

Pelagianism. As he looked back on *De Libero Arbitrio* from the vantage point of the *Retractationes*, Augustine saw the work as an answer not only to Manichaeism but also to Pelagianism. The question that can be asked is whether this was an accurate assessment of what was in his mind when he wrote. The narratives concerning legal and social conventions in book one provide an implicit contrast with Manichaean "fables," which are openly criticized at 1.2.4. However, in the case of Pelagianism,[93] Augustine had to contend with an approach to ethics that was not constrained by narrative considerations, despite the indebtedness of its founders to Old and New Testament writings; and as a consequence much of what he says in book one is beside the point, since the storied accounts of obedience and disobedience to God's commands in Genesis and elsewhere were thought by Pelagians to be exemplary but not binding on future generations. The followers of

these should be treated with caution. Augustine tended to give late ancient schools of philosophy more coherence than they actually had. The same may be the case with Manichaeism and Pelagianism.

[91] Cf. S. Harrison, *Augustine's Way into the Will*, pp. 28–62.

[92] First appearance at *De Lib. Arbit.*, 1.7.16; cf. 3.1.3, where a similar argument supports the view that everyone has a separate and distinctive will.

[93] Augustine argues that *De Lib. Arbit.* supports his opposition to Pelagianism at *Retr.*, 1.9.3; on which see Goulven Madec, *Introduction aux "Révisions" et à la lecture des oeuvres de saint Augustin* (Paris, 1996), pp. 105–110; and for an authoritative review, Josef Lössl, *Intellectus Gratiae. Die Erkenntnistheoretische und hermeneutische Dimension der Gnadenlehre Augustins von Hippo* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 210–410. But this summary of his views, dating from 426–427, has to be interpreted in the light of attacks on his conception of grace and human insufficiency made by Pelagius, Caelestius, and Julian of Eclanum after 399. These did not criticize *De Lib. Arbit.* but the interpretation of Paul in *Ad Simplicianum* and the *Confessions*, which were begun respectively in 396 and 397. See Gerald Bonner, "Augustine and Pelagianism," in *Church and Faith in the Patristic Tradition: Augustine, Pelagianism, and Early Christian Northumbria* (Aldershot, 1984), pp. 35–36, 40; Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 2nd edn (Berkeley, 2000), pp. 340–377; a recent review is Yves-Marie Duval, "La correspondence entre Augustin et Pélage," *REA* 45 (1999), 363–384.

Pelagius were convinced that mortals did not inherit original sin as a result of Adam's disobedience in the garden of Eden: men and women are personally responsible for their behavior before themselves and God.

In order to avoid confusion on this point it is necessary to put Augustine's retrospective view of these issues in the context of the chronological development of his doctrine on free will.[94] As noted, well before he became acquainted with the teachings of Pelagius, he had rejected the notion of ethical self-sufficiency in the form in which it is found in pagan philosophy and literature. He had investigated, if somewhat inconclusively, the factors potentially contributing to the soul's impoverishment and replenishment in both *De Beata Vita* and *Contra Academicos*. Also, he renounced his early interest, possibly inspired by Porphyry, in the achievement of spiritual progress by psychological means. This thinking culminated in his doctrine of grace, which appeared in stages from the late 380s and assumed a more consolidated form of expression in 397. In the light of this thinking, Augustine championed the view that humans were chosen for salvation "before the foundation of the world by means of predestination, in which God fulfilled what he foretold."[95] As noted by Luther and Calvin, this doctrine was based on a conception of divine power which made it impossible for mortals to influence the timing or justification for receiving God's benefits. Augustine derived his position from an interpretation of Paul that was contested in his own time and modified by later Catholic thinkers, but was still the subject of discussion *pro et contra* as late as seventeenth-century France.

It was during the period in which his notion of grace was taking shape that Augustine became the first Western thinker to deal systematically with the problem of free will.[96] His approach to the will evolved in phases, which included (1) dialogue with Plotinus and opposition to

[94] Cf. S. Harrison, *Augustine's Way into the Will*, pp. 24–27, where the issues are succinctly summarized.

[95] *De Praede. Sanct.*, 17.34, written in 429.

[96] For an interpretation of the theological components in Augustine's notion of the will within an argument for the continuity of his Christian outlook, see Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 95–99, 198–237; cf. the earlier theological presentation of these doctrines by Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982. With reference to the philosophical background, a good introduction is Charles H. Hahn, "Discovering the will from Aristotle to Augustine," in *The Question of "Eclecticism,"* ed. Dillon and Long (Berkeley, 1988), pp. 234–259; for useful comments on the approach of Dihle, *The Theory of the Will in Classical Antiquity*, see pp. 236–238, 258–259. Other introductions from a philosophical standpoint include William Lane Craig, "Augustine on Foreknowledge and Free Will," *Augustinian Studies* 15 (1984), 42–49, Eleonore Stump, "Augustine on free will," *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. E. Stump and N. Kretzmann (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 124–143 and Simon Harrison, *Augustine's Way into the Will*, chapters 4–6 (pp. 63–111).

Manichaeism, represented by *De Libero Arbitrio*; (2) studies in the inner conflict of the will, largely based on St. Paul, in the *Confessions*; and (3) consideration of the place of the will within a triadic psychology developed chiefly out of Plato's and Plotinus' conceptions of the powers of the soul, in the later books of *De Trinitate*.[97] In general, in phase one he was concerned with the individual and society; in phase two, with the conflict between mind and body; and in phase three, with the rôle of the will in cognition and emotion. In all three phases, narrative considerations played a part, since in the last analysis Augustine's theory of free will is based on an interpretation of stories taken from the Bible.

In his understanding of these episodes, he is acknowledged to be the first to propose a link between will, intentions, and sin. He sums up his thinking at *De Sermone Domini in Monte* 1.12.34, where he argues that there are three stages in every sinful act, an evil possibility, taking pleasure in the thought of doing the act, and consent. He is convinced that there is a perfect knowledge of virtue, which humans can occasionally glimpse in moments of mystical elevation, but the source of this knowledge, and hence of its permanence, resides in God alone. Mortals have an intuitive grasp of what this knowledge is like, because the capacity for such an insight is lodged in their minds by God; however, because of the first sin in Eden, they also possess a parallel and equally innate understanding that this grasp is temporary. It is the frailty, instability, and fallibility of the knowledge on which ethical decisions are made which constitutes Augustine's chief reason for rejecting the philosophical link between virtue and cognition which was so prominent a feature of ethical thought in Plato and his successors. How to reconcile ignorance and responsibility – this, in a nutshell, is Augustine's approach to grace and free will.

Augustine thought highly of the argument in *De Libero Arbitrio*, despite its weaknesses,[98] recommending the work to Secundinus, Marcellinus, and Jerome between 405 and 415.[99] One possible reason for his satisfaction may have arisen from his original argument that predestination contains

[97] On this topic see the full review of Gerald O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (London, 1987), pp. 7–79.

[98] Possibly resulting from the fact that the work began as a spoken dialogue, whose conversations, unlike those at Cassiciacum, were reported at different times and places. Evodius, Augustine's partner in *De Quant. An.*, is only named as interlocutor in *Ep.*, 162.2; on his identity and those of other participants in the dialogues written after the first four were completed, see the questions raised by S. Harrison, *Augustine's Way into the Will*, pp. 32–36. The text quoted in this chapter is from the edition of W. M. Green, *CCSL* 29 (1970), 211–321, silently corrected by G. Madec, *BA* 6, 3rd edn, (1976); on the changes, see G. Madec, "Notes sur le texte critique du 'De libero arbitrio,' d'Augustin," *RA* 20 (1974), 82–87.

[99] In order: *C. Secund.*, 11; *Ep.*, 143.5; and *Ep.*, 166.3.7.

a rationale for both the *genetic* and *intellectual* inheritance of sin. Humans may be ignorant of their inherent tendency towards wrongdoing, as are infants. But on reaching maturity and by studying the Bible, as Augustine did, they acquire an understanding of their situation, as well as the knowledge that they cannot extricate themselves from their fates, no matter how virtuously their lives are led according to the principles of one or another ancient philosophical school. Their actions in this world would win them merit, even the possibility of salvation, if the solution to the problem of sin depended on the establishment of ethics based on reason alone. But since the root cause of sin is historical, this approach has little value in the final analysis, except as a way of sorting out the local motivations for actions, which is what is done in book one of *De Libero Arbitrio*. In other respects, Augustine sees men and women as being caught in the interpretive webs that have been spun for them as well in those that they have spun for themselves.

Will, emotion, and legal stories

With these prefatory remarks in mind I turn to book one of *De Libero Arbitrio*. My discussion of this text differs in two respects from those that have preceded.[100] First, I take Augustine's discussion of legal cases (or legal stories) seriously and consider this segment of the dialogue to be one of the finest examples in his writings of reasoning from first principles. Secondly, I argue that this is an essential first stage in his argument, from which he advances into books two and three. Here, as noted, he abandons reasoning from first principles, at least in the form in which it appears in book one,[101] and adopts a combination of philosophical and theological analysis in which soliloquy and narrative play important rôles. In other words, we pass from one stage of the argument, in which the issues are approached as if there were no prior knowledge required for the argument, as in the case of the *cogito*, to a second stage, in which the aprioristic statements of book one are completed by thinking that involves a deeply historical and theological background. In this respect, the relationship between book one of *De Libero Arbitrio* and books two and three parallels the two segments of *De Magistro*, in which signs are

[100] For an authoratative review of the extensive literature, see the introduction to Goulven Madec, *Dialogues philosophiques. De magistro, De libero arbitrio* (*BA* 6), 3rd edn (Paris, 1976). Later studies are discussed by S. Harrison, *Augustine's Way into the Will*, pp. 1–27.

[101] On this point, see the discussion of book one that follows.

first analyzed from first principles and later placed within a hermeneutic framework which presupposes an understanding of the story of the fall in Genesis and the promise of redemption. It is possible to have a purely philosophical summary of the three books, as it is possible to sum up Augustine's theory of signs. However, in my view, taking these arguments out of their narrative settings does them a serious disservice.

In *De Libero Arbitrio*, Evodius, Augustine's sole interlocutor,[102] begins the discussion by asking whether God, the creator of all things, does not have to be considered the creator of evil as well. Arguments against this position have already been rehearsed in *De Ordine*; here Augustine distinguishes more clearly between evil that we do to others and evil that is done to us, proposing that only the latter can be attributed to God. He argues that a good God cannot be a true originator or perpetrator of evil; nonetheless, it is God who judges right and wrong. Those who are punished undoubtedly suffer, but their pain is ultimately a part of God's design for a just and ordered universe. God is therefore responsible for evils within a system of divinely administered justice, but he is excluded from responsibility for evils that we bring upon ourselves. These come about by means of the free operation of the will.[103]

Augustine's method of establishing this position in book one is based on the analysis of stories. In these narratives there are two conceptions of authorship and audience.[104] God is conceived as the perfect author, who knows in advance what we will do, and as the perfect audience, for whom in the end all human plans are realized, good or evil. By contrast, humans are imperfect authors and audiences: they do not see very far ahead, and what they know amounts to nothing more than a few episodes in a lengthy narrative. In acting evilly they effectively replace God, as an omniscient author and audience, with themselves. Put in the language of earlier dialogues, Augustine is suggesting that they do not focus their attention in order to be detached from their senses, as they would in the meditative experience which he recommends throughout his early writings; instead, their minds are fixed on the corporeal and transitory.

In these terms, to commit an evil act is to isolate one's life narrative, to rewrite the story in terms of personal desires, and to create a fictional environment that involves the illusion of self-authorship. However, if we

[102] I adopt the convention of referring to the participants as "Augustinus" and "Evodius," which dates from the 1506 edition of the work.
[103] *De Lib. Arbit.*, 1.1.1; cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 1.9; 12.6.
[104] Cf. *De Mor. Eccl. Cath.*, 2.2.3; 2.4.6. This aspect of Augustine's approach is clarified if *auctor* is translated as "author" in the phrase *auctor mali*.

know how to do this, we must have learned it somewhere, Evodius concludes.[105] But how? Not, it would seem, by means of external or internal dialogue,[106] nor by means of some form of inner instruction.[107]

In order to answer this question Augustine divides narratives into two types, as noted, which I will call "personal" and "non-personal."

Personal. In the one, introduced at l.2.4, he briefly summarizes the story of his youthful intellectual adventures in which, confused by schools of philosophy and by Manichaean "fables," he expressed a desire for divine assistance in finding a solution to his problems.[108] His recollection (and reminiscence) about these events requires a careful interpretation,[109] since it differs from the account of the same period in his life as outlined in the prefatory letter to *De Beata Vita*. In the alternative presented in *De Libero Arbitrio* some of the stages of his philosophical development are omitted and attention is focused in particular on his inability to deal with the origin of evil. Also, whereas in writing to Mallius Theodorus in his earlier dialogue he relates a series of events as they took place, in *De Libero Arbitrio* he contrasts the emotions aroused in his discussion with Evodius with the feelings associated with his earlier experiences, as they have already coalesced in his memory. This, in fact, is the most emotionally charged of the several retellings of this story and it is characterized by strong language for passion (*uehementer*), mental fatigue (*fatigatum*), distress (*adflictus*), and confusion (*obrutus*).

The meaning in this account arises from the juxtaposition of an outer narrative located in the past and an inner reflective rewriting of that narrative in the present, i.e., by means of a technique that Augustine goes on to polish in the *Confessions*. He thus proposes that the undefined territory

[105] *De Lib. Arbit.*, 1.1.2. The rôle of the reader is stressed in Augustine's later (and admittedly retrospective) account of the dialogue at *Ep.*, 162. There is some splendid verbal and logical interplay in book one, while books two and three can be considered a monologue (or, as I should prefer, a soliloquy); cf. S. Harrison, *Augustine's Way into the Will*, pp. 44–50.

[106] Cf. *De Mag.*, 10.30.

[107] Evodius speaks of two stages in his thinking, *quaerere* and *intueri*, and conversion (*rapere*, *admonere*), recalling the combination of questions and answers and interior illumination from *De Ord.*, book 1.

[108] *Ibid.*, 1.2.4: "Eam questionem moues," etc. It is assumed that this was written closer to 395 than to the date of the original conversations, 387–388. If so, one can ask who is addressed, since Evodius, who joined Augustine's circle in Milan, would by then have known the details of Augustine's earlier life. Augustine may envisage a general reading public, as in *De Mus.*, 6.

[109] Augustine divides his early philosophical investigations into two periods, in contrast to his accounts elsewhere, including the *Conf.*, where emphasis is placed on a succession of several schools of thought, religious as well as philosophical. Notable also by its absence is any mention of the conversion scene recounted in *Conf.*, 8. The transition described here is comparable to that of *De Mag.*, in which the questions and answers of the dialogue are replaced by the affirmation of the primacy of belief at Is. 7:9.

of the mind between belief and understanding is occupied by the internal telling of stories about oneself. Moreover, the manner in which we are situated in our life stories, which leaves us ignorant of their beginning or end, requires that we trust in certain expected occurrences before we can know anything about the context of the account that will help us make moral decisions. As a consequence, we can be persuaded that everything that exists derives its being from God; at the same time we can maintain that he is not the author of our sins (1.2.4). The rationale which lies behind Augustine's configuration of God as perfect author is thereby made clear.

Non-Personal. But if sins originate in souls and souls in God, as Evodius has pointed out, how can we avoid the conclusion that our wrongdoings are in the last analysis attributable to the deity? The pair attempt to answer this question at 1.3.6 by taking up examples of non-personal narratives.[110]

The ensuing discussion lays the groundwork for Augustine's view, advanced in books two and three, according to which the gift of free will, which is the source of life narratives, implies that humans cannot trust these personal stories if they wish to attain a consistent ethical outlook throughout their lives. This is a restatement of Plato's argument against narrative in which local stories concerning real persons have replaced mythical tales in Homer concerning gods and heroes.

Evodius begins this phase of the debate by offering for consideration three types of sin that can be discussed by means of non-personal narratives, namely adultery, homicide, and sacrilege.[111] Augustine wants to know why these are inherently sinful, and whether there is a connection in sinning between will and emotion.[112] I turn briefly to these illustrations, noting that the circumstances in each example differ, while the analysis of narrative is essentially the same.

Adultery. Evodius proposes that the adulterer does to another person what he would not want done to himself, and this is chiefly why adultery is sinful. But Augustine offers the example of a man who desires a married woman with sufficient passion to offer his own wife to her husband

[110] *De Lib. Arbit.*, 1.3.6, where the phrase "potes totum simul breuiter uerbis conprehendere" recalls Ratio's words to Augustine at *Sol.*, 1.1.1: "breuiter conlige."

[111] The case of sacrilege is not taken up; at 1.5.11, it is mentioned as a topic for further discussion. Homicide is divided into culpable and non-culpable killing. The examples are possibly drawn from the Ten Commandments, which were routinely used for the instruction of catechumens, or, in this instance, for correcting Manichaean errors; see *De Mor. Eccl. Cath.*, 2.2.2 ff. On the connection between this text and *De Lib. Arbit.*, book one, within Augustine's reading of Varro's *De Philosophia*, see the pertinent remarks of Nello Cipriani, "L'influsso di Varrone," 375–377.

[112] Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 14.6.

in return for the opportunity of sleeping with her.[113] The proposer of this scheme would be committing adultery; yet he would not be violating the above stated rule of reciprocal actions, since one wrong is being traded for another. In this instance, Augustine argues, sinning does not consist in what we do or do not do in relation to others or for that matter what we do in the general satisfaction of our desires at any time: it arises from a larger moral context for our actions. Evodius replies feebly that adultery is wrong because it is condemned. But condemnation, Augustine points out, is not in itself proof of wrongdoing. He draws attention to the fact that many people were condemned and put to death for holding Christian beliefs.

In this example Augustine makes extensive use of the concept of *libido*, whose connotative field in *De Libero Arbitrio* includes wishing, longing, or anticipating the pleasures of the body and the mind.[114] *Libido* is a way of expressing the intentions that are lodged in the emotions, just as *intentio* expresses those that arise in the cognitive faculties.[115] By contrast, Evodius appears to be concerned chiefly with two types of intentions: primary intentions, which consist in the thoughts or actions that we direct toward others, and recursive intentions, by which we imagine the wishes that others may have for us. Also, his approach implies the presence of two people, each of whom knows which actions will do injury to the other, whereas Augustine speaks of one person, the would-be adulterer (except in the improbable case in which two men equally desire each other's wives). As a consequence, Augustine accuses Evodius of seeking an explanation of the sin of adultery outside, in the act itself (*foris in ipso facto*). It would be more accurate to say that he is concerned with one type

[113] In his example men have desires but women do not; cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 14.22, where it is argued that "male" and "female" are allegorical terms for "ruling" and "ruled." Nor are the women's responses to the scheme taken into consideration. Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 12.6, where the problem of an evil will is illustrated by the example of two men observing a beautiful woman's body: one of them desires unlawful sexual relations, while the other chooses to remain chaste. At *De Civ. Dei* 14.16, Augustine considers the case in which the mind has desires but the body does not, resulting in a disposition "aduersus se ipsa diuiditur."

[114] For a discussion of *libido*, see S. Harrison, *Augustine's Way into the Will*, pp. 54–56; on its intentionality, see Augustine's definition at *De Lib. Arbit.* 1.4.10. On the use of the term in later texts, see Gerald Bonner, "*Libido* and *Concupiscentia* in St. Augustine," *SP* 6 (1962), 303–314.

[115] *Libido* may therefore be added to the traditional emotions mentioned by Augustine, fear (*metus*, *timor*), desire (*cupiditas*), joy (*laetitia*), and grief (*tristitia*); cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 9.4; 8.7. Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 1.19, where Augustine argues that Lucretia's suicide was partly brought about by shame at having been raped by Tarquin's son and partly by shame at having yielded to her own desire. For an introductory review of Augustine's treatment of emotion, see Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind*, pp. 400–417.

of interiority and his mentor with another, and that once again Augustine is in debate with himself.

In the ensuing discussion Augustine sticks to his thesis that the evil in adultery arises from strong emotion. Let us say that no occasion is found for a prospective adulterer to sleep with another man's wife; nonetheless, he would do so if he could. In Augustine's view, he is just as guilty as if he were caught in the act (1.3.8). Evodius appears to be convinced and proposes that *libido* governs all the types of wrongdoing mentioned earlier, namely adultery, homicide, or sacrilege. But what Augustine has suggested is that three elements are involved in committing any evil act: these are intentions, emotional commitment, and the subject's locating of a single action within a connected narrative.

He points out that the desire to commit adultery is not envisaged by the agent as an isolated emotion. True, the person who wishes to commit an act of adultery is driven by desire, and this desire may overwhelm him, distracting his attention from everything but the realization of his goal. However, a further consideration of his action reveals that it is interconnected in various ways with the narratives of the other people who are affected in some way by his decision. In the examples presented these fall into two classes. In the case of a swap of wives, the realization of the adulterer's desire depends on the parallel enactment of two narratives in which mutual sins are cancelled out. In the case of a single person, the individual has had to think of ways in which his desire can be realized: these involve imagining what is going to happen as if the action in question were an already completed narrative, (i.e., as projected *phantasiae* or *phantasmata*, two of the three types of images in Augustine's theory of memory, discussed in Chapter 4). In neither case, therefore, does sinning consist in assent alone, although this is the trigger that releases the potential to act (as Abelard was to point out in revising Augustine's views in his *Ethics*). On the contrary, in both instances the wish to commit adultery is linked to a complex set of stories which includes other lives and enough knowledge about one of them to suppose that realization of the desire is possible. On this basis the alleged adulterer can compare two evidently different emotions, namely desire and fear. In Augustine's view, therefore, the motive is grounded in the interiorization of an exterior chain of events.

Homicide. The point is illustrated by the second example of evil, namely homicide. Here Augustine cannot weaken the significance of the external act, as in the case of adultery, since the decisive evidence of murderous intentions is the presence of a corpse. He nonetheless proposes that

emotions are the force that shapes a person's intentions when a murder is committed, and, in this sense, like adultery, the sin is mental before it is physical.

Evodius is asked whether there is any difference between killing for gain or from fear, since, whatever the motive, the result is a death. Considering the alternatives, Augustine distinguishes between a murder committed to obtain material goods and a homicide that is carried out in order to prevent harm coming to oneself.[116] In the one the motivation is greed, in the other fear. Moreover, in the latter case, the murder narrative is the result of two emotions, one giving rise to the other: it is the combination, or accumulation, of emotions that produces the act. Augustine thus suggests that the source of evils is emotion, but that the reality on which such emotions are based can be external or internal.[117]

Breaking with the view expressed in *De Ordine*, where Licentius has to overcome his emotions before a free, passionless decision about his future can be made, this argument effectively introduces into the discussion the view that a chain of emotions has an internal narrative logic of its own, which can be managed or negotiated in the process of a lived set of events. In the example under discussion, these interlinked emotions begin with fear. This leads to the desire to commit murder, which is (presumably) followed by the disappearance of fear after the crime is concluded. Augustine is less interested in potential gain than in these overlapping intentions: in particular, in the way in which these are explained, understood, and reach narrative closure in the murderer's mind.[118]

If desire overcomes fear, he reasons, the murder will be committed, whereas, if fear overcomes desire, it will not. Whether or not the act takes place depends on the resolution of an internal conflict between two story-like schemes (just as resolution of philosophical problems in the early dialogues frequently results from dialogue between Augustine and himself). Also, morally acceptable behavior can in some circumstances arise from the defeat of one emotionally charged narrative by another, as would equal but opposed sound waves that cancel each other out. In such cases it is not desire that is culpable but emotion. The narrative that leads to

[116] *De Lib. Arbit.*, 1.4.9. The examples of desire and fear parallel Augustine's initial distinction between doing and suffering (1.1.1).

[117] The second emotion, desire, would then have the same relationship with the first, namely fear, in the way in which, in his theory of signs, Augustine speaks of *signa signorum*. In this case, the referent for a sign is not a thing but another word; cf. *De Mag.*, 6.17–18.

[118] *De Lib. Arbit.*, 1.4.9 ;cf. *De Civ. Dei* 1.27, where Augustine asks whether it is permitted to commit suicide in order to avoid sinning. He argues that this might encourage people to kill themselves immediately following their baptism.

killing may in some instances have nothing to do with the person who performs the act, for example the downing of an enemy by a soldier or the execution of a criminal by the state. In such examples, what is responsible is the non-personal laws sanctioned by societies.[119]

Augustine asks Evodius one further question about mixed emotions in the perpetration of actions susceptible to different interpretations. This concerns a homicide for which the motivation is fear of torture. Is this truly murder? If not, how does it differ from the cases of the soldier and the executioner, both of whom appear to kill without being accused?[120] When Evodius argues that the law considers the former a crime but not the latter, Augustine reminds him that they have agreed to try to understand what they believe (1.3.6), not just to accept legal authority. What he does not say is that these examples are unalike with respect to the rôle of the emotions. In the cases of the soldier and the executioner, the objective of the person engaged in killing is to remain unmoved by emotion. The non-emotional quality of justice, by which the state legitimately kills a criminal, is transferred in each case to the person doing the killing, who functions as an instrument of the law rather than as an individual who decides freely to kill. The connection that Augustine wishes to make between emotions and the moral implications of free will is therefore proven by the simultaneous absence of both. The point is made even more strongly in the case of an accidental killing, where premeditation is ruled out. Augustine proposes that it is not through the legality of the actions alone that ethical issues arise but also, and sometimes principally, through their narrative contexts.

Does Augustine's approach throw any light on whether the law that punishes the servant for killing his master is just? Evodius states that the law is just because the servant commits the crime *uolens et sciens* (1.4.9). Augustine reminds him that the dominant motive of evil is passion: it is through the initial emotion, therefore, rather than the events alone that what is done acquires its moral significance. Moreover, a person who desires to live without fear does not necessarily harbor evil thoughts. This would appear to be the situation of the servant in the previous example.

119 Augustine does not take up the case of mass slaughter, as took place during the Roman conquest of Carthage; the moral implications are discussed at *De Civ. Dei*, 2.21. Also, he does not consider the willful killing of an innocent person through the perversion of the justice system, a rather frequent event in antiquity. The question of socially sanctioned narratives is taken up in book 3, when the subject is biblical. Books 1 and 3 implicitly contrast pagan and Christian public narratives, just as books 1–5 and book 6 of *De Mus.*, written during the same period, contrast pagan and Christian literary forms.

120 Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 1.21; 1.25.

When he kills his master, he expresses a desire, but the murder does not take place through a desire that carries blame. As a consequence, he and Evodius have not discovered why the action is evil, and this dialogue, like others in Augustine's early writings, would appear to be at an impasse. The pair are not certain that acts are evil (*mala*) because of a strong urge (*libido*), that is, a wish or desire (*cupiditas*) to see them done. Evodius suggests that it is the original crime against the servant that should be condemned rather than the resulting murder, but that turns the principle of narrative around, focusing on the opening scenes and their consequences rather than on the final act of the drama.

In response to his friend's bewilderment, Augustine turns afresh to the topic of emotion, adding a personal note. He points out that Evodius himself has been persuaded by his emotions rather than by his weighing of the evidence against the servant. In order "to understand what he believes," he would have to acknowledge that part of his ignorance arises from the rôle these emotions play in his judgement of the servant's case. Augustine thus distinguishes between the emotions of the action's performers and the emotions of those who judge them, as their audience. This observation deepens the narrative context by suggesting that there can be differing interpretations of the same criminal events (just as, elsewhere, Augustine proposes that there can be different readings of the same biblical text).[121] Evodius, he argues, has convinced himself that the crime should not be punished: he has not judged the action on its own terms. And he has to admit that this is something he cannot know for sure. What he knows, in fact, is limited to the pair of scenarios that result in either good or evil actions that can be judged on the basis of the evidence available. But there is some uncertainty in this as well, since the desire to live without fear is common to both scenarios.[122]

Augustine's counterproposal is that the servant wishes to be free of one emotion, namely fear, while indulging another, desire (*libido*). At the same time, the perpetrator has to be persuaded that this course of action is morally defensible. There is presumably a mental rhetoric at work, which argues that good can come about through the substitution of one thought-narrative for another, even though along the way evil is substituted for good. In Augustine's view, it is the wish to be free that

[121] *Conf.*, 12.18.27; *De Doct. Christ.*, 2.12.17.

[122] In a complicated sentence Augustine argues that good men seek to avoid fear by turning their love away from things which it is not possible for them to have without the danger of loss, while evil men try to remove obstacles to satisfying their desires and adopt a life of wrongdoing. In both cases, the actions are the result of anticipated narratives.

establishes the individual's desire for an alternative life. Freedom of will resides in this desire rather than in the original emotion of fear, over which the servant has little control, or in the satisfaction, which results in a murder and leads to events beyond his control. The moment of choice is the instant between these two emotions, when he is aware that one course of action has been abandoned and another is envisaged but not yet taken up. This is what is meant by the desire to live without fear, which is earlier praised as a lofty goal (1.4.9). Evodius is at last convinced that Augustine has explained a type of emotion that can give rise to the desire that results in blameworthy actions.

Augustine pursues the relationship between the emotion that brings about a wicked act, such as a murder, and the concept of justice by which the moral status of the action is to be judged. This phase of the discussion obliges him to take up abstract questions concerned with law, even though he has twice criticized Evodius for connecting the rules of law to understanding what we believe. He likewise attempts to broaden the context of violent crime to include among other factors the social history of emotions. These are important shifts in orientation: they take the discussion away from the consequences of open debate, by which it is assumed that some progress can be made in the understanding of criminal motives, and toward Augustine's doctrine that the major forces affecting the long-term behavior of individuals consist in historical and theological processes which lie beyond their understanding. As rational dialogue offers no insights into these principles, an alternative type of understanding is eventually to be sought.

Legitimate Killing. The subsequent consideration of the social context of emotions leads Augustine to take up two types of killing that society condones: (1) an enemy who is manifestly guilty of aggression (*hostis inruens*) and (2) an assassin who operates by secrecy and subterfuge (*insidiator sicarius*). The question is whether either type of person can be put to death without the expression of an emotional desire in defence of life, liberty, or propriety (*siue pro uita, siue pro libertate, siue pro pudicitia*, 1.5.11).

In general Evodius is convinced of the rôle of *libido*. In his view, strong emotion cannot be absent when men are struggling for their lives and fighting to preserve their cherished possessions. By contrast, Augustine looks beyond the problem of emotion and examines the part played by foresight both in the individual who commits the crime and in the thinking of those who judge his action. In response to Evodius he argues that a law is not just if it permits a person to kill a potential assailant before

an attack takes place, for example a traveler who thinks he is about to be robbed. The alleged victim is ignorant of what is in the would-be attacker's mind; as a consequence, he does not know whether the threat is real until there is an act of aggression. A person who kills an assailant in advance, basing his action on a potential threat, intended to perform the action before a reasonable amount of evidence concerning the other person's motives has been presented. This intended action is principally motivated by fear.

This fear generates two narratives with unhappy consequences in the subject's mind, i.e., the story of the death of the potential robber and the story of the robbery of the potential victim. These are both emotionally connected stories in which one experience, namely fear, is eliminated by another, the desire for murder; but unlike the earlier examples they are based on a conventional social narrative that tells the story of what robbers typically do to their victims. The cause of the subject's action, i.e., his preventive murder of the potential assailant, is his simultaneous consideration of the first story, but the authority on which his murderous act resides is the underlying social narrative. The would-be victim does not know what the person suspected of criminal intentions plans to do. On the contrary, in reverse to what is suggested by Isaiah 7:9, the subject makes his choice of a course of action based on what he *believes* robbers usually do rather than what he *knows* that a potential thief may do. His is an act of free will that is based on his faith in his experience (i.e., of witnessing or hearing about robberies) and on conventional knowledge about the behavior of robbers. Lacking this authority, his murder of his suspected assailant is nothing more than an act of random violence.

The case of the soldier differs, but the same elements are involved. Once again, the subject has a conventional estimation of potential reactions. The soldier does not know whether his enemy will fight or surrender. Like the would-be victim of the robbery, his action is based on beliefs rather than on certain knowledge. He too enacts a narrative that begins in his thoughts and terminates in action, and this is based on a combination of emotions, e.g., fear, courage, and patriotism. Where the two cases chiefly differ is in the source of the authority by which the act of killing is carried out. In the case of the person robbed, it is private and individual; in the case of the soldier, it is public or collective. If the person who thinks that he is about to be robbed does not act in self-defense, he has the impression that he will suffer injury or death. However, in failing to act, he does not break the law. If the soldier refuses to fight, he too may be injured or killed. But, in failing to act, whatever

the consequences, he breaks the law, that is, the contractual agreement with the state by which he is permitted to take up arms. This law tells him among other things that it is right for him to kill his enemy; it also tells him that he cannot override the law through a personal estimation of what is about to take place. In the case of the person who thinks he is about to be robbed, an intentional narrative is the basis for action, whereas in the soldier's case this type of story can only reaffirm the principles of correct conduct in the circumstances, and these, needless to say, do not depend on him alone.[123] In the one, therefore, private thinking prevails; in the other, it is constrained.

Temporal Law. Moving beyond these three illustrations, we may, according to Augustine's criteria, attempt to define the sphere in which temporal law operates as one in which the dominant narrative is public.[124]

The problem is the source of the authoritative status of such a narrative. Shifting the story from private to public does not necessarily make it right or wrong but changes the relations between performer and audience. In the case of the person robbed, the audience of the preventive action is private. As noted, the expression of fear is countered by the removal of its source. It is possible that the murder could be justified by an internal narrative and yet could take place without anyone else knowing this story. In the case of the soldier, the removal of the source of fear, the enemy, has to be a public act requiring uniforms, rituals, etc.; otherwise, the battle is meaningless in the public sphere, even though the source of fear may be removed. The public narrative of fear has to be answered by the public recognition of its disappearance. In order to complete the story the individual enemy does not matter in the same way as the individual robber.

At 1.5.12, Evodius makes a lengthy speech on legally sanctioned killing in society, observing that in the examples they have discussed in which emotion plays a rôle in decisions, namely the defenceless citizen and the defender of the state, there is an alleged connection with a higher power to which law itself is referred as the source of its legitimacy. This presumes that there could be a *public narrative* which appeals to *permanent laws*. The central issue is the relationship between the individual's freedom of will and the higher values by which the preventive killing of another

[123] Correct conduct in this context means socially correct conduct, and this argument would in theory lead Augustine toward a somewhat Pelagian position. He appears unaware of this implication.

[124] In principle this would apply to both just and unjust laws. Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 1.16, where, as noted, a subtle discussion of rape opposes the notions of private virtue and public shame.

person can be justified. Evodius suggests that these are connected not by law but by means of the mind or soul. For the law does not oblige a person who engages in a preventive murder to kill a potential assailant, but rather leaves the question open for individual judgement.[125] As Augustine earlier argued, it is through an act of will that we turn away from evil and toward the good, and, in doing so, create the basis of our freedom. By implication, the freedom to act or not to act is not derivable from circumstances, such as being threatened with the loss of worldly goods, but from within oneself.

Augustine states that no law holds a person guilty who merely acts in self-defence, but Evodius is not convinced. Perhaps such persons are not guilty by the laws legislated in societies, but they may be bound by a stronger, hidden law, if it is true that everything, including human laws, is governed by divine providence (1.5.13), just as, in *De Ordine*, it is agreed that natural laws may operate unobserved. If that is the case, how can a person be free of guilt, if his hands are stained with blood, whatever the reason?[126] Again, what Evodius is driving at is the difference between human laws, which have largely instrumental goals, and the higher moral principles to which they ultimately have to be referred. Human laws may permit homicides in certain circumstances, but divine providence condemns them. The purpose of such laws is to arrange for peaceful conditions among peoples and to provide them, if possible, with a workable government. Within this system, the crimes committed against individuals, such as robbery, are punished, either through prevention or imprisonment.

However, there is a higher type of crime or fault (*culpa*), which merits a different sort of chastisement. Here, the misdeed is spiritual, not material, and liberation is only possible through the practice of wisdom. Evodius makes this point through a series of contrasting spheres of law that go beyond the specific issue of legalized killing and draw attention to the broader principle that underlies Augustine's ethical position throughout his early writings. This erects a boundary between the temporal and non-temporal dimensions of moral judgements,[127] which can be summed up as follows:

[125] In particular, not to kill defending things which can be lost against his will. These are things which he ought not to cherish; *De Lib. Arbit.*, 1.5.12.

[126] A good example of this principle is suicide, which is condemned as a willful self-destruction; *De Civ. Dei*, 1.17.

[127] A more nuanced discussion of this relationship as a contrast between social virtues, inspired by philosophy, and Christian wisdom, inspired by scripture, is found in *De Civ. Dei*, 19.11–14.

laws	vs.	law
open (*apparens*)		hidden (*secretissima*)
written (*scribitur*)		non-written (*uerbum dei?*)
human		divine
(*per hominem regi*, *quae regendis ciuitatibus fertur*)		(*diuina prouidentia*, *sapientia*)

In Augustine's view, societies are not permanent entities (*sunt*), because they undergo change; they merely continue, endure, or subsist (*consistunt*) in space and time. Their continuity is largely maintained by writing, which records laws and makes them publicly accessible (as proposed in Reason's allegory in book two of *De Ordine*). The people governing societies may be brigands or criminals,[128] and the secular legislation by which they govern provides no guarantee that public polity will prevail over private interests. Of course it is possible for people to behave in a moderate, dignified, and public-spirited manner, but it is all too easy for enlightened self-government to be subverted by dishonesty, corruption, and outright despotism.

The major problem with temporal laws is that they are impermanent, and therefore can always be changed. By contrast, the law of reason affirms principles that are valid at any time and place, even if these are idealistic notions, seldom put into practice. In Augustine's opinion, everything of permanent value in temporal laws is derived from the rationality of eternal law. Even when a society is governed unjustly, its citizens know what justice is: such knowledge is evidently not derived from their present state of affairs but from a timeless "notion that is impressed in ourselves according to which all things fall into place in the most perfect order."[129] He thus supplies the conclusion to his thinking in *De Ordine* which that dialogue suggests but never puts into words.

Human and divine constraints

Will and Narrative. In the second segment of book one, the issue of public responsibility is tackled from a different angle, namely that of a story which is independent of actors and interpreters.

[128] Cf. *De Civ. Dei.*, 4.4.
[129] *De Lib. Arbit.*, 1.6.15. cf. *Conf.*, 1.18.29.

This phase of the discussion begins by taking up once again the problem of personal and non-personal narrative. However, on this occasion Evodius's response to Augustine's repetition of events from his life (1.11.22) is the introduction of the notion of a shared narrative; this is the story of Adam's fall. The book of Genesis subsequently becomes the reference text that links this segment of book one with books two and three.[130] The emotional tone of the discussion also undergoes a change. There are moments of optimism in what follows,[131] for example in the description of the beauty of creation in book three, but in general the ensuing conversation has to do with the negative implications of one major historical constraint, the entry into the world of original sin. It is in this context, I argue, that one must understand Augustine's defense of freedom of choice, with which he concludes book three.

If understanding is usually preceded by belief,[132] Evodius reminds us, he can trust the biblical account of man's fall, since it arises in an authoritative source. But, despite having faith in this record, he cannot understand why Adam, given the opportunity for wisdom, became the slave of desire, passion, or emotion (*libido*): refusing to remain in the happy life (*in beata uita*) in which he had the good fortune to be created.[133] The one hint of Pelagianism in *De Libero Arbitrio* is proposed as an alternative (and echoes what Augustine says about wisdom and folly in *De Ordine*) when Evodius observes that humans have always been foolish and therefore have never been wise. As a consequence, they cannot have merited personally the perpetual punishment that was entailed by a single initial act of sin (1.12.24).

Augustine reminds Evodius that he is as certain that he has a will as he is of his existence – a redirection of the argument of the *cogito*.[134] Also,

[130] Cf. S. Harrison, *Augustine's Way into the Will*, pp. 61 and 61n41, where is it pointed out that Adam is mentioned by name (3.19.53) and elsewhere as *primus homo* (e.g., 3.20.54). However, named or unnamed, such figures point to a specific narrative context for the ensuing philosophical discussion of the will, as contrasted with the abstract narrative situations of book one. Another aspect of the narrative approach, namely the autobiographical, is revealed at 1.2.4. As Harrison notes, p. 72, this text may or may not be useful for reconstructing Augustine's life; it is useful for situating his philosophical arguments within a narrative context that consists of personal, historical, and purely abstract elements in *De Lib. Arbit.*, whereas in the *Conf.* these three genres are less clearly interrelated.

[131] *De Lib. Arbit.*, 1.8.18; 1.10.20.

[132] Isiah 7:9; *De Lib. Arbit.*, 1.2.4; 2.2.6.

[133] *De Lib. Arbit.*, 1.11.23. He postpones the inquiry, which is taken up in book 3. The delay serves a philosophical purpose in book 2, which is illustrated by the immediately preceding autobiographical description (1.11.22): this is to show that failures of the will begin with the refusal of individuals to lead virtuous lives, not with their willingness or unwillingness to take up historical examples of virtue. Augustine himself postpones a discussion of the soul's origin (1.12.24); this is taken up briefly at 3.20.

[134] *De Lib. Arbit.*, 1.12.25. The connection with the *cogito* is evident from Augustine's references to the vocabulary *nescio* and *scio*; also through the mention of *nihil* in the context of knowing and

he notes that people are neither wise nor foolish in themselves: they are poised between the possibility of moving in either direction as their life histories unfold. Absolute happiness is unattainable and absolute folly is improbable, because humans seek pleasure rather than pain. Freedom of will holds out the only hope of betterment, since it permits mortals to strike a middle ground between these extremes. It is within the will, therefore, as Licentius suggested at *Contra Academicos* 1.2.5, that the potential for happiness exists in each of us (1.12.26).

But Augustine has shifted his ground somewhat since introducing this theme in earlier dialogues. Now he is talking about the will in two senses, one general and universal, the other particular and associated with specific occasions in which decisions are made. It is assumed that we all possess a "good will," but the goodness implied in this capacity is not accessible or comprehensible any more than is wisdom. What humans have to deal with in their everyday lives are particular decisions, which change with times, places, and circumstances. As a consequence of these factors, the will to do good, however inherent, has to be reasserted continuously, at times against the opposite tendency, the will to do evil. The concept of a good will is the standard against which these efforts are judged, just as eternal law, equally inscrutable, is the point of reference for particular laws.

It is here that soliloquy enters the work, shifting the argument from outer to inner conversation, as at the end of book three, when the conversation between Augustine and Evodius dissolves into another inner dialogue in defense of free will. Augustine conceives an inner dialogue which takes place on this theme in the soul of every person. This looks forward to *Confessions*, book eight, where a lengthy interior conversation on the opposing tendencies in the human will and his inability to deal with them prefaces his conversion. By contrast, in *De Libero Arbitrio*, it is Augustine who offers Evodius an exemplary tale of a person who judges himself unhappy over his failure to achieve fame and fortune, thus framing the soliloquy within a part of a dialogue. Evodius, as audience of this private performance taken public, plays the rôle of a supervening and omniscient "good

not knowing. In *Sol.*, the articulation of words, transforming unconscious thoughts into conscious expressions, provides an empirical validation of the principle that thoughts exist, ergo the mind. Accordingly, at 1.12.25, Augustine states, "Nihil ergo deinceps me interroges." When Evodius asks why, he replies, "Quia roganti tibi respondere non debeo nisi uolenti scire quod rogas." It follows that Augustine's proof for the existence of mind and will are variants of the same argument, as is his response in each case to the Sceptical alternative. It is interesting in this context that Evodius does not reply that there is a will but that it cannot be denied that we have wills, 1.12.25: "negari non potest nos uoluntatem habere."

will," and comments, as Augustine the bishop does in the *Confessions*, on potentially unproductive decisions. If we assume that the person who errs in this fictive story in *De Libero Arbitrio* is in reality Augustine, then his alter ego is Evodius, who plays the part of Alypius in *De Ordine*. And this, no less than the *Confessions*, is an autobiographical episode.

It is not clear to Evodius why God chose to endow humans with the freedom to make ethical decisions by means of the will, since, if they had not received this gift, they would not have been capable of sinning. He does not even understand why God created humans in the first place (2.1.2). Worse, he is aware that his response to these questions is based on believing rather than on reflective thinking or contemplating.

With these issues in play the pair agree to continue the debate on the assumption that everything connected with the creation of man and the gift of free will can be doubted (2.2.5). There are two phases in this discussion:

(1) at 2.3.7, Augustine completes his statement on self-existence and certainty;
(2) at 2.3.8–2.8.23 he takes up related matters in which there may be degrees of imprecision, ignorance, or uncertainty.

As Simon Harrison points out, Augustine's notion of a self-evident argument has to be taken seriously as the starting point for his defense of free will, and this argument hinges on questions of knowledge and ignorance.[135] By contrast, book three returns the discussion to narrative itself, which is where the debate begins in book one. The link between the topics of certainty and uncertainty and the theme of narrative in books one and three is provided by Augustine's discussion of the *sensus interior*.[136] Just as the uncertainty of the outer senses is balanced by the certainty of the *cogito*, the argument concerning the interior sense is Augustine's point of departure for establishing that there exist with certainty in individual minds concepts such as wisdom, happiness, and number, in contrast to various forms of sensory perception.

[135] S. Harrison, *Augustine's Way into the Will*, pp. 1, 28ff., and 80.

[136] Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 11.3, where Augustine speaks of exterior and interior senses, referring to the latter as "de his, quae animo ac mente sentiuntur" and, to chacterize these, uses the term *sensus interior*; and 11.27, where, connecting with Pauline thinking, he refers to "the sense of the inner man." For a brief account of Augustine's possible philosophical sources, see G. J. P. O'Daly, "*Sensus interior* in St. Augustine. *De libero arbitrio* 2.3.25–6.51," *SP* 16 (Berlin, 1985), 528–532; O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, pp. 90–105. Augustine refers to the five senses through gerunds (*uidendi*, *audiendi*, *olfaciendi*, *gustandi*, and *tangendi*), and elsewhere as *uidendi sensus*, etc., emphasizing their active character.

The Senses. The connection between these ideas is not made entirely clear in *De Libero Arbitrio* but at *De Civitate Dei* 11.27.[137] There, in a discussion of existence, knowledge, and our love for these things, Augustine reminds us that our desire to avoid death is a sign that humans, unlike animals, are endowed with the capacity for thinking. But animals, trees and plants, although they do not possess what humans call "knowledge," nonetheless certainly enjoy something similar to knowledge (*certe quaedam scientiae similitudo*), especially in the desire to feed themselves and to reproduce. The causes of such desires are hidden in nature (*latentes in natura*); but their forms (*formas*), which we perceive through our senses, endow the structure of the visible world with its characteristic beauty, as pointed out in *De Ordine*.

It is as if these inanimate things desire to be known because they cannot know themselves. For our part, we perceive them through our bodily senses, but we pass judgement on them by means of a far more important sensory capacity, which can be called the sense of the interior man.[138] It is by means of this sense that we judge what is just or unjust, the former by what is seen in the intellect, the latter by its absence.

In *De Libero Arbitrio*, book three, Augustine argues that it is not only abstractions that can be affirmed with certainty, but also, in some circumstances, shared narratives, that is, stories which, like myths, are the common cultural property of a people. As a consequence, these can be used for teaching ethical principles, just as the notion of number is used for teaching mathematics. The initial phase of this argument takes place in book two, where Augustine no longer considers sensorial psychology as a problem in itself, as he does in his earlier dialogues, but as a preparatory stage in establishing his theology of grace, in which the historical events of sin, incarnation, and redemption play major rôles.

Evodius, on being questioned, is as sure that he has five senses as he is that he possesses the trio being, life, and understanding. Both types of knowledge are in his mind without his having to think about them or to call upon them through an effort of will. But the senses differ from the mental faculties; for example, when we see, we perceive what is presented to the eyes in a bodily form, but we do not "see" whether such bodies are hard or soft. It would appear, therefore, that each sense has a proper object (*proprius*). Some qualities are perceived in common (*communis*) by more than one sense at once, for instance shapes, which are noted by both

[137] Cf. *Conf.*, 7.16.23: "ad … interiorem uim."
[138] Cf. *Conf.*, 10.9.16.

touch and sight. The distinction between what is proper and common is made by reason, which is also the subject's source of information on the presence of the inner sense.[139] What is perceived by the exterior senses is conveyed to the interior sense, and this knowledge, although transitory in origin, is retained as it is understood by means of reason (2.3.9). The inner sense thus acts as a point of transition between the external world and the interior life of the mind.[140]

In sum, the bodily senses perceive objects but not themselves; the interior sense perceives sensory data as well as the senses; and all this, including the thinking involved, is known to reason. Evodius would like to see a parallel for the trio *esse, uiuere*, and *intellegere* with, respectively, the objects of the senses, the senses themselves, and the interior sense. But Augustine points out that the interior sense is comparable to *esse* and *uiuere*, not to *intellegere*, because it is shared with animals, who lack reason. The interior sense is superior to the exterior senses only in acting as their moderator and judge (2.5.12). A hierarchy of judgement operates at each major level of perception – senses, interior sense, and reason. That which judges is superior to that which is judged:[141] the bodily senses judge bodily things, the inner sense judges the bodily senses, and reason in turn judges the interior sense.

But is there anything superior to reason, by which reason itself can be judged, something inferior to nothing, and therefore identifiable with God? In an attempt to answer this question Augustine first considers the problem of other minds. When his companion is asked whether he has seen something, Evodius knows that it is he, and only he, who truly knows whether he is seeing. In a comparable manner, Augustine may understand something, e.g., what is seen, while Evodius does not; yet Evodius may not know whether Augustine truly understands what he has

[139] *De Lib. Arbit.*, 2.3.8 ; cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 11.27, where the description of the interior sense follows the *cogito* in 11.26. On these distinctions, see Goulven Madec, ed. *Le libre arbitre*, *BA* 6, Note complémentaire 14, 566–567.

[140] Augustine initially proposes that the chief rôle of reason in this process is to distinguish what is proper to each sense, but Evodius is unconvinced, since animals, who lack reason, understand the different functions of the senses, for example, the ears and eyes; *ibid.*, 2.3.9; cf. 2.4.10. However, Augustine points out that there are sensory distinctions animals cannot make, for example, between the color they perceive and the sense of sight, or between the sense of sight and the interior sense, the interior sense and reason, etc. In humans the bodily senses perceive objects but not themselves; the interior sense perceives what the bodily senses perceive as well as the senses themselves; and all this, including the reasoning by which these relationships are understood, is known by reason.

[141] Cf. *De Mus.*, 6.7.17; 6.10.25.

seen, even though Augustine knows that he himself does in fact understand (2.6.14).

The situation changes if we consider the external objects of the senses. Every person has his own sense perceptions; nonetheless, we share some perceptions, as, for instance, when several of us listen to the same piece of music. Other senses work differently: for example, two people can taste the same food, but not eat from the same piece of food. Seeing and hearing are shared, even though the organs of sight and hearing are separate, whereas in smelling, tasting, and touching, the senses act separately, even though the object sensed may be the same. Augustine concludes that the things which are sensed by us and which we do not change in the process of sense-perception do not pertain to the nature of our senses: they are public, not private. By "private" in this context is meant something that belongs to each of us individually and to no one else, that is, something perceived by the person alone, which pertains to his particular nature, whereas what is "public" is what is common to many persons: this is something perceived by all without undergoing any deterioration or transmutation (2.7.19).

Reason and Will. Another question then arises. Is there anything that corresponds to reason in the public sphere? This would be a type of reason, over and above our individual rational faculties, which is shared by all who engage in reasoning, such as the laws of mathematics, which are understood in the same way by everyone (2.8.20).

Does this principle apply to words that represent permanent ideas, such as wisdom?[142] As there are private and public sensory responses, is there a type of wisdom that is suitable for each of us and another that is shared by all? Or do we all share one and the same understanding of wisdom, merely particularizing it to our needs? Finally, if such a general concept exists, how are we to gain access to it? Augustine's initial answer is that concepts and numbers are alike in this respect, namely that the law that governs generalization in mathematical laws appears to apply, although with some qualifications, to concepts like wisdom. Later in *De Libero Arbitrio* he disagrees with this (untenable) view and argues instead that while we learn about numbers from mathematical laws, we learn about wisdom, to the degree we can, through participation in a special sort of narrative. In this narrative we have an illustration of wise actions, and

[142] The connection is made through a quotation from Eccles. 7:26 (Septuagint): "Circuli ego et cor meum ut scirem et considerarem et quaererem sapientiam et numerum." The Vulgate reads "sapientiam et rationem," which supports Augustine's interpretation.

from this we deduce what wisdom is because we already have within us, lodged there by God, the potential for this understanding.

Evodius points out that soldiers, farmers, bankers, civil servants, and monks, among others, all think they are wise when they faithfully follow the guidelines of their respective professions, thus echoing what he has said about social narratives in book one. But he is not sure there is anything beyond this, which can be called wisdom itself. For different lifestyles, each in its way seeking good and avoiding evil, reflect personalized conceptions of what is good, and, insofar as the people following them are seeking the happy life, they cannot be considered to be in error in their search for wisdom, unless they wilfully deviate from their adopted norms. Augustine does not disagree with this statement: he observes that what is true for particular notions of wisdom in specific narrative contexts must also be true for the general notion within an as yet unspecified universal narrative, in which these instances of wise behavior have their place. He reminds Evodius of a cardinal factor in setting all life narratives in motion, namely the perennial desire for happiness: this implies a shared wish to attain wisdom, which is the only thing that can provide lasting satisfaction. It is by means of this common ground that each of us, when asked whether he wants to be happy, can reply affirmatively, without any doubt, that this is his or her goal (2.9.26).

True, we all see within our own minds, and the thoughts that we have are not perceived by others. There is nonetheless something that concepts like "wisdom" and "happiness" have in common: this is a quality which presumably Evodius and Augustine can perceive at once, intuitively, without communication in words. Accordingly there are statements that reflect a single truth that is simultaneously present in more than one mind, for example, to prefer the better to the worse, the incorruptible to the corruptible, and the eternal to the temporal. These can be called general principles, even though they are perceived individually, and it is the combination of the universal and particular that makes them useful as rules of life. They are inscribed into our particular narratives, but it is within those narratives, in moments of detachment, that we come to realize the nature of their universality (2.9.27–29).

These brief periods of withdrawal are the subject of two descriptions, both of which have parallels elsewhere in Augustine's early accounts of meditative experiences. In the first, Evodius asks himself whether number and wisdom belong to a single class. But it is his manner of getting at the problem that provides the solution, as in the case of the soliloquy. Meditating on the question, he notes, he departs momentarily from his

body: he finds himself in a state of elevation induced by an inner dialogue in which thought predominates and spoken words have been left behind. After this brief period of heightened consciousness, he returns, somewhat wearied by the experience, to more familiar things, now describing in words what is before his eyes.[143]

In the second description, Augustine sums up the nature of a similar experience, proposing that it is less like touch, taste, or smell than like seeing or hearing, since every word is heard wholly by all who hear it at the same time, just as everything we see is seen at once by all who look at it:[144]

> What do we do when we study to become wise persons but direct the whole of our soul … toward what we can attain by means of the mind. By this method we concentrate our thoughts, put them in place, and keep them firmly fixed. As a result, the mind no longer takes pleasure in what is particular to itself and entangled with transient things, but, having rid itself entirely of attachments to times and places, seizes and takes hold of that which is always one and the same. (2.16.41)

These are good examples of the domestication and democratization of the process of upward ascent by means of reason, which is presented in more mystical language in the first Cassiciacum dialogues. Here, as in *De Vera Religione*, the process is explained by analogy with artistic creation, and this in turn through God's creation of the world in Genesis. This theme is explored in book three of *De Libero Arbitrio* in a manner that proceeds at both analytical and narrative levels: the one advances by means of dialogue, chiefly between 3.1.1 and 3.4.1, while the other is introduced by means of a commentary on the opening chapters of the biblical creation story. Unlike the brief narratives concerning adultery and murder in book one, whose time-frame is envisaged in the same dimension as the moral imperfections they describe, the biblical narrative that lies in the background of book three is assumed to be part of a commonly shared cultural and historical heritage that is established before the philosophical dialogue begins. As a consequence, the narratives of book three can be described as *propria*, i.e., belonging to the private lives of the persons in question, while the story of Adam and Eve is *communis*, i.e., lying within the public sphere of collective experience. If the highest good to which

143 *De Lib. Arbit.*, 2.11.30 ; a parallel and possibly a predecessor for the "vision at Ostia."

144 Yet Augustine adds that the comparison does not entirely make sense, because, in the cases of hearing and sight, the greater the distance, the poorer the perception, whereas in the case of truth, we are only separated from its beauty by the failure of our wills; *ibid.*, 2.14.38.

Evodius refers in his initial question at 3.1.1 is "shared by all and immutable," the story of the fall is a common inheritance that has achieved a timeless status through the universality of its application.[145] It is here that the primal or original sources of wisdom are to be sought.

The connection between the analytical and narrative modes is made in a pair of passages at 3.1.3 and 3.2.4. In the first, Evodius recognizes his inalienable possession of a will. In the second, he speaks of God's foreknowledge that Adam would err (3.1.3). These are parts of a single statement, which together establish a theological framework for understanding human sin. In his view the narrative logic that underlies the Genesis story provides a context for statements about particular wills, just as the affirmation of the will's existence, like that of the *cogito*, provides a philosophical explanation of Adam's self-consciousness before and after his sin.

In summing up this view, Evodius observes in Augustinian fashion that in creating man, God displayed his goodness, in punishing him, his justice and, in saving him, his mercy (3.2.4). He nonetheless asks how the human will can be considered free, if the events of this narrative have come about through necessity. In response, at 3.3.6 Augustine asks Evodius to tell him, if he can, what will be his will tomorrow – whether to sin or to act correctly: *utrum peccandi an recte faciendi*. Evodius says that this is something that he does not know but which is known to God, who foresees our future actions as well as much else, for example the fates of both the righteous and the impious: *quid de iustis impiisque facturus sit*. He then asks his friend whether this means that God, through his foreknowledge, brings these things about by necessity rather than through his will: *quaecumque facturus est non uoluntate sed necessitate*. Evodius says that when he was speaking about all the things that were foreseen by God he was referring only to those in creation, not in God himself. In his view, and, needless to say, in Augustine's, it is incorrect to speak of things being made, fashioned, or fabricated in any manner within God. This would imply that such things were made over time, whereas God exists eternally in the present. Augustine asks Evodius whether this means that God plays no part in what he has created. Evodius replies that God has arranged everything that he has created in order; as a consequence he does not attend to anything by means of a fresh decision (*noua uoluntate*).

Augustine concludes that God knows in advance what we are going to will; yet it does not follow that we can will an event to take place

[145] Cf. *De Doct. Christ.*, 2.5.6.

without the use of our personal wills. In other words, it is through God's foreknowledge that we attain happiness, but this arrangement does not reduce our capacity to create our own happiness, since we make our own decisions about the course of action that we wish to pursue. The will to do so would not be a "will" if it were not within our power; and, since it is evidently within our power to do this, for us, at least, the will is free.[146] Augustine is thus able to maintain that God has foreknowledge and yet humans enjoy freedom of choice. Or, to put the matter the other way round, God knows ahead what we will do; as a consequence, there must be something of which he has this foreknowledge, and this is the human will. God likewise has foreknowledge of our power over the will, but this foreknowledge does not in any way diminish that power. On the contrary, this makes our freedom more certain, since what arises from divine prescience cannot be mistaken.[147] In this context, free will can be viewed as a part of Augustine's response to Sceptical doubt. The question with which book three begins would therefore appear to be answered. No one compels us to sin: we ourselves sin, through our wills.[148]

The narrative phase of this discussion is begun in book three but is not completed before the writing of the *Confessions*, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, and *De Civitate Dei*. The conception of the theme outlined in these writings is one of Augustine's enduring legacies. At one level the argument attempts to establish the cultural primacy of biblical story-telling in contrast to its pagan and Manichaean rivals; at another, it moves from the defense of free will to the establishment of a hermeneutic perspective on all human decisions. Augustine proposes that in making decisions we encounter, initially at least, not arguments, but life as it is, as Heidegger would say, in its untheoretical and inexplicable reality, and this encounter reflects the soul's vitality.

[146] *Ibid*., 3.3.8: "Voluntas igitur nostra nec uoluntas esset nisi esset in nostra potestate. Porro, quia est in potestate, libera est nobis." Augustine does not argue that the will is entirely free in an objective sense, without the intervention of specific acts of volition on our part, since that would contravene divine necessity. What is free in willing is what lies within our power, which is the capacity to make assertions of will.

[147] *Ibid*.: "Voluntas ergo erit, quia uoluntatis est praescius. Nec uoluntas esse poterit si in potestate non erit. Ergo et potestatis est praescius. Non igitur per eius praescientiam mihi potestas adimitur; quae propterea mihi certior aderit, quai ille cuius praescientia non fallitur adfuturam mihi esse praesciuit."

[148] *Ibid*., 3.4.9: "sed ea nos uoluntate peccare." Evodius asks three further questions: (1) by what principle of justice God can punish sins that are committed by necessity; (2) whether it is necessary that events such as sins which he sees in advance actually take place; and (3) why in consequence one should not impute to the creation whatever takes place by necessity in creation. These do not alter the argument for free will but strengthen its narrative context.

Our experience of these activities is temporal, that is, it is divided into our awareness of the past, present, and future. In making up our minds about what is right or wrong, good or evil, it is not only principles that concern us but the generic shape of the story in which we are involved and our sense of our particular place in the stream of time. It is our narrative sensibility, therefore, as much as our reasoning, that permits us to advance along the road to ethical correctness. We are aware that this is a pathway on which others have traveled, and their experience, as framed in their stories, forms a part of the map that guides us through the territory, in particular the narrative of the first traveler, who set the itinerary for others who followed. We can claim failure to understand this sequence of events, as does Evodius, but we cannot deny the relevance of the intertwined events that lead inseparably from past to future. For Augustine, as he approached the writing of the *Confessions*, their lesson was not one of "rational progress" but of the acceptance of the human condition in its finite limitations.

CHAPTER 4

Narrative

Cur ergo tibi tot rerum narrationes digero?

Conf., 11.1.1

INTRODUCTION

When he opts for interior dialogue in preference to outer forms of discourse, Augustine makes a choice which has theoretical implications. In this chapter I turn to these considerations under the headings of images, words, time, and memory. His initial statements on these topics take place in the *Soliloquia* and *De Magistro*, where he expresses his views on the capacity of images and words to convey certainties, and in book six of *De Musica*, where he analyses the subjective experience of time. These discussions prepare the way for his reflections on comparable themes in later works, such as books ten and eleven of the *Confessions*. The result, I propose, is the West's first fully developed narrative philosophy.

I begin my exploration of these themes with a further reflection on the difference between narrative and non-narrative thinking, which has been touched upon in Chapter 3. In Augustine's view, narrative thinking has its basis in a sequence of sounds or images impinging on the senses, which subsequently pass through the *sensus interior* to the mind, whereas non-narrative thinking arises when the flow of words and images has ceased and the mind is able to determine the significance of what has been said.

In this respect, both narrative and non-narrative thinking are encompassed within his philosophy of language. As I speak, he tells us, the sounds of the syllables are heard one by one, but when I have stopped speaking, the meaning is understood as a unit by the person to whom I am addressing my words. At *Confessions* 4.10.15, he sums up his view of

the temporal element in language and lived experience in the following words:

> When things rise and emerge into existence, the faster they grow to be, the quicker they rush toward non-being. That is the law limiting their being. [They are] parts of things which do not have all of their being at the same moment, but by passing away and successiveness, they form the whole of which they are the parts. That is the way our speech is constructed of sounds which are significant. What we say would not be complete if one word did not cease to exist when it has sounded its constituent parts, so that it can be succeeded by another.[1]

As a consequence, communication depends on the listener's memory, which retains what has been said for a brief interim of suspended time, permitting the establishment of the words' meaning.[2]

This theory is based on the analysis of the hearer's response to quantitative verse, to which reference is made, *inter alia*, in *De Immortalitate Animae*, *De Vera Religione*, book six of *De Musica*, and book eleven of the *Confessions*.[3] Augustine assumes that the methods used to write poetry in order to create an aesthetically pleasing effect can tell him something about the permanent emotional and cognitive makeup of the soul, whose harmony establishes a sense of well-being in the individual. The metres and rhythms that make up the norms of pleasurable verse and the forces at work in creating the soul's equilibrium share a common principle of organization, whose source, initially at least, is thought to be mathematical. The capacity to recognize this arrangement is permanently lodged in the soul, even though the sounds by which this recognition is stimulated are themselves transitory.[4] As a consequence, the soul's appreciation of such harmonies is intellectual in nature, but it is never completely detached from the physiological activity of the senses.[5] As he frequently remarks, the soul animates the body: the bodily senses reflects the soul's vitality.

In relating literary experience to the establishment of this type of equilibrium Augustine is preceded by a number of ancient thinkers, in

[1] *Conf.*, trans. Chadwick; cf. 4.11.17.

[2] *De Trin.*, 13.1.4; ably analyzed by Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et récit*, vol. 1, ch. 1 (Paris, 1983 = *Time and Narrative*, trans. K. McLaughlin and D. Pellauer, Chicago, 1984), pp 5–30, however, with inadquate attention to the meditative element (pp. 5–6); on this question see the final section of this chapter.

[3] Augustine speaks of this connection on several occasions in his early writings; these include *De Imm. An.*, 3.3; *De Vera Rel.*, 22.42; cf. *De Mus.*, 1.7.13–1.8.14; 1.13.27; 6.2.2; 6.8.21; 6.11.30; 6.14.47; 6.17.57; *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.16.32; *Conf.*, 10.10.17; 12.6.8 ; 12.19.40 (on song); *De Trin.*, 13.1.4.

[4] *Conf.*, 3.7.14. [5] *De Mus.*, 6.8.20–6.9.23; 6.17.57–58;

particular by Plato and Aristoxenus, although he appears to have read neither author on the subject. In the *Laws* and elsewhere, Plato anticipates Augustine's position by arguing that music can play a rôle in the formation of a person's character and moral outlook by training the mind to take pleasure in things that are right.[6] Also, Augustine is convinced, as is Aristoxenus, that the senses react most perfectly and completely to the order represented by musical compositions and to their metrical equivalents in quantitative verse,[7] and that this reaction can provide a guide for other dimensions of orderliness in art and life.[8] Augustine presents a combination of these views in which it is proposed that philosophy, theology, and poetry are variants of a single type of literary artistry.[9] This notion is the subject of an important digression on aesthetics in *De Vera Religione*,[10] and underpins the positive approach to biblical rhetoric in book four of *De Doctrina Christiana*.

In the form in which his views appear in book six of *De Musica*, Augustine's theory of narrative likewise incorporates the Stoic doctrine that problems in poetics are inseparable from those in the study of language in general.[11] These linguistic elements include the distinction between signs and what they signify as well as the simultaneous consideration of a poem as a composition in speech and thought. The three

[6] *Laws*, 668d; the direct source is possibly Cicero, *De Republica*, 2.42f. At *De Civ. Dei*, 2.21, Augustine quotes with approval Cicero's rendering of the discourse of Scipio Africanus in which the musical harmony created by instruments and voices is proposed as a model for the desired rational equilibrium in a human community.

[7] Aristoxenus, *Principles and Elements of Harmonics*, 1.5; the possible source is Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, 1.10.19–20, 1.11.24, 1.22.51, and above all 1.18.41: "Harmoniam autem ex intervallis sonorum nosse possumus, quorum varia compositio etiam harmonias effecit plures." Cf. Cicero, *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 3.26, which Augustine knew: "In vita tu, quae omni gestu moderatior, omni versu aptior esse debet, in syllaba te pecasse dices? Poeta non audio in nugis." Augustine's earliest dialogue, written in 380–381, entitled *De Pulchro et Apto*, was influenced by such views in Plato, Pythagoras, Cicero, and Manichaeism; see Takeshi Katô, "Melodia interior. Sur le traité *De pulchro et apto*," *REA* 12 (1966), 231–238.

[8] E.g., *De Trin.*, 10.6.8. [9] E.g., Plotinus, *Enn.*, 1.6.1. [10] *De Vera Rel.*, 21.40–22.43.

[11] Phillip de Lacey, "Stoic Views of Poetry," *American Journal of Philology* 69 (1948), 241–271. It is also possible that Augustine's notion of the parts and the whole, later taken as a foundation of hermeneutics, arises in Stoicism and related ideas in other ancient schools; see the synthesis of Jonathan Barnes, "Bits and Pieces," in *Matter and Metaphysics: Fourth Symposium Hellenisticum* (Naples, 1988), pp. 225–235, 251–252 (on Plotinus, *Enn.*, 6.2.3), pp. 264–265 (on Seneca, *Ep.*, 113.1), and p. 280 (on Sextus' version of the principle of parts and whole). Augustine adhered to this literary Stoicism, while rejecting Varro's Stoic pantheism and the notion of God as a corporeal substance spread through space; *Conf.*, 7.1.1. Apart from the notion of *phantasia*, (whose evolution is traced by Gerard Watson, *Phantasia in Classical Thought* (Galway, 1988), and "The Concept of 'Phantasia' from the Late Hellenistic Period to Early Neoplatonism," *ANRW* 2.36.7 (1994), 4766–4810), the transformation of Stoicism into literary and hermeneutic theory in late antiquity has received inadequate attention.

central elements associated with the Stoic approach to language, namely *phone*, *lexis*, and *logos*, reappear somewhat transformed in book six of *De Musica*, as metrical verse is considered from the viewpoint of acoustical impression, disposition or arrangement, and significance. Although this work was one of the least popular of Augustine's writings in succeeding centuries,[12] it is the most representative example of the transformation of Stoic views into literary theory in late antiquity and the Middle Ages.

Augustine's thinking on this subject forms a part of a more general transformation of the Stoic notion of *phantasia* from a philosophical to a rhetorical perspective, which took place in a number of late ancient authors, among them Plutarch, Longinus, Quintilian, Philostratus, and Boethius.[13] If this change is taken into consideration, it is necessary to modify the inherited view, which sees Late Stoicism as lacking in important innovations in comparison with either Early Stoicism, as represented by Chrysippus, or Middle Stoicism, as represented diversely by such figures as Paenetius or Posidonius. In the early writings of Augustine, who is typical of the rhetorical approach to the problem of "impressions," literature is looked upon as a bridge between the harmonies of nature and lived experience. In book one of *De Musica*, which provides the clearest statement of his views, it is proposed that the training involved in learning to play an instrument implies a grasp of theoretical knowledge (*scientia*),[14] even though it may be impossible for the performer to give a coherent account of the characteristics of this knowledge.[15] Book six of this work turns from the practice of an art to the manner in which the discipline in question relates to body and soul, arguing that the same knowledge is simply transferred to a higher level when reflection takes place on the nature and meaning of aesthetically pleasing experiences.

Just as we enjoy the sensory effects of a well-balanced line of verse, he proposes, then think about the principles of harmony involved, so

[12] The hierarchical scheme of judicial numbers in *De Mus*., book 6, enters medieval (and early modern) thought through quotation by Bonaventure, *Itinerim Mentis in Deum*, 2.10, *et passim*.

[13] See Watson, *Phantasia in Classical Thought*, pp. 59–95.

[14] Cf. H.-I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la culture antique*, 4th edn (Paris, 1958), p. 200, and on the use of *scientia*, pp. 561–562. In *De Mus*., Augustine's use of *musica*, based on Cicero and Varro, incorporates elements of Greek μουσική, including music, dance, poetry, and the playing of instruments. Similarly, he conceives all the practical arts of the moral life as having their respective *scientiae*.

[15] *De Mus*., 1.4.6–7; cf. *De Dial*., 10 (ed. D. Jackson [Dordrecht, 1975], pp. 114, 38–44), for the parallel comparison in language between *usus* and *natura*. A summary of Augustine's view is found at *De Civ. Dei*, 11.29, where a distinction is made between a knowledge of an art and the knowledge that operates in that art.

we appreciate the pleasure of sense data that impinge on our lives, and, through a process of detached consideration, gain an intellectual view of the impressions that have a beneficial effect on the soul.[16] Humans, doomed to perish, can thus appreciate permanence by means of their grasp of the harmoniousness of intelligible forms whose source is ultimately divine.[17] In literature as in life, the making of meaning consists in a combination of the physical, i.e., waves of sound, and the intellectual, i.e., the relation between parts and whole. This relationship plays an important part in Augustine's conception of philosophical discourse and arises from the consideration of the words of the soliloquy in both sequentialist and non-sequentialist perspectives. When he speaks to himself, he is not only aware that conversation is taking place, but that the meaning of the words is created, as in other types of speech, by means of a sequence of sounds and the operation of memory.

It is through this linear dimension of internal speech that he is able to propose the soliloquy as a solution to the ancient problem of relating "forms of discourse" to "forms of life."[18] In his view, the link between them is the narrative shaping of events. With the possible exception of Seneca (whose writings, as noted, he may not have known, or have known indirectly), Augustine differs from earlier writers on the theme of lived philosophies in presenting his ideas in a narrative and autobiographical setting. In contrast to Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations*, for example, which offers its readers important reflections on Stoic philosophy within an interrupted narrative, the *Confessions* establishes a continuous story-line stretching sequentially over many years, and this narrative is subsequently recreated as a set of morally interrelated events. In Augustine, we can conclude, philosophical considerations are inseparable from the subject's understanding of the narrative in which they occur, whereas in the *Meditations* ethical thinking arises as a set of generalizations from a series of temporally unrelated thoughts and experiences. The fact that the emperor is occasionally writing on a battlefield in the Danube delta is an incidental detail in the *Meditations*, whereas the events of the young Augustine's life in Carthage, Rome, and Milan form an important part of the ethical context of the *Confessions*. As Augustine understands this tradition, it begins in the Hebrew Bible and continues in the New Testament and the desert fathers. He was well aware

[16] For an exploration of this theme, whose relevance to *De Mus*. would require a separate study, see A. A. Long, "The Harmonics of Stoic Virtue," in *Stoic Studies* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 202–223.

[17] *De Civ. Dei*, 10.14, alluding to Matt. 6:28 ff., possibly in the light of Plotinus, *Enn*., 3.2.13.

[18] See Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 49–70.

of Athanasius' view that St. Antony's exemplarity consisted in striving after virtue in and through the everyday events of his life.[19]

The result of this development in both philosophy and theology was to place greater emphasis on the story element in such lives than on the conceptualization of the virtues that the life exemplified.[20] We know little of the lives of distinguished figures like Epictetus or Plotinus beyond what their students and secretaries have left us, whereas we know a great deal about Western figures like Jerome and Augustine, who believed in relating to their readers important details of their attempts to follow a Christian path as an inseparable part of the message they wanted to convey. In writers after Pachomius, the connection with lived experience was strengthened by the introduction of rules for the establishment of lived narratives within monastic communities. Such narratives united events, principles of conduct, and the institutional arrangements for their communication, which complemented and in some cases replaced the rôle of memory in the gospel, apostolic, and eremetical traditions.

IMAGES AND WORDS

Scepticism. In Augustine's transformation of these notions, the influence of another school of thought besides Stoicism and Platonism has to be taken into consideration, namely Academic Scepticism. As noted in Chapter 1, he rejected the strong Sceptical thesis which denied that we have any certain knowledge and in its place worked out a weak thesis in which certain knowledge is thought to be attainable concerning such matters as the self, will, laws of grammar and arithmetic, the existence of the senses, and concepts like wisdom, justice, and happiness. He likewise proposed that in everyday life we accept as factual many statements concerning things we have not witnessed ourselves and this trust is largely established by the reports of others.

An important stage of his thinking on this theme is presented in book two of *Contra Academicos*, where he is invited by Alypius to speak to the group at Cassiciacum about the Old and New Academy.[21] He does not

[19] *Vita Antonii*, cc. 47–48. [20] *De Trin*., 14.9.12–14.10.13.

[21] The source is usually taken to be Cicero, *Acad*.; for potential links with Sextus Empiricus and Numenius, see Pierre Hadot, *Comptes rendus des conférences données à l'École pratique des Hautes Études de 1964 à 1980* (Année 1968–1969), pp. 25–29. On the complex relationship of Cicero to Sceptical thought, see John Glucker, "Cicero's Philosophical Affiliations," in *The Question of "Eclecticism*," ed. Dillon and Long (Berkeley, 1988), pp. 34–69. Augustine was unaware of Cicero's double change of allegiance, from youthful admiration for Philo of Larissa and Academic Scepticism, thence to Antiochus' Old Academy, and finally, after 45 BC, back to Carneades. On

provide his students with a full account of Sceptical doctrines but focuses on the problem of truth and falsehood within the evidence provided by mental impressions and verbal signs. It is here that he takes his first step in the direction of his weakly sceptical thesis, as it is developed in the *Soliloquia* and *De Magistro*.

It is not known how much Augustine had read about the prehistory of the debate on mental impressions before the appearance of Cicero's *Academica*, on which he based his views. He had only an imperfect grasp of the Academy's reasons for rejecting the Stoic position that it is possible for individuals to have an impression which provides an accurate grasp of its object and thereby permits them to form a positive judgement in its favor. Like the Academics, Augustine doubted the existence of such self-evident perceptual impressions, although he agreed with Cicero that these may provide faultless evidence of their own veracity.[22] Augustine altered this argument under Academic influence, proposing among other things that the establishment of certainty was in many cases a question of the observer's assumptions.

As a consequence of their eclectic composition, it is difficult to place Augustine's thinking on mental impressions squarely in either the Stoic or Academic camp. True, what he tells us forms part of a commentary on the Stoic position;[23] in particular on the strict criterion for knowledge put forward by Zeno (as reflected by Cicero), according to which only what is certifiably true can be apprehended:[24] this is "an impression stamped and reproduced from something which is, exactly as it is."[25] Following

the thesis of the unity of the Academy in Augustine's writings, to which reference is made in both *C. Acad.*, and *Ep.*, 118, see Charles Brittain, *Philo of Larissa. The Last of the Academic Sceptics* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 242–247.

[22] Cicero, *Acad. pr.*, 2.68, 78; cf. James Allen, "Academic Probabilism and Stoic Epistemology," *CQ* 44 (1994), 85–86.

[23] See M. Baratin, "Les origines stoïciennes de la théorie augustinienne du signe," *Revue des Etudes Latines* 59 (1981), 260–268. On the background of Cicero's summary, see Michael Frede, "Stoics and Skeptics on Clear and Distinct Impressions," in *The Skeptical Tradition*, ed. Myles Burnyeat (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 65–93, esp. 79–81. For a clear exposition of early thinking on the issues (which Augustine did not have), see David Sedley, "On Signs," in Jonathan Barnes *et al.*, *Science and Speculation: Studies in Hellenistic Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 239–272; on the Aristotelian component, see M. F. Burnyeat, "The origins of non-deductive inference," *ibid.*, pp. 193–206.

[24] *C. Acad.*, 2.5.11; cf. *Conf.*, 5.10.19. For a useful summary of Stoic teachings on the phonetic and semantic aspects of language, see A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 199–202. On the connection between Zeno and "Platonism," see G. R. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenic Philosophy: A Study of its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 102–104.

[25] Cicero, *Acad.*, 2.77.4, trans. Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1, p. 242. On the notion of a Stoic "cognitive impression," see A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy. Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*, 2nd edn (Berkeley, 1986), pp. 126–128 and F. H. Sandbach, "Phantasia Katalēptikē," in

Carneades' statement on the subject,[26] Augustine proposes that no impression is grasped in the mind with this degree of certainty. He likewise appears to be aware of, or to have concluded on his own, as had his Stoic predecessors, that "impressions are self-revealing in the sense that they make their recipient *aware* of their occurrence – i.e., aware of the objects they reveal." And he agrees that impressions are not

> internal pictures or images, so that what we perceive is images of objects. Rather, like light, impressions are the illumination of, or means of our observing, actual things. And just as light can vary in its illuminating effects, so sense-impressions can vary in the clarity and distinctness with which they represent their objective causes … [Also,] impressions as a class … are distinguished [in Stoics and Augustine] from the "imagination" or "figments," which refers to purely illusory states … produced without any impressor. [In sum,] to have an impression is simply to entertain an idea, without any implication of commitment to it … not an impression *that* something is the case … but just an impression *of* something's being the case.[27]

Beyond this, Augustine attempts to strike a compromise between Stoic and Sceptical views, as represented by Cicero. He is aware that some impressions are more accurate than others, owing to the veracity of their sources, and that, by reviewing these sources, initial impressions can be corrected by later ones. However, he is not convinced that certainty can be associated with mental impressions at all, at least in the absence of supporting criteria from beliefs, assumptions, or intentions. In making this latter claim, he introduces a novel element into the traditional discussion of the subject (although here again, perhaps without being aware, he is covering ground formerly traversed by Stoic thinkers):[28] this is to place emphasis on the rôle of language in creating, distorting, or misrepresenting impressions rather than on the cognitive construction of such impressions according to the criteria set down by Zeno, namely that each "has a real object as its cause" and that each "represents that object with complete accuracy and clarity."[29] Instead, he proposes that the crux of

Problems in Stoicism, ed. A. A. Long (London, 1971), pp. 9–21. Texts relevant to the subject are gathered in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. I, pp. 236–239 (translations) and vol. II, pp. 238–243 (texts); with a helpful synthesis, vol. I, pp. 239–241, 249–253, and 256–259; cf. on the Academics, pp. 445–449.

[26] Namely, that no judgement is true unless based on impressions that report the facts and that such impressions are recognized as reliable by the perceiving subject. For a summary of Carneades' contribution within approval for Cicero's characterization of the "New" Academy, subsequently taken over by Augustine, see Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. I, p. 448–449.

[27] Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. I, pp. 239–240.

[28] Watson, *Phantasia in Classical Thought*, p. 56; and, on the background, A. A. Long, "Language and Thought in Stoicism," in *Problems in Stoicism*, pp. 79–84; 94–98.

[29] Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. I, p. 250.

the problem concerns the limitations of verbal signs; moreover that the source of this limitation is *historical* rather than *philosophical*, and therefore cannot be overcome by perception, cognition, or interpretation.[30] On this view, the Academic assertion about the unreliability of cognitive representations can be upheld, while the Stoic conviction that truth can be grasped by such impressions need not be entirely abandoned.

Finally, based on his creative reading of Cicero's *Academica*, it can be argued that Augustine finds Stoic arguments in defence of impressions stronger than the attempted refutations, despite the fact that the Sceptical alternative corresponds more closely with the views on the subject that he expresses elsewhere. Stoic sources are hinted at by Alypius at the critical juncture in the discussion, namely *Contra Academicos* 2.6.14, while the epistemic element in Cicero's summary of Zeno's dictum is subsequently elaborated in Augustine's sign theory in *De Magistro* and in books two and three of *De Doctrina Christiana* (not to mention the Stoic elements in *De Dialectica*). Augustine concludes in these writings that in the absence of certain knowledge of an object in question nothing can be learned about it for sure from verbal signs alone.[31]

In the analysis of the issues following the discussion to which I have alluded in *Contra Academicos*, as well as at the end of *De Magistro*, his interest shifts from a concern with certainty based on the apprehension of sense-perceptions, to the concept of meaning, which operates by means of a distinction between what is sensed and what is understood. In making this adjustment he transforms the three types of assent distinguished by Zeno, namely *doxa*, *katalepsis*, and *episteme* (opinion, apprehension, and understanding) into a hierarchy that leads from sensory perception to mental cognition, understanding, and interpretation. On this view, "the wise man," who, in Stoicism, is the source of all virtue, becomes identified with the Platonist (or Neoplatonist) Christian, who ascends from empirical perception to mental illumination.

The pastiche of quotations from different sections of the *Academica* on which Augustine bases his conclusions in *Contra Academicos*[32] also provides some insight into the commentary on the deficiencies of the open

[30] *De Civ. Dei*, 19.19, where he argues that our knowledge is partial because of the corruptible body (1 Cor. 13:9). The term "historical" here means "genetically transmitted over time," since, through original sin, mortals inherit this limitation.

[31] On the problems in this account of "epistemic categories," see John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 53–55; on Zeno's distinctions, see David Sedley, "The Motivation of Greek Skepticism," in *The Skeptical Tradition* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 10–11.

[32] Principally 2.5.15–2.6.16, where Zeno's view is summarized, and two statements of opposition 2.48.147 and 2.18.59; cf. 1.12.45.

dialogue at *Soliloquia* 2.7.14. Among the statements to which he refers is Cicero's observation at *Academica* 2.48.147, in which Lucullus is reminded that there is only one truth but many differences of opinion on the subject of certainty among the thinkers whose views have been discussed. As he nears his conclusion Cicero draws attention to the obscurity, potential errors, and severity of disagreement among ancient and Hellenistic philosophers. In the *Soliloquia* Augustine takes the further step of preferring a conversation with himself to open dialogue, noting as well that opposition to Zeno arose from such typical elements in the dialogue as disputes, deceptions, dreams, madness, and sophistry. These sources of error are all found in the *Academica* but in different places.[33] In speaking of them together at *Contra Academicos* 2.5.11, Augustine makes an implicit connection between the confusion created by signs and by the needless disputation created by open dialogue.

The clever Licentius asks Augustine to suspend his judgement on the question, as the Academics recommend, since by his admission his victory over doubt is uncertain. This is similar to the strategy of Adeodatus in *De Magistro*.[34] Both statements support Augustine's conviction that the chief source of uncertainty in philosophical communication arises from problems in the rational dialogue, which is where Scepticism begins in the Socratic tradition. Augustine would seem to be moving away from Academic Scepticism, which revels in debate, and towards a type of Pyrronism which avoids intellectual entanglements as impediments to achieving a contemplative state of mind. Another route towards tranquility lies in the background, namely inner teaching, but its rôle in spiritual advancement is spelled out in *De Magistro* rather than in *Contra Academicos*. In the earlier work Augustine advises his students not to abandon the dialogue as a form of argumentation, since, in his view, the classical method of disputation is a preparatory stage in the inward search for truth.[35] The value of book two of *Contra Academicos* arises from statements on this theme rather than from weak arguments against the Academics.[36]

[33] *C. Acad.*, 2.5.11: "Inde dissensionibus philosophorum, inde sensuum fallaciae, inde somnia furoresque, inde pseudomenoe et soritae." By contrast, Cicero speaks "de dissensionbus tantis summorum virorum … de obscuritate naturae deque errore tot philosophorum," etc.; cf. *Acad.*, 2.48.147.

[34] *De Mag.*, 10.31.

[35] *C. Acad.*, 2.7.17: "Non ideo tamen tu causam tuam debes deserere, praesertim cum haec inter nos disputatio suscepta sit exercendi tui causa et ad elimandum animum prouocandi."

[36] Criticisms are listed by Therese Fuhrer, *Augustin Contra Academicos* (Berlin, 1997), p. 175, n.2 and discussed by C. Kirwan, *Augustine* (London, 1989), pp. 24–28.

This phase of the discussion is complete when Augustine admits that he has been engaged for some time in a personal inquiry on the questions under review. He has gone over the whole thing, turning it about in his mind for a long time: *Iam hoc totum mecum egi et diu multumque uersaui animo* (2.9.22). These are close to the words that he uses to describe his state of mind at the beginning of the *Soliloquia*: *Volventi mihi … mecum diu ac per multos dies … quaerenti memetipsum* (1.1.1). The implication is that he is engaged in what is later defined as a *soliloquium*,[37] which is here both the preparation of an argument against the Sceptical position and an attempt to rise above argumentation as a surface activity that engages the senses through the voice. Augustine tells Alypius that he did not undertake this debate for the sake of entering into a verbal dispute.[38] He asks that they put an end to playing this sort of game with their juniors – a topic to which, as noted, he returns.[39] As in the *Soliloquia*, he compares this activity to puerile fables (*fabellae pueriles*)[40] in which a joking part has been played by Philosophia herself.[41] In his view the inquiry is a serious matter: an attempt to configure their way of life, their morals, and the soul (*de uita nostra, de moribus, de animo*); or, as he says in the preface to book three, their hopes for the manner in which a contemplative style of life can be established (*de spe, de uita, et instituto nostro* 3.1.1).

Images. After *Contra Academicos*, Augustine continues his discussion of aspects of uncertainty in the *Soliloquia* and *De Magistro*, whose dates are about a year and a half apart (386–388).[42] These dialogues are concerned with the nature of truth and the manner in which truth can be understood, respectively, in images and words. The two works present essentially the same solution to this problem. Truth, if it can be known, has to be considered permanent, while images and words are transi tory, even if retained over time in the memory. Such conceptions are

[37] Earlier Licentius is likewise found apart, reflecting to himself; 1.4.10: "ille in cogitatione defixus fuit;" cf. 2.12.27

[38] *C. Acad.*, 2.9.22.

[39] *Ibid.*: "Satis sit quod cum istis adulescentibus prolusimus;" cf. *De Mag.*, 8.21.

[40] In this respect, the oral disputation is comparable to a type of narrative that is intended principally to entertain. Augustine also uses *fabella* and *fabula* pejoratively when referring to pagan or Manichaean "fables." On usage within Neoplatonism, see Ilsetraut Hadot, *Arts libéraux et philosophie dans la pensée antique* (Paris, 2006), pp. 112–115.

[41] *Philosophia* (and *Philocalia*) appear in the second epistle to Romanianus, 2.2.3–2.3.7, of which this may be a deliberate reminder.

[42] Augustine perhaps revised *De Mag.* as a memorial to his son, whose intelligence he admired; *Conf.*, 9.6.14.

therefore uncertain, even if the reality of their mental existence cannot be denied.[43]

The relevant part of the discussion in the *Soliloquia* begins at 2.5.8, where Augustine and Reason address the problem of mental representations. Augustine restates the view advanced in book one, namely that something is false because it is not what it is perceived to be (i.e., a tree cannot be a wall).[44] Later in book two, this will provide the basis for his positive evaluation of literary self-portraiture; however, at this point, Reason extends her argument, pointing out that when something is observed, it cannot be called false unless it bears a "likeness" to what is true.[45] A man seen in a dream is not true; but he is considered false based on what we know the man in question looks like.[46] The images of those who are awake can be mistaken for the same reason.[47] If a person sees a horse and thinks it is a man, it is because an image of a man appears in his mind while he is looking at a horse.[48] As Cicero noted, we are often deceived by likenesses.[49] We cannot always distinguish original from copy, since both are mental impressions.[50]

Reason classifies these *similitudines ueri*, dividing them into the equivalents of the original (*aequales*), such as identical twins, and those that are inferior (*deteriores*), such as mirror images.[51] The inferior are based on either misreadings of what the soul receives (*in eo quod anima patitur*), e.g., in the case of madness or dreams, or on errors in visual perception (*in his rebus quae videntur*), e.g., a stationary tower that appears to move.

[43] Augustine describes this type of image formation at several places in his writings, e.g., *De Trin.*, 8.4.7, where he speaks of creating a mental image of St. Paul based on his writings; cf. 15.11.20. Types of image transformation are briefly listed at *De Imm. An.*, 5.7.

[44] *Sol.*, 1.15.27–29. Note that this conclusion, which contrasts the permanent and the impermanent, is configured by two participants in the debate, namely by Reason, which does not change, and Augustine, who does; cf. *De Imm. An.*, 2.2. On truth and the true, Augustine takes up a Stoic problem but does not offer a Stoic solution; see A. A. Long, "Language and Truth in Stoicism," in *Problems in Stoicism*, pp. 98–104.

[45] This is a variant on Augustine's interpretation of Zeno's statements at *C. Acad.*, 2.5.12.

[46] The argument will be repeated in a different context at *Conf.*, 3.2.2–3.2.4, where Augustine argues that during a play our emotions are felt to be true, although we know the story that gives rise to them is false.

[47] Cf. *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.2.3.

[48] I.e., a mental image has replaced a sensory image; *Sol.*, 2.6.10.

[49] Cf. Cicero, *Acad.*, 2.126; cf. 3.6.13, where Augustine describes Proteus, who represents the truth; but this truth cannot be grasped as long as one is deceived by images; cf. *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 2.2.3 and *De Mus.*, 6.4.7, where Augustine considers the case of the truth of an object, such as a tree, seen in a dream. In both cases, he gives priority to sensory perceptions over mental images, since the image-producing capacity of the soul depends on the corporeal senses; *De Mus.*, 6.5.9.

[50] Paralleling what is said about emotions; *Conf.*, 3.2.2.

[51] At *Sol.*, 2.6.11, Augustine appears to be speaking of unequal likenesses alone, but at 2.6.12, he suggests that his subsequent comments in this paragraph refer to both: "sive aequalibus sive in

Reason then subdivides things observed into the animal and human, the latter alone benefiting from her offices. At the animal level likenesses come about as "offsprings" or as "mirror reflections;" at the human, in pictures (*in picturis*) and mental configurations (*figmentis*).[52] In all cases, she maintains, we call something false because it resembles what it should be in truth.[53]

It is dissimilarity (*dissimilitudo*), therefore, that is the source of this type of error,[54] since there is virtually nothing similar to something else that is not dissimilar to it in some respect. This conclusion leaves Augustine in confusion, since it would seem that falseness can be brought about equally by similarity and dissimilarity.[55] In an attempt to clarify the notion of falseness, Reason distinguishes between the fallacious (*fallax*) and the mendacious (*mendax*). The fallacious is what fashions itself to be what it is not (*se fingit esse quod non est*); the mendacious is that which fully tends towards existence but does not exist (*omnino esse tendit et non est*).[56] The one has the desire to deceive (*fallendi adpetitus*), and this desire is envisaged as a soliloquy, i.e., as a type of request which is made within the soul which cannot be granted without the soul's assent. The other results from lies, deceptions, counterfeits, and fictions. The difference depends on intentions: in the fallacious, they are lodged in signs, whereas in the mendacious, they are lodged in the soul (2.9.16).

These statements mark the beginning of a new phase of thinking about the problem of lies in literature which effectively situates the problem in intentions.[57] The discussion in the *Soliloquia* is a preface to two later

deterioribus rebus." For a remarkable transformation of this notion, see *Conf.*, 12.28.38, where he states that God did not bring about creation from himself in his own likeness, as the form of all things, but out of nothing, which was a formless dissimilarity to himself, although given form through his likeness.

52 Augustine includes illusions produced by demons, if any exist, and shadows, because they are perceived by the eyes; 2.6.11; cf. *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.20.42.

53 *Sol.*, 2.6.12: "eas res falsas nominare quas verisimiles deprehendimus."

54 *Ibid.*, 2.8.15; cf. *Conf.*, 7.10 where a comparable notion accounts for the *regio dissimilitudinis*, expressing alienation from God.

55 *Sol.*, 2.8.15; this is close to Plotinus' view that, if we say two things are the same, we imply that we can somehow distinguish between them, whereas, if we say they are different, we imply that they possess an underlying similarity. As a consequence, beyond multiplicity, the world enjoys principles of unity, and it is these that unite reality and the processes of human thinking. Augustine's most rigorous discussion of this theme is in *De Mus.*, 6.

56 Cf. *Conf.*, 7.15.21. The verb *tendere*, meaning here to stretch, extend, or distend, anticipates Augustine's use of *distentio animi* at *Conf.* 11.26.33 to describe the extension of thought, based on the memory, that creates the impression of non-temporal meaning.

57 For a discussion, see Paul J. Griffiths, *Lying: An Augustinian Theology of Duplicity* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2004), pp. 25–40; more generally Harald Weinrich, *Linguistik der Lüge* (Heidelberg, 1966) [= "The Linguistics of Lying," in *The Linguistics of Lying and Other Essays*, trans. and intro. Jane K. Brown and Marshall Brown, Seattle, 2005, pp. 3–80]; on the Stoic

treatments of the subject, *De Mendacio* in 395, and *Contra Mendacium* in 420. Augustine sums up his view of the connection between intentions, lying, and mental representations at *De Magistro* 12.39, when he proposes that

> we retain images in the depths of memory (*in penetralibus memoriae*), as proof of instruction (*documenta*), so to speak, concerning things previously the objects of sense perception. While we are contemplating these things in the mind (*quae animo contemplantes*), we can speak about them in good conscience without lying (*bona conscientia non mentimur*). But these witnesses (*documenta*) are only for ourselves … not for someone else, who does not have the same sensory experience.

In the *Soliloquia*, Augustine asks why a work that is *mendax* cannot also be *fallax*, that is, something that deceives the senses by intending to be what it is not.[58] Reason observes that it is one thing to want to be false, another not to be able to be true:[59] in the latter category fall works of art and drama,[60] which do not have the intention of creating falsehood but result in misrepresentations to the degree that they reflect the will of those who create them.[61] These literary works are true in one sense and false in another: in fact, they establish their truths by means of their falsehoods, as does an actor, when, being faithful to his rôle, he is literally unfaithful to the person whom he is (2.10.18). According to this reasoning, it would seem impossible for Augustine to be his true self by imitating another person's style of life, even someone whose behavior is superior to his own, since he would merely be trading one representation for another. Within a decade however, under the influence of St. Paul, he adopts a progressive view of self-representation based on realistic principles and operating within the master narrative of the Bible. He attempts, not always successfully, to shed his former person, who is the actor in the *Confession*'s nar-

background of the use of intentions, see A. A. Long, "Language and Thought in Stoicism," in *Problems in Stoicism*, pp. 100–101.

58 *Sol.*, 2.9.16. These include mirror images, pictures and portraits, fantasms that occur during sleep or periods of mental derangement, and optical illusions, e.g., a stationary tower that appears to move. The mental reality of such representations is upheld at *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.2.3. These texts do not consider the problem of the observer's perspective in lying; this is taken up at *Conf.*, 10.3.3.

59 *Sol.*, 2.9.16: "Aliud est falsum esse velle, aliud verum esse non posse."

60 The list includes comedy, tragedy, and mime, as well as painting and sculpture.

61 *Sol.*, 2.9.16. By contrast, an actor chooses his rôle voluntarily, becoming *fallax*. This division contrasts with Augustine's characterization of drama at *Conf.*, 3.2.2–3.2.4, where the two types of intention seem to be conflated.

rative, and by an act of will to clarify the nature and presence of his true underlying self, both for himself and God.

Reason appears unaware of this distant challenge. She prefers to explore a related problem, echoed in *De Ordine*, which arises from the consideration of the nature of a branch of learning. She asks Augustine whether the "art of disputation" is "true" or "false" (2.11.19). He opts for the former, and suggests that the same can be said for grammar, since one discipline is as true as another.[62] She points out that works of literature can be written according to grammatical rules, and be true in one sense, and yet at the same time judged false (*fabulosa*), as in the story of Daedalus.[63] Augustine concurs, and notes that artistic and literary works are not made either true or false through grammar: they are merely made what they are.[64] On this view a narrative can be called a falsehood that is created for the purpose of instruction or pleasure,[65] since grammatical rules, acting as "custodian and regulator of the articulated word, … bring together everything in human language that has been preserved in memory or writing, including even the fictitious."[66]

By way of conclusion Reason draws attention to still another facet of the problem of *similitudo* or *imitatio*. This concerns what can be called false when the verbal statement of a fictional narrative takes place, for example, the story of the flight of Medea, which Augustine recited as a set piece when he was a student of rhetoric. Reason's answer is that the likeness arises from the judgement or determination of what is taking place (*sententia*). But Augustine asks how this expressed sentiment can be an imitation of the truth (*imitatio veri*). For the line of verse in which Medea's flight is described would have been expressed in the same way in performance, even if the event had taken place. The pair conclude that a false imitates a true statement in its form of expression (*enuntiatio*), whether or not

[62] Cf. *De Imm. An.*, 1.1: "Si alicubi est disciplina, nec esse nisi in eo quod vivit potest et semper est;" cf. *ibid.*, 4.5.

[63] Respectively *Sol.*, 2.11.19 and *Conf.*, 1.13.22, where the story is given as an example of pagan immorality.

[64] *Sol.*, 2.11.19: "Non per grammaticam falsa sunt, sed per eam qualiacumque sunt demonstrantur;" cf. *De Ord.*, 2.12.37, where grammatical studies include both history and myth: a view, needless to say, that Augustine subsequently abandoned.

[65] *Sol.*, 2.11.19: "Est fabula compositum ad utilitatem delectationemve mendacium." Cf. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 337–344.

[66] *Sol.*, 2.11.19. There is a rough parallel with the third type of memory image designated by Augustine in *Ep.*, 7.4, which concerns geometrical configurations, musical rhythms, or other numerical arrangements. Like grammar, these are not false in themselves but can give rise to false images (e.g., optical illusions) that are so convincing that reason itself cannot distinguish them from what is true.

it is believed. In this case it is false, but not wilfully deceiving; and, if it is believed, it likewise "imitates" an accredited truth, namely the alleged flight (2.15.29).

Words. At the end of the *Soliloquia*, Augustine claims that he has gained an understanding of the difference between something that is said and the object about which something is said. The reader may not agree, since the discussion of representations in the *Soliloquia* is inadequate on two issues: these concern the rôle of language in forming images and the errors that arise through ambiguities in speech. These problems are taken up in *De Magistro*.[67] The philosophical connection between the two works arises from Augustine's view that mental images are the sources of words; this view is defended at greater length in *De Trinitate*. [68]

Along with the uncompleted *De Dialectica*, *De Magistro* is the most serious discussion of signs in Augustine's writings before *De Doctrina Christiana*.[69] The earlier work is an incomplete review of Stoic and Peripatetic topics in language, along with some important reflections on the subject by Augustine himself. *De Magistro* is a more extensive contribution to the late ancient philosophy of language and anticipates a number of contemporary issues in the field of linguistic signs.[70] As noted, Augustine revises Stoic sign theory in the eclectic form in which it is reflected in his sources, mainly in Cicero, and, perhaps better than any other extant ancient author, offers an explanation for Chrysippus'

[67] In the following discussion of *De Mag.*, I do not repeat the analysis in my *Augustine the Reader*, pp. 148–162, which compares the dialogue to Augustine's earlier treatment of signs in *De Dial.* Nor do I discuss the extension of sign theory in *De Doct. Christ.*, partly in response to the false imagism of the Manichaeans and the misleading sacramentalism of the Donatists; on the former topic, see Cornelius P. Mayer, *Die Zeichen in der geistigen Entwicklung und in der Theologie des jungen Augustinus*, 2 vols. (Würzburg, 1969, 1974).

[68] E.g., *De Trin.*, 8.6.9, where, speaking of the image of Carthage, he notes: "Carthago nominatur uel etiam tacite nomen ipsum per spatia temporum cogitantur, sed illud quod in animo meo cerno cum hoc trisyllabum uoce profero uel antequam proferam."

[69] There are a number of useful introductions to what is called Augustine's "theory of signs." These include R. A. Markus, "St. Augustine on Signs," *Phronesis* 2 (1957), 60–83; repr. in *Augustine*, ed. Markus (New York, 1972), pp. 61–91, and B. Darrell Jackson, "The Theory of Signs in St. Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*," *REA* 15 (1969), 9–49; repr. in *Augustine*, pp. 91–147; Marc Baratin and Françoise Debordes, "Sémiologie et métalinguistique chez saint Augustin," *Langages* 65 (1982), 75–89; and Raffaele Simone, "Semiologia Agostiniana," *La Cultura* 7 (1969), 88–117. A good recent account, with an extensive knowledge of the sources, is Rist, *Augustine*, pp. 23–33.

[70] On this question the outstanding contribution remains M. F. Burnyeat, "Wittgenstein and Augustine *De magistro*," *Proceedings of The Aristotelian Society*, Suppl. vol. LXI (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 1–24. On Augustine's possible anticipation of de Saussure, see André Mandouze, "Quelques principes de 'linguistique augustinienne' dans le 'De magistro,'" in *Forma futuri: Studi in onore del cardinale Michele Pellegrino* (Turin, 1975), pp. 789–795. A good approximation of Augustine's understanding of earlier sign theory (although not intended as such) is found in Jonathan Barnes, "Meaning, Saying and Thinking," in *Dialektiker und Stoiker*, ed. K. Döring

celebrated dictum that every word is by nature ambiguous.[71] *De Magistro* likewise adds a dimension to Augustine's understanding of the external and internal dialogue that is not clarified in his earlier treatments of the subject: this concerns the part played by memory in creating meaning. Augustine is convinced that in linking signs to things we recognize or remember what we have already learned. This position provides a foundation for the theory of narrative developed in books ten and eleven of the *Confessions*.

De Magistro contains Augustine's most extensive discussion of outer and inner speech in his early writings, thus providing a link between the dialogues of 386–395 and book fifteen of *De Trinitate*. His model for outer words is communication between individuals (including his relations with the individuals who constituted his reading audience). His thinking on inner words is based on communication with himself or with God.[72] He and Adeodatus turn to this subject at the outset of the dialogue, where his son proposes that when we speak, our object is to teach or to learn: *aut docere aut discere*. But Augustine offers the examples of song and prayer, in which this is not the case. When Adeodatus sings, he is normally alone,[73] and when he prays, he addresses God, who knows what he is going to say. In neither case is teaching or learning involved. Augustine himself later argues that there are words that do not teach, while not denying that there are many that do. But his conclusion at the dialogue's climax is that words in themselves do not teach their recipients anything in themselves.[74]

Teaching sometimes takes place through memory. If that is so, Adeodatus should have said that the purposes of speaking are to teach or

and T. Ebert (Stuttgart, 1993), pp. 1–3. A recent review, comparing Augustine with Wittgenstein and Hellenistic traditions, is C. Kirwan, "Augustine's Philosophy of Language," in *Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, pp. 186–204.

[71] Catherine Atherton, *The Stoics on Ambiguity* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 37–38. However, Cicero associates the connection Augustine develops between teaching, learning, remembering, and foreseeing with Aristotle's fifth nature; *Tusc. Disp.*, 1.10.22. (The notion that Augustine's *sensus interior* is a descendant of Aristotle's conception has now been abandoned).

[72] *De Mag.*, 1.1–2.

[73] An exception to Adeodatus' example would be singing before an audience; that is taken up in *De Mus.*, book 1.

[74] *De Mag.*, 10.33. Cf. *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.8.19, where, referring to two statements by Paul on prayer, Augustine distinguishes between what is and is not conveyed by verbal signs, and 12.9.20, where he states that "signs of things are formed in the spirit, and an understanding of the signs is illuminated in the mind." Augustine thus abandons the view shared by Stoics and Platonists that prayer implies some form of rational communication between man and maker; e.g., Seneca, *Ep.*, 41.1. For a discussion, see Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982), pp. 3 and 160–162, n.8.

recollect: *aut docere aut commemorare*.[75] But Adeodatus retorts that when he sings, even if communication of a sort takes place, he does not make vocal music in order to recall anything but to please himself. The pleasure of a song arises from its melody (*modulatio soni*),[76] and does not need words. Neither do birdsongs or instruments. It is the use of words that distinguishes *locutio* from *cantus*.

Prayer presents a more complicated example. When a person speaks in ordinary discourse, a sign of what is intended to be communicated is presented outwardly by means of articulated sound; however, when one prays to God "in the inmost region of the rational soul," outer sounds are irrelevant. Augustine calls this source of expression "the interior man,"[77] after Paul, giving the saint's expression a linguistic turn, and he subsequently argues that it is the locus of all genuine instruction,[78] (in contrast to the interior sense, which may also be derived from Pauline vocabulary but is limited to the sensory realm). His point is illustrated by a series of quotations justifying the view that prayer has no need of outer speech.[79] Their inspiration is a passage from the Sermon on the Mount in which Christ contrasts exterior and interior types of prayer, telling his listeners: "When you pray, go into your bedchamber, and, with the door closed, pray to your Father, who is hidden."[80] A second quoted text, Psalms 4:5–6, refers to the "bedchamber" symbolically as the place in which one can speak openly within one's heart.

[75] As Augustine employs *commemorare* in *De Mag.* the verb is an expansion of Cicero's usage, in which it means both to recall to oneself or to others, or to recall in speech. The latter sense is attested by Sallust, Ovid, and Pliny; however, the verb is utilized in *De Mag.* in a philosophical context that has no clear precedent.

[76] Cf. *De Mus.*, 1.4.5–6, where it is concluded that birdsongs involve *imitatio* but not *ratio*.

[77] *De Mag.*, 1.2: "Qui enim loquitur, suae uoluntatis signum foras dat per articulatum sonum, deus autem in ipsis rationalis animae secretis, qui homo interior uocatur, et quaerendus et deprecandus est." On the link to interior teaching, see Goulven Madec, "Augustin et son fils. Le Maître intérieur," *AL*, vol. 1, pp. 87–90 and "Saint Augustin et le Maître intérieur," *Connaissance des Pères de l'Église* 48 (1992), 16–20, as well as the notes accompanying his edition of *De Mag.* in the *BA*. On this notion, cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 10.19 and 6.2, where, commenting on the unjust accusation that the Jews killed Christ, Augustine notes that the wicked preach such an interpretation only outwardly, by means of sounds, while the just understand the mystery of the passion *in interiore homine*.

[78] *De Mag.*, 11.38. Adeodatus offers two examples of prayer, as well as a Pauline text on the temple and spirit. The examples of prayer are Matt. 6:6 and Ps. 4.5:6, which deal with the heart, interior devotion, and seclusion. The Pauline statement is 1 Cor. 3:16, which accounts for interiority through the indwelling spirit.

[79] The suspension of the mind at the sound of the priest's words is a way of focusing the listener's attention. Words, if communicating doctrine, are directed towards other humans; *ibid.*, 1.2; cf. *Conf.*, 1.1.1, where the rôle of preaching is similarly envisaged.

[80] Matt. 6:6; paraphrased at *De Mag.*, 1.2: "ut in clausis cubiculis oremus."

We are reminded of letter 3, discussed above, in which Augustine engages in soliloquy before saying his prayers, while mulling over his reply to Nebridius. The type of experience to which he is alluding through his biblical quotations also bears a resemblance to his description of his soliloquies at the beginning of the *Soliloquia* and *De Ordine*. In the latter work he speaks of his habitual practice of turning over his thoughts silently in his mind: *de more mecumque ipse tacitus agitarem* (1.3.6). It is possible that he already has the biblical examples of inner speech in mind when he speaks about the secular versions of this type of discourse. In both cases, he refers to concern with his moral preoccupations, the agitation produced by silent dialogue, and the search for a pathway to tranquility within himself.[81]

When a person is struggling with his thoughts, Augustine notes, he is in fact reflecting on words that are spoken in his mind. When he actually speaks, he calls to mind the objects to which these words refer with the aid of memory, just as, when he turns spoken words over in his reflections, he brings into his mind the memory of the objects for which the words are signs.[82] In the first process he moves from soliloquy to dialogue, in the second, from dialogue to soliloquy. Between the lines Augustine is suggesting that there is a relationship between his theory of signs and such internal conversations. In this case, it may be that he has in mind a foundation for his notion of interior prayer within his philosophy of language.

The pair ask whether a word is a sign if it does not signify something (2.3). Adeodatus is invited to examine a line of verse, *Aeneid* 2.659: "If it please the gods above that nothing be left of so great a city (*Si nihil ex tanta superis placet urbe relinqui*)." Augustine asks a silly question: whether the verse is understood word by word, as if each were perceived aurally as an autonomous sign, or whether the line is understood as a whole, as a group of signs in a coherent discourse. Adeodatus sees through his ploy and wisely chooses the second option.[83] Even if Vergil had written *de* for *ex* in the phrase *ex tanta superis*, the replacement of one preposition by another

[81] At the end of 1.2, it is asked whether the priest's words are succeeded by spoken words on his listeners' part or whether those at church continue their meditations silently, as if in soliloquy. Adeodatus reminds his father that when Christ taught his disciples how to pray, the normal relationship of teaching things by signs was reversed.

[82] *De Mag.*, 1.2, which contains a succinct summary of the essentials of Augustine's sign theory.

[83] An interesting application of the *cogito* follows at 2.3, which is focused on the words *si* and *nihil* from *Aeneid* 2.659. The pair agree that there is no other word by which the conjunction "if" can be explained. The word nonetheless signifies something, but where does this signification arise? Adeodatus replies that "if" signifies doubt, and doubt cannot exist anywhere but in the mind.

would not help him construe the line, which depends on understanding the preposition itself and what it means in the quoted verse. The point is this: If we grasp a sentence's meaning by means of its parts of speech, we are accounting for the meaning of words only by means of words (*uerbis uerba*), that is, signs by means of signs (*signis signa*) and the known by the fully known (*notissimis notissima*). But the real issue is what is unknown, namely the things for which these words are signs: *illa ipsa quorum haec signa sunt* (2.4).

This statement is a variant of Reason's distinction at *Soliloquia* 1.15.27–29 between the "true" and "truth." There she argues that true things, which are perceived through our senses, change over time, whereas truth, which is understood in the mind, is changeless. The comparable thesis in *De Magistro* is that realities are understood by means of speech, which is a transitory medium of communication that gives rise to timeless meaning. The syllables of words can on occasion be interchanged, for example *de* for *ex* in the quoted line, and yet the reality they signify (the meaning of the whole line of Vergil's verse) cannot be replaced by anything else. Therefore, truth and the mental realities by which truth is represented have this in common: nothing can be substituted for them and they do not undergo change, as do sense data, including words.[84]

These distinctions strike at the heart of Augustine's criticism of the ancient dialogue. It is Adeodatus who draws attention to the problem on his father's mind, once again anticipating his conclusions. He expresses surprise that his mentor does not know, or is trying to give him the impression that he does not know, why he cannot answer the question concerning the way in which words relate to truth. This, Adeodatus claims, is because the pair are engaged in a dialogue in which they can only respond to each other's questions by means of words. But the realities that his father is seeking and to which his son is responding are certainly not words, although it is evident that words are being used to ask questions about both of them. It would appear that questions and answers are necessary for getting at these realities, just as seeing something that is

It follows that, if "if" exists, the mind exists. The case of *nihil* is similar, but relies on a reversal of the argument. Since the mind exists, and *nihil* is in the mind, in some sense "nothing" exists. But this example refers to the absence rather than the presence of a thing, with the exception of the word's physical sound. Adeodatus is not fully convinced by this argument, and Augustine has only a weak reply to his objection, proposing that if the mind does not see something that corresponds to nothing, it nonetheless thinks it has found what the word stands for.

84 This principle finds diverse applications in Augustine's doctrines, e.g., *De Civ. Dei*, 10.13, where an explanation is given of the way in which the invisible God makes himself visible to his faithful beholders.

true is essential for understanding the abstract concept of truth. But one must not mistake impressions for the objects they represent (3.5).

Augustine will presumably have to ask Adeodatus a question without using words if he wants an answer that does not depend on the intermediary of words. This is done in the following segment of the discussion.

He points out that it is possible to imitate dialogue by means of gestures. He can name an object like a wall through the three syllables of the Latin *paries*, or he can simply point to a wall, indicating what he has in mind without the use of words. He can also communicate a limited number of things about different sorts of walls, for example, their height, thickness, etc. It is demonstrable, therefore, that not only objects themselves, but some of their qualities, can be conveyed without the use of words.

But this "ostensive" method only works for an object's visible characteristics. Gestures cannot point to an object's sound, odor, taste, weight, or temperature. Moreover, this type of instruction is not a true substitute for the dialogue; it is merely another sort of dialogue in which words are replaced by movements of the limbs or facial muscles. A clever actor might be able to indicate what is meant by the preposition *ex* in Vergil's line. The lesson would seem to be that even in the case of gestures signs are necessary to create meaning.

But what about actions, such as walking? Instead of replying to the question "What does it mean to walk?" Adeodatus can take some steps, demonstrating what is meant through movement. In this case, the sign, "walking," is given its meaning by the action, "walking," as soon as Augustine sees what his son is doing.

In this exchange, actions appear to replace words. However, in most cases of this type, we recognize such actions because we know what they mean beforehand. If we did not, would we understand what is taking place? If Augustine did not know the meaning of "walking," and asked his son what it meant while the latter was taking steps, could he be instructed on the significance of the word and the action at once? Adeodatus says he could walk a little faster, so that his father would perceive that something in his movements had changed and from this deduce the word's meaning. But "walking" and "hurrying" are words that describe variants of the same kind of movement; they are different *signa* for the same *res*. Moreover, the meaning of hurrying is not limited to "walking" but can refer to other activities, such as writing and reading. Therefore, using the ostensive method, walking can be defined as a gesture that points to one thing, while hurrying, in addition to pointing to walking, points to other things.

Augustine argues in book one of the *Confessions* that gestures are only the first stage of learning to speak; they are followed by efforts at making the connection between signs and things (1.8.13). Adeodatus admits that we cannot show what a thing is, if that thing is an activity, without the indication of a sign, if we are asked what it is while we are performing the activity. On the other hand, if the inquiry is made about things we are able to do, like walking, while we are not doing them, then, following the question, we can reply by means of the reality itself rather than a sign. The only exception would be the activity of speaking, for an obvious reason, namely that a person cannot show what speaking is without uttering words.

The pair agree that there are essentially two classes of things that can be demonstrated without signs. Both are activities: one consists of those that we are not doing when we are asked about them but can do immediately, if asked, like walking; the other consists in those that are signs themselves, for instance, speaking, in which we actually make the signs necessary for conveying meaning. If the question is about signs, actions can be indicated by means of signs. If the question is about things that are not signs, an indication of what is meant can take place after the inquiry on those occasions on which the signs in question refer to activities that can be performed. Alternately these actions can themselves be indicated by signs by which the questioner's attention is drawn to what is meant (3.6; 4.7).

A lengthy but inconclusive discussion of types of signs that indicate signs follows, after which the debate to this point is ably summarized by Adeodatus. Both he and his father agree that little progress has been made on the questions with which they began their dialogue. Their conversation consists in circumlocutions (*ambages*) – a comment echoed later in *De Magistro* (10.31) and the *Soliloquia* (2.7.13). The debate is a verbal game: this amounts to a set of puerile inquiries (*pueriles quaestiunculae*) of little or no value (*paruam uel mediocrem aliquam utilitatem*), which has distracted them from more serious pursuits, as suggested at *Contra Academicos* 2.9.22. Augustine reassures his son that their conversation (*sermo*) has not been a worthless plaything (*uilia ludicra*). What appears to Adeodatus to have taken place in a puerile sense (*puerili sensu*) actually has a larger purpose. But that is as yet unclear.

The discussion subsequently takes a different direction. Instead of investigating signs of signs the pair turn to signs that signify things, among them those that Augustine calls significables (*significabilia*, 8.22). A distinction is made between the phonetic and semantic dimensions of

statements that involve both signs and realities in a classroom example, whether a man is a man (*utrum homo homo sit*). Adeodatus accuses his father of making light of serious matters,[85] but there is an important issue at stake, which concerns the manner in which a question that is asked in the course of a dialogue acquires its meaning. He points out that the word *homo* consists of two syllables; these, when united, make the word but not the thing. The question is how the mind proceeds from the sounds to the reality.

The answer requires that the problem be tackled at another level, which has already been mentioned in connection with the meaning of a line of the *Aeneid* (2.3). This consists in taking up the sentence as a whole rather than the words that make it up. If Adeodatus had been the recipient of the question only by means of the part communicated by the sound of the syllables, he would not have understood that a question was being asked and therefore not replied. However, when he perceived the entire clause, consisting of four words in which one is repeated, he understood the meaning because he did not perceive the first and last words, *utrum* and *sit*, as independent entities but in relation to *homo*. At that point, and no sooner, he realized that a question was being asked, and attempted to reply. This conclusion is an advance in one respect on what is said about the same subject at 1.3–4, inasmuch as greater attention is paid to hermeneutics. Augustine is proposing that it is not the sequence of sounds that creates meaning but the parts in relation to the whole. He also suggests that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. He has effectively moved from the analysis of words to the analysis of discourse.

In sum, the dialogue is not an exception to the general rule of language (*loquendi regula*): this is the principle that words, when expressed, attract our attention to what is signified.[86] Contrary to what was suggested earlier (3.6–6.17), it would appear that signs depend on realities for their capacity to convey meaning, since it is realities that hold our attention, not signs. As a consequence, realities have a higher value in relation to meaning than signs, which, lacking referents, are mere sounds (9.25). A knowledge of realities takes precedence over a knowledge of words. The ensuing discussion reverses other conclusions that are reached in chapters 2–10. After

[85] *De Mag.*, 8.22: "Nunc uero an ludas nescio." The phrase recurs at *Conf.*, 8.12.29, when Augustine thinks that the words *tolle, lege* may be a children's game: "quasi pueri an puellae, nescio …; cogitare coepi utrumnam solerent pueri in aliquo genere ludendi." In both cases, it is the senses that err.

[86] *De Mag.*, 8.23–24. The opposite, namely, speech without intentions, is discussed at 13.42.

a reconsideration of the cases of speaking and walking, it is agreed that nothing can be taught without the intervention of signs (10.31).

From the moment that they began to play with words, Augustine recalls, they have endeavored to inquire into three issues: whether it is possible to teach (or learn) anything without signs, whether there is a class of signs that should be given preference over the things that they signify, and whether a knowledge of things themselves is better than a knowledge of their signs. He now adds a fourth question: Does his son entertain any doubt about their discoveries? (10.31). In view of his previous rehearsals of the *cogito*, the question may perhaps be rephrased as follows: if only a few things are certain, among them self-existence, what status can we assign to the elements in the semiotic triangle of words, signs, and things? Adeodatus has conveniently forgotten that he was present for at least one of Augustine's statements of the *cogito* (at *De Beata Vita* 2.7), and presumably understood what was said, since he was described as "the youngest, whose talent gave much promise." He replies, possibly with false innocence, that he would like to think that by means of their digressive conversation they have reached sure conclusions (*ad certa peruentum*), but his father's question disturbs him for some unknown reason and makes him fearful of giving his assent (*assensio*).

This is, of course, the language of the group's discussion of Cicero's *Academica*. Adeodatus adapts its conclusions to his own purpose in stating that Augustine would never have asked him such a question if he did not have the answer in mind. He evidently associates the lack of certainty with the entwining, interweaving, or complexity of the discourse (*ipsa implicatio*), which does not permit him to gain a comprehensive view of the issues or to offer a solution that is free of problems, as suggested by the convoluted questions of Reason in the *Soliloquia*. He observes that the matter is so carefully concealed under wraps (*in tantis inuolucris*) that even the sharpest mind cannot penetrate the obscurity. His doubt is not unwelcome, but its source, perhaps deriving from Augustine, is both linguistic and hermeneutic, again indicating a subtle shift in the direction of the dialogue. Adeodatus says that it is difficult for him to remain calm and avoid confusion when arguments to which they have given their approval (*adprobatio*) are so successfully refuted. One reason seems to replace another, with the result that he is tempted to distrust reason itself. This is precisely Augustine's objective: his statement, which terminates chapter 10.31, effectively combines his critique of both Academic Scepticism and the rational dialogue.

He proves that Adeodatus was correct to regard their initial conclusions as *dubitanda*. By a series of logical and literary statements, he questions

each of their former points, *contrariis disputationibus*. The difference between walking and hurrying is resolved by the example of someone observing a bird-catcher who is capable of figuring out the purpose for which the trap and birdlime are designed without being told (10.32). Other objects and actions represented by signs are brought forward to prove that nothing is taught or learned by means of words alone.[87] Augustine concludes that, when words are spoken, we either know what they mean or not. If we know, it is because they remind rather than teach concerning the things to which they refer. If we do not know what they mean, it is because we have no recollection of these things. In this case, they do not remind us of anything, but they may nonetheless alert us, through the recognition of our ignorance, to the need for an inquiry (11.36).

The question with which the dialogue began, namely, whether words have the dual function of teaching and reminding, is thus answered in the negative. But a rôle is retained for the method of the dialogue at the moment when Augustine is about to abandon it as a means of learning about the realities that words represent: it is the first step in proceeding from ignorance to knowledge concerning a sign's meaning. Beyond that, teaching about objects requires that the things that a person wants to know about be shown to his eyes, his other senses, or his mind.[88] Other types of signifying are raised but the point is the same: it is through a knowledge of realities that our knowledge of words is completed (11.36).

Rejecting the notion that we can learn anything about the nature of reality by means of words, Augustine abandons the oral dialogue and completes *De Magistro* as a monologue. The linguistic emphasis of chapters 1–10 is replaced by a discourse on inner instruction and illumination: this represents a move from the concern with certainty toward Platonically influenced questions of understanding. The knowable is divided into sensible and intelligible (*sensibilia, intelligibilia*), or, to use other terms, carnal and spiritual (*carnalia, spiritalia*).[89] Knowledge acquired through the senses, language, or memory is considered inferior to what is presented

[87] *De Mag.*, 10.33–35; 37. For a discussion of the cases of bird-snaring, head-gear, and the learning of the meaning of the word-sign for "head," see Burnyeat, "Wittgenstein and Augustine," 13–15; on hermeneutics, see B. Stock, *Augustine the Reader:* pp. 152–157.

[88] *De Mag.*, 11.36. On *spiritalis*, as an alternate for *spiritualis*, originally applied to wind instruments, see Vulgate, Gal. 6:1; 1 Cor. 15:44.

[89] *De Mag.*, 12.39. Carnal and spiritual are employed *more nostrorum auctorum*, but the authorities in question are not identified. There are several candidates, including Paul, Ambrose, and the unnamed Platonists whom Augustine was reading in Latin translation about the time the original dialogue took place.

to the mind in the truth that enlightens "the interior man."[90] We have moved from words to silence, from dialogue to contemplation, and from signs to realities.[91] For, when I say what is true and my listener or hearer sees what is true, he is not being instructed by my words but by realities shown to him from within himself.[92]

Two Methods. The cogency of this argument is apt to distract the reader from Augustine's other major aim in *De Magistro*: this is to offer a contrast between two methodologies which, as noted, are used throughout his early writings, namely the philosophical and philological. The latter is introduced in chapter 1 and taken up again after chapter 12. Chapters 2–11, summarized above, are almost exclusively concerned with philosophical reasoning. In view of the criticisms of the rational dialogue in these chapters, as well as the reversal (in chapter 10) of the initial view that we can learn about things by means of signs alone, it is possible to argue that Augustine's strategy in the work is to devalue progressive or cumulative thinking and to suggest that a superior methodology can emerge from a combination of philology and theological hermeneutics. He is equally interested in demonstrating how the philosophical and philological methods can work together in the construction of a Christian outlook that is defensible against both Manichaean dualism and Platonist intellectualism. To the degree that these goals are attained, *De Magistro* ranks as a significant meeting ground for the disciplines of philosophy and theology within a theory of historical narrative.

The objective that he has in view can be shown by a brief review of the methodological contrasts in the dialogue. *De Magistro* begins with a classic debate on a defined philosophical theme, namely what it is we intend to do when we speak, using as a point of departure *docere*, *discere*, and *commemorare*, or some combination of these terms. But the pivotal argument of chapter 1, which sets the stage for what follows, arises from the juxtaposition of this philosophical style of reasoning with a piece of philological erudition. Augustine does not answer Adeodatus's point about prayer with a demonstration of the way in which words work in prayer but with three quotations from the Bible

[90] *Ibid*., 12.40: "Cum uero de his agitur, quae mente conspicimus, id est intellectu atque ratione, ea quidem loquimur, quae praesentia contuemur in illa interiore luce ueritatis, qua ipse, qui dicitur homo interior, illustratur et fruitur." There is no easy way to render the sense of *fruor* here, which is in implicit contrast with *utor*, as represented by the utilitarian functions of language.

[91] *Ibid*., 12.40: "Sed tum quoque noster auditor, si et ipse illa secreto ac simplici oculo uidet, nouit quod dico sua contemplatione, non uerbis meis." It is not clear that the envisaged *auditor* is only Adeodatus, as contrasted with a general hearer (or reader).

[92] *Ibid*.: "Docetur enim non uerbis meis, sed ipsis rebus deo intus pandente manifestis."

(Eph., 3:161–7, Ps., 4:5–6, and Matt., 6: 9–13). His assumption in presenting these statements as a part of his response is that the thinking found in the Bible is superior, because anterior, to the conclusions reached in open dialogue (not only on prayer, as it turns out, but on all aspects of relations between language and reality; 11.38). In his view it is legitimate to offer the collective meaning of these passages, which is arrived at by means of comparative philology, as an answer to an argument advanced by means of abstract philosophical examples (i.e., speech, song, etc.). Behind this assumption lies another: namely, that the true teacher of truth is the wisdom of the distant past, as recorded in the most venerable writings on the subject, rather than philosophical reasoning from first principles, which is best suited to resolving present difficulties of thought and language.

The relation between the two styles of thinking is made clear by the notion of inward teaching, which is mentioned in chapter 1 and taken up again in chapters twelve to fourteen, thus framing the discussion of signs. These methodologies would appear at first to give opposed answers to the question with which the dialogue begins. In the philosophical approach, signs take precedence over things as conveyers of meaning, and it is only when the inquiry into signs is exhausted that the notion of teaching by means of words is rejected. In the philological approach, things take precedence over signs, as becomes clear in chapter 11, when the last cases against the realist position are overturned, namely teaching and speaking. The concern with interiority and thingness is reasserted at critical moments in the discussion of signs: for example, at 1.2, when the rôle of soliloquizing in personal instruction is highlighted, and at 8.21 and chapters 12–14, when it is proposed that the correct model for teaching in both philosophy and theology consists in inner illumination.

The dialogue that follows chapter 1, therefore, although it appears to be concerned with two sides of the question of signs, is, in addition to this, an argument in favor of a rapprochement between philosophical and philological methods. In this development, the philosophical aspects of the issues are explored through the examination of oral utterances, while the philological are discussed by means of written texts. The question of the meaning of *Aeneid* 2.659 at 2.3–4 is resolved verbally, but the verbalizations are based on the grammar of written language. Augustine's conclusion is that the meaning of a sentence in verse or prose depends on a combination of grammatical rules and hermeneutical understanding, the latter aided by memory. After verbal dialogue is

criticized (3.5), and forms of non-verbal communication such as gesture, dance, and mime are delimited (4.6–7),[93] he notes that spoken language is concerned with the ears, while written words "present the eyes with a sign by which something pertaining to hearing is brought to mind," thus moving up the scale of being from the physical to the non-physical (4.8). Written language plays an important part in the following discussion, which considers parts of speech (4.9, 5.11, 6.17–18, 8.22), as well as quotations, definitions, and even visible insignia (4.9). He concludes that in some cases, although by no means all, the meaning of a word depends on a connection between verbal and written language (5.12). It is not only the rational dialogue that is under attack, therefore, but everything that suggests that meaning can be conveyed through the voice alone (5.13). One of the chief sources of human confusion arises from "dealing with words by means of words" (5.14).

The relationship between sounds and letters is not resolved philosophically, but by means of another resort to philology, namely Paul's statement at 2 Corinthians 1:19, which is rendered by Augustine (based on the Latin translation) as: "There was not in Christ "is" and "is not" but "is" was in him." (The use of the verb "to be" in the Latin text, as contrasted with the Greek, which reads "yes" or "no," is useful for Augustine's argument, since he wishes to argue that Christ, as the source of "being," is the source of truth). Augustine analyses the sentence in a purely philological manner for Adeodatus (5.14), concluding a few lines later that, although Paul's grammar may have been faulty, "the apostle's authority has the priority where realities are concerned, although not perhaps for words" (5.15). Further, lacking authorities, in this case those concerned with grammar, "reason itself cannot prove that each of the parts of speech signifies a thing." As authority in this instance Augustine does not invoke scripture, which, he reports at *Confessions* 3.5.9, he found inferior in style to Cicero, but the latter's oration, *In Verrem*. The final statements in this argument are made in chapter 10 when Augustine takes up the examples of birdlime and head-gear: here again, the model of written language, in this case the book of Daniel, serves as the archetype for the example of teaching by means of an activity, since the process of reasoning by which the ignorant observer of the bird-catcher realizes what he is doing is clarified by the

[93] Cf. *De Doct. Christ.*, 2.25.38, where a general sign theory is proposed for dealing with human institutions; as an example of how this works, Augustine refers to ancient Carthaginian mime and dance, whose meaning was evident to the audience by means of the actors' gestures and did not require explanation by third parties.

process by which the philologically informed reader learns what is meant by *sarabarae*.[94]

"Unless you believe, you will not understand." The quotation, which, as noted, is a founding principle of Augustine's Scepticism, is made at 11.37, where he switches formally from a philosophical to a philological style of argumentation. There is an assumption that lies behind his reference to Isaiah 7:9 on this occasion, namely: "Unless you understand scripture, you do not have a foundation for belief." Belief, here, as Augustine fits the statement from Isaiah into his discussion, is used in two senses, to refer to everyday beliefs, by which we assume that words mean the things to which they seem to refer, and theological beliefs, which depend on the understanding of the passages of the Bible in which they arise. Augustine summarizes his thinking on the subject in this way (11.38):

> Regarding, however, all that we understand, we do not take our direction from the speaker, whose voice resounds on the outside, but rather consult truth, which presides within over the mind itself, even though it is by means of words that we are admonished to engage in this inquiry.

Words act as markers, point to intentions, and frame inchoate desires; but on questions of truth, he who is "consulted" in the final analysis is Christ: he is the unchanging source of wisdom, who is accessible to mortals depending on the disposition of their wills, as they reason within themselves, over the meaning of scripture. It is the connection between the individual and God which permits Augustine to make an equation between the senses and the mind, on the one hand, which are the poles of his philosophical discussion, and the carnal and spiritual, on the other, which are the two sides of his philological and hermeneutic approach.

Because of the problem of "other minds," which is invoked in another context at the critical juncture of the debate in *De Libero Arbitrio* – namely, the proof for the existence of God – we can never be sure that the realities that we perceive as "truths" are the same as those perceived by others (12.40). Lacking a common foundation for such judgements, we have to assume that the rationale for this commonality resides in a source of understanding outside ourselves. As a consequence the only way that a dialogue concerning this problem can attain certainty in its conclusions is the case in which it is assumed that when one party asks a question the other party has the capacity to understand what is said. Communication

[94] Cf. *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.9.20, where Daniel is lauded as the highest sort of prophet because he both told Nebuchadnezzar what he saw in a dream and told him its signification, thus combining two stages of the vision.

is then brought about in both parties simultaneously by a form of interior instruction that cannot depend individually on either.

This single region of certainty in interpersonal dialogue has the same inviolable status of the type of self-knowledge that is guaranteed by the *cogito*. Augustine's conclusion thus invites a comparison between these realms. The common ground for both notions is found in the qualities exhibited by the human mind. As argued in both the *Soliloquia* and *De Magistro*, nothing can appear to men or women unless those who receive such "appearances," either (respectively) through images or words, do not first recognize that they are living creatures, who are able to approve or disapprove what is intended for their sensory perception. On this view, consciousness is a sort of life of the mind, which comes into being in infancy and proceeds to non-being again after death, when the body, in which our sense organs are lodged, no longer functions as a recipient of such communication.[95] During our lifetime, moreover, when our minds are alive and have the knowledge of this life, "being" and "knowing" are inseparable, since everything we know, whether it is temporal or eternal in origin, is known through sensory experience or its analogies in the brain, both of which depend on the prior recognition that we are living, sensing, perceiving, and judging beings. As a consequence, something that is observed presupposes an observer.

Augustine is arguing in effect that those who observe, and therefore interpret such "appearances," are themselves appearances to others. They see and are seen, hear and are heard, and, as a consequence, exist both as subjects, perceived inwardly by themselves, and as objects, perceived outwardly by others. In Augustine's view, existence demands both sorts of guarantee, that is, the participation of observers and observed, in order for any demonstration of "existence" to work, as evidenced by his discussion of the knower and known in book ten of *De Trinitate*. One of the functions of inner and outer dialogues in his early writings is to illustrate this principle, which underpins the argument for self-existence. Unlike Descartes, who is satisfied with the *res cogitans*, he argues that these two elements are always present and necessary; however, he goes beyond the Platonic tradition in utilizing language as the chief model for this two-sidedness, refusing, in fact, to accept its existence, as perceived, beyond the linguistic level, owing to our inability to penetrate our innermost minds. *De Magistro* sums up his early thinking on this issue, proposing that our understanding of reality is much like our understanding

[95] *Conf.*, 1.8.13–1.9.15.

of spoken and written language, which presupposes senders and receivers of linguistic "signs." These do not betoken "realities," as he makes clear in chapters 10 and 11; however, the dialogue between Adeodatus and Augustine configures the manner in which we learn about anything, whether we are speaking to others or to ourselves.

THE SOLILOQUY, MEMORY, AND TIME

In *De Magistro*, Augustine would thus seem to anticipate questions of concern to the contemporary philosophy of language, especially in semantics and epistemology.[96] However, his interest in images and words arises from practical rather than theoretical considerations and is chiefly introduced in order to provide a foundation for his ethical views and, after 396, for his theory of biblical interpretation. He is convinced that error, ambiguity, and imprecision in language are serious impediments to living a philosophical life within Christianity. His statements on verbal and imagistic representations in the *Soliloquia* and *De Magistro* comprise his first serious attempts to address this issue. He completes his thinking on these topics in his theory of narrative and scripture, which involves an extension of his thinking to the topics of memory and time. I now turn to these subjects.

Memory. It is generally agreed that memory is one of the areas on which Augustine's achievement represents both a synthesis and in some respects an advance on the views expressed in ancient and late ancient thought. In addition to memory itself, which is approached in a psychological and philosophical manner,[97] he has important things to say about habit, forgetfulness, collective memory, and relations between memory, the senses, and emotion. He distinguishes between our awareness of the past, which takes place in the present, and our inherent understanding of pastness. His conception of *phantasia*, as one type of memory image, is midway between the notion of an "impression," as inherited largely from Stoicism, and the medieval and modern conception of an imaginary "phantasy."[98] He utilizes the language of Platonic anamnesis, not to indicate the manner in which

[96] For a defense of this view, see Norman Kretzmann, "History of Semantics," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York, 1967), vol. VII, pp. 358–406.

[97] Excellent review by E. Feldmann, *AL*, s.v; also, A. Solignac, "La mémoire," *BA* 14, 557–567. Augustine's point of departure may have been Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, 1.24.59–1.25.60, where a distinction is made between having a good memory (e.g., Simonides) and knowing what it is to which one refers when one speaks of memory; cf. 1.25.61. Cicero subsequently considers two conceptions of memory discussed in *Conf.*, 10, namely, memory as a container and the theory of memory traces.

[98] E.g., *Sol.*, 2.20.34, where a distinction is made between a *vera figura*, held by means of *intellegentia*, and one created by thought for itself (*quam sibi fingit cogitatio*), which in Greek is called

one soul communicates with another, but to show how the mind activates the latent knowledge that is stored within itself.[99]

Some of his most original reflections are concerned with the rôle of memory in creating and sustaining the notion of the self. In book ten of the *Confessions* he suggests that personal identity is largely constructed by means of a combination of innate, personal, and cultural memories.[100] He likewise proposes that God constructed human souls with skill and artistry, endowing them with an awareness of a mode of time concerning which they have no direct experience.[101] In Augustine's view, the evidence for this design is to be found in scripture, where the New Testament story of the incarnation teaches us that ethical theory cannot dispense with the body, just as the Old Testament books tell us why the soul's conception of pastness cannot do without history. As in Aristotle, the study of habit forms an essential part of this conception of memory, since habits represent the incorporation of memories into patterns of conduct, often without our conscious knowledge. In a comparably hidden manner, biblical history works itself out in the lives of individuals without their awareness, and this frequently takes place through the operation of grace. The self is constructed from both conscious and unconscious records: from lived experience, which we know at first hand, as well as from poetry, art, music, and sacred writings, which require interpretive intermediaries to be understood. In respect to this architecture, the personal configuration of the self in the *Confessions* and the historico-cultural configuration of the self in *De Civitate Dei* considerably overlap.

There are a number of recurrent features in Augustine's several accounts of memory. In his view, memory functions by means of the creation, storage, and retrieval of images in the mind, which is capable of distinguishing between images arising from sensory experience and those that are its own invention.[102] Memories are like captioned pictures in the

phantasia sive phantasma; cf. Gerard Watson, *Phantasia in Classical Thought*, pp. 59–60, 91–95, 101–104; on Augustine (incomplete), 135–153.

[99] Gerald O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (London, 1987), pp. 199–201.

[100] *Conf.*, 10.16.25: "Ego sum, qui memini, ego animus." As in his notion of the imagination, Augustine's view of mind, memory, and identity has much in common with Stoicism. Like the Stoics, he is convinced that the mind is "the essential bearer of human identity" and that in this context the mind is responsible for "the unity, or the potential unity of all mental functioning"; A. A. Long, "Stoic psychology," in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. Keimpe Algra *et al.* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 562.

However, it is important to note that Augustine differs from the Stoics, if indeed they are a source here, by replacing physicalism and vitalism with an emphasis on the rôle of language and time in creating identity. On time and personal identity, see James Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 26–37.

[101] *Conf.*, 10.16.21 [102] *Ibid.*, 10.16.25; cf. *De Mus.*, 6.11.32

imagination.[103] Image formation and recovery are normally controlled by the will,[104] although some images are involuntary, as in dreams, visions, and hallucinations.[105] The manner in which images are registered and recalled is similar; as a consequence, if the initial perception is erroneous, as in the case of an optical illusion, the error will be recorded in memory.[106] Further, when an image is recalled, there is a recollection of the sensory or non-sensory channel by which it was formed.[107] The way in which we use language to describe the world depends on memory, since the connection between signs and referents works by means of recognition.[108] Foresight also depends on memory,[109] as well as intentions. Memory is ubiquitous in human experience: even the soul's knowledge of itself, to the degree that this knowledge is conscious, is a memory.[110]

In book ten of the *Confessions*, these and related topics are organized into three sections which take up respectively memory's function in cognition (10.8.12–10.16.25), recollection (10.16.26–10.24.35), and habit formation (10.25.36–10.39.64). At the beginning of each discussion Augustine recalls his central theme, namely the part played by memory in the soul's elevation.[111] This subject is introduced in *De Quantitate Animae*, where memory is described as the third of seven stages in the soul's ascent toward the contemplation of truth (*contemplatio ueritatis*).[112] The achievements of memory in culture and civilization are praised,[113] just as the psychological dimension of human recollection is later admired in the *Confessions*. Yet, in both works memory is envisaged chiefly as a means to an end: a faculty that can be utilized (*uti*) so that the benefits of the contemplative life can be enjoyed (*frui*). The arts and sciences that depend on memory may contribute to intellectual progress, but the unaided intelligence is

[103] *Conf.*, 10.16.22. [104] *De Imm. An.*, 4.6. [105] *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.2.3.
[106] *Conf.*, 10.8.13; 10.13.20 [107] *Ibid.*, 10.16.22.
[108] *De Mag.*, 10.33. [109] *De Trin.*, 15.8.13. [110] *Ibid.*, 10.8.12, with links to *anamnesis*.
[111] *Ibid.*, 10.8.12, 10.17.26, and 10.25.36. [112] *De Quant. An.*, respectively 33.70 and 33.76.
[113] *Ibid.*, 33.72. On Augustine's debt to Varro here, see Nello Cipriani, "L'influsso di Varrone," 393–394. Cf. *Conf.*, 10.8.12: "Transibo … gradibus ascendens." However, in the *Conf.*, there is no schema, and, building on *De Mus.*, book 1, Augustine offers a more nuanced interpretation of the relationship between memory and habit. As unreflective memory, habit is associated with animals rather than humans; *Conf.*, 10.17.26; however, in humans, habit is, so to speak, the body's record of repeated or customary actions, which have moral and ethical implications; these are taken up at 10.25.36 *et seq*. The list of achievements in *De Quan. An.*, 33.72 includes crafts, agriculture, building, symbolic systems in writing, the spoken word, gestures, painting, and sculpture; human languages, institutions of learning, books, records, and the principles of social organization, including rights, duties, and honors, both in private and public life; the force of reason, thought, eloquence, poetry, mimicry, joking, music, surveying, and mathematics; and the basis for interpreting the past and foretelling the future. All of which, needless to say, are repeated, and somewhat transformed, in *Conf.*, 10.

incapable of attaining an understanding of the soul and God. In book ten of the *Confessions*, Augustine attempts to surmount this limitation.[114] He finds himself in "the fields and extensive domains of memory," and asks whether their "treasures" will lead him back to God.[115] This question creates the internal drama around which his lengthy soliloquy on memory is organized.

The prayer with which book ten begins is an extension of the statement at *Soliloquia* 2.1.1, "Let me know myself, let me know you." In the *Confessions*, Augustine again asks God, "May I know you, you who know me; may I 'come to know even as I am known.' "[116] In the *Soliloquia* the desire for this knowledge precedes the *cogito*; in the *Confessions* it introduces a lengthy statement on the genre of the soliloquized confession (10.1.1–10.6.10), with which it has philosophical affinities. As in the *Soliloquia*, writing is envisaged as a meditative exercise, but its context and purpose have been altered, since Augustine now offers his readers his own written text as a model of an examined life.[117] The goal of his confession is to reveal himself to God, to others, and to himself, but he recognizes that there are impediments to realizing this project. God knows him fully and learns nothing from his words. His readers have much to learn about him but they cannot learn about his personal self-knowledge from what he says, since they know him in the present, when his confession is being made, rather than in the past, when the events he describes took place.[118]

Finally, he recognizes that there is a good deal about his self that he does not know, even though he knows nothing more inwardly than his self.[119] Despite this intimacy, he can only visualize himself "in an enigma and through a mirror, never face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12). This is the critical concept to which he refers in the *Soliloquia* when describing the unreliability of mental representations: it reappears in an experiential context in the *Confessions*, where it pertains to his lack of understanding, through memory images, of the past or future. In the earlier dialogue

[114] *Conf.*, 10.7.11.

[115] *Ibid.*, 10.8.12 and 10.25.36; 10.40.65; cf. 10.17.26.

[116] *Ibid.*, 10.1.1: "Cognoscam te, cognitor meus, cognoscam, sicut et cognitus sum." Cf. *Sol.*, 2.1.1: "Deus semper idem, noverim me, noverim te. Oratum est." The phrase *sicut et cognitus sum* is taken from 1 Cor. 13:12.

[117] *Conf.*, 9.13.37; for an extensive account, see Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, pp. 21–121.

[118] The best they can do is to offer him a sympathetic response, which is based on a charitable disposition, much like his own; *Conf.*, 3.4.5.

[119] *Conf.*, 10.16.25: "Non ita mirum, si a me longe est quidquid ego non sum; quid autem propinquius me ipso mihi?"

this unknowableness is an aspect of his lingering attachment to Academic Scepticism; in the *Confessions*, it is a sign of God's providence and the working of grace. In the one, he is concerned with proving the self's existence; in the other, with describing the historical and transcendental qualities of the self. It is the uniqueness of this double view, rather than either conception considered on its own, which advances on the "mirror image" of Alcibiades and marks a new phase of Western thinking about self-knowledge.

The prayer that opens book ten includes two stages of meditation as they are presented in the *Soliloquia*, namely preoccupation with problems and focusing of attention. In both works the next stage is an internal dialogue. In the *Soliloquia*, the meditative soliloquy reflects Augustine's reading of philosophical texts, in particular Cicero; in the *Confessions*, it summarizes his thought experiments on aspects of cognition having to do with memory. His goal is to survey memory's contents in his search for the presence within his memory of God. In the process of making his inventory he marvels at what he finds in the contents and processes of memory, but he does not discover what he is chiefly looking for, namely traces of the deity, just as he remains ignorant of God's nature and origin in the *Soliloquia*.

Accordingly, at *Confessions* 10.17.26 he returns to his starting point. He recalls that memory is his very mind and self: *Et hoc animus est, et hoc ego ipse sum*. But he is still puzzled by the questions with which he began: what is he, and how can he transcend his nature? His response is a turning point in his several configurations of mental ascent, suggesting that the attainment of happiness in this world, for what it is worth, comes down to a rather practical matter – forgetting and remembering. Here, however, as elsewhere in his account of memory, his solution to what is initially stated as a philosophical problem is not in itself philosophical but a combination of literary understanding and common sense. He reasons that if something is lost and later found, the object cannot be identified unless it already exists in the memory.[120] When it is found, it is recognized by means of a memory image. In this manner what vanishes from the senses is nonetheless retained in the mind.[121] The process of recognition relies on a connection between the name of the object lost and the object itself, as between sign and referent. This is the argument of

[120] Cf. *Sol.*, 2.8.15, where, it is now clear, similarity and dissimilarity are deduced with the help of memory.

[121] *Conf.*, 10.18.27: "Quod cum inuentum fuerit, ex imagine, quae intus est, recognoscitur . . . . Sed hoc perierat quidem oculis, memoria tenebatur."

De Magistro in which the discussion of *commemorare* is extended beyond signs to the moral and ethical dimensions of experience. From a different direction, Augustine is suggesting that there are finite boundaries to what we know.

There is one missing connection in this argument as it is presented in book ten of the *Confessions*, and this is found in letters 6 and 7, which date from 389.[122] Nebridius had written Augustine to ask whether images in the mind are connected to memory and whether a memory can exist without an image.[123] In his reply,[124] Augustine divides *phantasiae* into three types, depending on whether they arise from the senses, mental suppositions, or mathematical reckoning.[125] He rejects, as noted, the Platonic solution to memory by means of reminiscence, because, he alleges, it pertains only to images of the past, whereas what we associate with the past is recalled in the present. He also disagrees with his student's view, possibly originating in Aristotle's *De Memoria* and commented upon by both Plotinus and Porphyry, that the soul, if deprived of the senses, will nonetheless be able to frame images of corporeal objects.[126] Memory images can refer to the past, the present, or both; however, when the mind invents images on its own, independently of sense perceptions, it is in danger of deceiving itself, since this class of images arises from what we take or have taken to exist (*quae putamus*) rather than what we know. Such images can be produced in different situations, for example in a debate, a reading of a narrative of past events, or the performance, composition, or appreciation of a fictitious story. Speaking of these types of images Augustine uses

[122] Cf. *Ep.*, 6 and 7.

[123] *Ep.*, 6.1: "Mihi enim uidetur quod, quamuis non omnis phantasia cum memoria sit, omnis tamen memoria sine phantasia esse non possit."

[124] Nebridius also replied to a number of objections that had been raised by Augustine in their previous discussions. These concerned two issues that appeared subsequently in Augustine's treatments of memory, namely the connection between words and sense perceptions, which is taken up in *Conf.*, 10, and the possibility that the imagination is directed by the senses to the contemplation of images it already possesses; this view is restated as the basis of the human understanding of the trinity; *De Civ. Dei*, 11.26.

[125] *Ep.*, 7.4: "Omnes has imagines, quas phantasias cum multis uocas, in tria genera … distribui uideo, quorum est unum sensis rebus inpressum, alterum putatis, tertium ratis." (On the third type, see *Conf.*, 10.12.19; and, for a more extensive discussion, based on the perception of "justice", *De Trin.*, 8.6.9). Cf. *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.6.15, where visions are similarly divided into *tria genera*; on the link with memory, see 12.12.25. At *De Lib. Arbit.*, 2.8.21, Evodius makes a further distinction based on memory images between number and the laws of mathematics. One can learn about numbers by means of sensory impressions (i.e., seeing six birds and remembering that their number was six), but not the law of addition or subtraction, which depends on a different sort of memory, lodged in the mind at birth.

[126] See Emmanuel Bermon, "Un échange entre Augustin et Nebridius sur la *phantasia* (Lettre 6–7)" *Archives de philosophie* 72 (2009), 199–222, esp. 216–220 on the divisions of *phantasia*.

the verbs *fingere* and *figurare*, meaning "to fashion by means of art" and "to form, imagine, or picture" (7.4). As examples he refers to the types of images formed in the mind after a reading of classical texts and to those by which people at different levels of education create mental configurations of what they allege to be true. These and other acts of imagination function through what we frame mentally and think about: *fingimus et putamus*.

An important supplement to this view is found in book twelve of *De Genesi ad Litteram*, where Augustine attempts to interpret the statement by Paul at 2 Corinthians 12:2–4 concerning a vision in which a man is said to be "caught up to the third heaven." In the ensuing discussion, he arrives at a threefold division of visions, namely *per oculos*, *per spiritum hominis*, and *per contuitum mentis* (12.6.15), subsequently summing up his *tria genera visionum* as corporeal, spiritual, and intellectual (*corporale*, *spirituale*, and *intellectuale*; 12.7.16). These correspond to the threefold division of memory images, to which they are linked in subsequent chapters through sign theory, the powers of the soul, and analogies with communication. For example, in the sentence, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39),

> the letters are seen corporeally, the neighbor is thought of spiritually, and love is beheld spiritually. But the letters, when absent, can be thought of spiritually, and the neighbor, when present, can be seen corporeally. However, love, in its essence, cannot be seen by the eyes, nor thought of by an image that is similar to a body, but is known and perceived in the mind alone, that is, in the intellect …[127] For the way in which I think about Carthage, which I know, differs from the way I think about Alexandria, which I do not know. But the third kind of vision, namely love, differs from these again, inasmuch as it contains realities (*res*) which do not have corresponding images.[128]

In contrast to what he says elsewhere, Augustine divides the second stage in this hierarchy into two phases: one in which a corporeal image is held *in spiritu*, and, while understood corporeally, is not assigned its significance *in intellectu*; and another in which, after thus being reproduced as a sign *in spiritu*, it is grasped in the mind according to what the sign signifies (12.8.19). When we suffer from mental disorders, for example bad dreams (12.15.31), feverish states (12.17.35), or unexplained illusions

[127] At *Conf.*, 12.10.21, Augustine says that *intellectuale* and *intelligibile* may be used interchangeably to describe this stage of visionary experience; however, at 12.7.16 he adds that *mentale*, from *mens*, is to be avoided, giving as his reason: *ipsa vocabuli novitate nimis absurdum est*.

[128] Augustine refers to this text twice in his discussion. I have drawn the first two sentences of my quotation from 12.11.22 and what follows from 12.6.15.

(12.11.23) one of the possible causes is the inability to focus our attention and move our thinking about signs from the level of *spiritus* to that of *intellectus*, where a correct interpretation can take place (12.12.15). This scheme uses a combination of sign theory, memory images, and interpretive philology to classify a number of uncustomary mental states (cf., 12.8.19), thus broadening linguistic explanation to religious, psychological, and historical types of visionary experiences.

In the *Soliloquia*, Augustine argues that it is not the method by which such images arise that causes problems but the object, which may not be what it seems, or the will of the perceiver, which may be disoriented. In letter 7 he presents a comparable viewpoint in which mental images that fall into category two of his threefold division are simply the result of reflection and interpretation. This point can be illustrated by the references to Aeneas and Medea that occur in letter 7 and the *Confessions*. In letter 7, he tells Nebridius that he is able to picture himself in the form of either figure after reading the appropriate texts,[129] and, at *Confessions* 3.11.16, he recalls that the legend of Medea gives him true food for thought, even though he knows the story is untrue.[130] In his immature imagination, such stories were able to create strong images and emotions without due regard for moral considerations.[131] Yet, what is unacceptable about such activities, he subsequently realized, is not the human capacity to create such configurations, which arises through the proactive nature of the senses, but their content and the interpretive context in which they occur. One of the enduring lessons of this experience is Augustine's discovery that through literature he can think about inner states, such as emotions and images, at the same time as he experiences them.

Augustine regularly distinguishes between two types of imagination involving the memory, i.e., imitative and creative imagination.[132] He can imagine his father, whom he has seen, but not his grandfather, whom he has not seen. In the case of his father, his image may not be entirely accurate, but it is accurate enough for recognition without error. In the case of his grandfather, the configured image may be erroneous, but it

[129] *Ep.*, 7.4: "Ego enim mihi, ut libet atque ut occurrit animo, Aeneae faciem fingo, ego Medeae cum suis anguibus alitibus iunctis iugo."

[130] *Conf.*, 3.6.11: "Nam uersum et carmen etiam ad uera pulmenta transfero; uolantem autem Medeam etsi cantabam, non adserebam, etsi cantari audiebam, non credebam."

[131] *Ibid.*, 1.13.21; cf. 3.2.2–4.

[132] E.g., *De Mus.*, 6.11.32; and, for a remarkable example of the distinction, based on a thought experiment, see *De Trin.*, 11.8.13 (using the example of the sun which is seen or imagined); cf. O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, pp. 106–108.

is nonetheless based on what he knows, i.e., his father, who is his grandfather's son. Creative imagination, therefore, involves both things that one knows and things that one does not know; and it is this element of the unknown, although based on the known, that provides Augustine's justification for the use of the literary imagination in ethical thinking. He cannot form an accurate image of the grandfather whom he has not seen without relying on the reports of others. Yet, if necessary, he can imagine how he would act, if placed in a variety of situations. In this way, ethics, intentions, and imagination become part of a single narrative picture.

It is through considerations like these that Augustine arrives at a positive use for narrative in inquiries into self-knowledge. As he puts the matter at *De Trinitate* 11.8.14:

> It happens very frequently that we … believe those who narrate some true experiences which they themselves have perceived through their senses. And since we conceive these things narrated to us as we actually hear them, it does not seem as if the mind's eye turns back to the memory in order that visions may arise in our thoughts; for we do not conceive them by virtue of what we remember, but according to what another describes to us … When something is narrated to me, I do not conceive that which is hidden in my memory, but that which I hear … But even then, … we do not go beyond the limits of memory. For the only reason why I could understand what the narrator was saying … was because I remembered generically the individual things he described (e.g., mountains, forests, etc.).

Augustine's statement applies to both what is heard and what is read, as noted a few lines later at 11.8.15:

> When someone is speaking to us and we are thinking of something else, it often appears as if we had not heard him. But this is not true. We did hear, but we did not remember, because the speaker's words slipped immediately away from the perception of our ears … For it happens even when reading – it has happened to me very often – that I have read through a page or a letter and did not know what I was reading, and so had to read it again. For when the attention of the will is centered on something else, then the memory is not so applied … to the letters.[133]

Augustine is speaking here of the type of sensing, attending, and remembering (or forgetting) that arises in the context of the person's life history, in which the self is envisaged as existing within the temporal flow of events as well as profiting from the meanings that he or she assigns to those events. Taking reading as a model for the focusing of attention, he

[133] *De Trin.*, trans. McKenna.

distinguishes between two types of lives, which, using Greek, he calls Ζωή and Βίος, the latter dealing with the meaning a man or woman ascribes to a life history.[134] Elsewhere he argues that the plotting of such a story acts as a point of mediation between the bare record of a life and the narrative retelling of a life history.[135] A part of his interest in this topic arises from the reasons why lives do not work out as they are imaginatively emplotted by those who live them. Most lives in his own time appear to him to have been imperfectly conceived and executed, including first and foremost his own. Nonetheless, he suggests, such lives, whether lived or written, acquire such meaning as they have through their narrative structure.

He defends this view by considering the words that make up a life history in three perspectives: (1) the awareness of a story in the senses of hearing or sight, as it is told or read; (2) the understanding of the story in the mind, when the telling of the story is completed; and (3) subsequent reflection on its meaning, which may or may not be directly connected with the story's events.

As noted, what we call a "narrative" has its origin in sense perception, as a sequence of sounds. These sounds, called syllables, are distinguishable from other potentially meaningful noises (such as bird-songs) because they form words, either singly, as in the articles "a" and "the," or by means of several syllables, as in the noun *narratio*. In principle, the syllables can be perceived aurally or visually, depending on whether the sequence of sounds is heard or read; but since ancient reading was almost entirely oral, Augustine usually speaks of the perception of a sequence of words as an auditory phenomenon. These sounds do not in themselves constitute a narrative in our sense of the term; however, the sensory engagement is important in his theory, since it is the foundation on which he builds his doctrine of narrative embodiment.

The sound of spoken words is material, and perceived through a sense organ, the ears. However, a group of sounds is also a transmitter of a meaning that corresponds to what is in the speaker's mind before they are spoken.[136] In this sense, meaning is immaterially present in sound, just as the soul is immaterially present in the body. A body lacking a soul is not alive; similarly, sounds without sense are dead with respect to meaning. In the second stage of the process of communication, potentially meaningful

[134] *De Trin.*, 12.7.11.

[135] See Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, pp. 52–87.

[136] *De Gen. ad Litt.*, 12.23.49: "Neque enim ulla vel brevissima syllaba in ordine suo nisi prospecta sonuisset."

sounds, having been perceived, are channeled through the internal sense; and, with the aid of reason and memory, by which they are classified, they enter the perceiver's mind, where they reacquire their intended meaning. The reception of meaning can be said to begin with their perception, since Augustine is convinced that the perceiver's senses act intentionally. However, there are two subsequent phases that are entirely mental: the signs in question are distinguished from other word-signs and recognized as the verbal representations of things; and the pattern of sounds, as it is reconstructed in the memory, is understood to have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Augustine concludes that a narrative is *perceived* through the senses as a phenomenon taking place over time but *understood* in the mind independently of the time of its passage.

The rôle played by memory in the understanding of all forms of narrative experience is explained by Augustine briefly at *De Genesi ad Litteram* 12.16.33, in a discussion of hearing:

> Unless the spirit immediately formed within itself and retained in memory an image (*imaginem*) of the word perceived by the ears, one could not tell whether the second syllable was actually the second one, since the first would no longer exist once it had impinged upon the ear and passed away. And so all habits of speech, all sweetness of song, all motion in the acts of our body would break down and come to nought, if the spirit (*spiritus*) did not retain a memory of past bodily motions with which to join further operations (*consequentes in agendo*). And the spirit surely does not retain these motions except in so far as it has formed them in imagination within itself (*nisi imaginaliter a se factos in se*). Furthermore, there are within us images of our future actions (*futurarum motiones imagines*) before the actions themselves begin. For what act do we perform through the body that the spirit has not previously fashioned in thought.[137]

Through mental concentration on the meaning of a sequence of words, it appears to the hearer that the passage of time measured by those sounds is temporarily suspended. This is the third stage in his narrative theory, which he calls *distentio animi*, literally the "distending" of the mind. We endow words, which are impermanent as they are spoken or read, with a continuity sustained by our thinking, and it is in this process rather than the passing of the syllables, that we locate their beauty.[138] In this respect, a narrative is no different from other types of texts that can be the subject of meaningful interpretation, for example maxims, concepts, prayers, etc. Augustine himself, as noted, describes an experience of this type in book nine of the *Confessions*, when he speaks of reading aloud Psalm

137 *Ibid.*, 12.16.33, trans. J. H. Taylor (Latin added).
138 *De Gen. ad Man.*, 1.21.32.

4 before his mother in the villa garden at Cassiciacum (9.4.8–10). This experience prepares the way for his extended reflections on biblical texts in books twelve and thirteen, in which larger passages are held in memory and compared with each other, making his "spiritual" interpretation a function of narrative memory. Also, when he speaks of narrative, his emphasis is equally on the telling, as in ancient epic, on which the narrative books of the *Confessions* are modeled, and on what is told, as in the exemplary lives of philosophers, saintly persons, and Christ, as illustrated by Athanasius's Life of St. Antony, which he encountered in Milan.

When Augustine proceeds through the sensory, mental, and contemplative dimensions of narrative, he is obliged to take account of two aspects of the phenomenology of time.[139] These concern the relationship of time to being and the subjective awareness of time's duration. The first of these topics is discussed at the end of book one of the *Soliloquia*, when Reason concludes that being is associated with what is permanent in a notion like "truth" (1.15.28–29). However, the dialogue takes place entirely in Augustine's mind, and the external senses, by which duration is measured, are not involved except for brief excursuses on wealth, marriage, and friendship (1.10.17–1.12.20). In order to appreciate this dimension of his narrative theory, we have to turn to other works, namely *De Musica*, which analyses duration from a theoretical standpoint, and the *Confessions*, which offers a perspective that relies on Augustine's personal experience. In these writings the present, while retaining its value as a dimension of time, acquires an ontological significance, since it reflects the concept of being.

These treatises play an important rôle in Augustine's attempt to define the notion of duration. His ideas are developed in two closely related pieces of reasoning on the nature of time in *De Musica*, book six, and *Confessions*, book eleven. The earlier version, as noted, has as its topic the source of harmony between the body and the soul that is created by the aesthetic appreciation of a literary text. Here, as in the *Confessions*, the text in question is the first line of Ambrose's evening hymn, "*Deus creator omnium*." Augustine proposes that the pleasure produced on hearing this line of verse results from a combination of two elements, the iambic metre in which it is composed and the intervals of time that elapse when it is recited.[140] His concern in both *De Musica* and the *Confessions*

[139] Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, 3–30, where a more extensive discussion of the phenomenology of time can be found.

[140] *De Mus.*, 6.2.3; 6.8.21–22; 6.9.23; 6.17.57.

is to distinguish between the physical and psychological dimensions in the reading aloud of a line of verse, and, as a consequence, between the objective and subjective conceptions of time. At *Confessions* 11.27.35, where he solves the problem of subjective time to his satisfaction, he notes that the first line of the hymn is composed of eight syllables, four short (1, 3, 5, and 7) and four long (2, 4, 6, and 8). As the words are read, he is able to measure the time-span of the syllables, and he concludes that it is by means of his *sense* of hearing that these measurements are made. But it is in his *mind* that he retains the length of the first short syllable in *de/us* while he hears the sound of the first long syllable that follows. This understanding cannot have arisen from his sense of hearing, because sound waves begin and end; therefore, his ability to measure time must be a product of his memory: *in memoria metior*. It is this mental record of what was said that permits him to reconstruct the line's meaning.

Time. These reflections on biblical texts lead Augustine to the problem of the temporal understanding of writings as they are spoken or read. This takes place in two phases. Book eleven of the *Confessions* is first of all an exposition of the biblical text on which the quoted line from Ambrose's evening hymn is based, namely the opening chapter of Genesis. Augustine then establishes a connection between the two main segments of the discussion, namely the commentary on *In principio*, in which the problem of time is proposed, and the metrical analysis of *Deus creator omnium*, in which it is solved.

In order to understand the book's organization it is helpful to recall the plan of the *Soliloquia*, which involves the use of prayer as a mental exercise. *Confessions*, book eleven, too, begins with a prayer, in which Augustine asks God to heed his devotions: *intende orationi meae; attende et miserere; attende animam meam* (11.2.3). Then, in a soliloquy, he asks his own mind to pay attention to the ensuing argument (11.3.5), to resist mental dispersion (11.13.15), to persist in his inquiry (11.17.22; 11.18.23), and to resolve the enigma of time (11.22.28). Finally, at the moment at which a solution seems to be immanent, he gathers his mental energies, and the truth dawns: *Insiste, anime meus, et attende fortiter … Attende, ubi albescit ueritas*. The book ends with a second prayer in which his insights are summarized: this too reflects the pattern of the *Soliloquia*, in which Reason asks Augustine to provide a brief résumé of the lengthy prayer with which the dialogue begins.

The theme of narrative is introduced in the second chapter of the opening prayer (11.2.2), which restates the view expressed at the beginning of book ten, namely that God knows what Augustine says before he speaks

(cf., 10.2.2). He asks whether God understands words as he does, as they flow by over time.[141] If not, why has he taken the trouble to set down a narrative account of so many matters?[142] Even if he tells his story in an orderly fashion, he places too high a value on the sensory element: this is represented metaphorically by "the drops of time" that chime like the syllables of spoken words. He remains at stage two of his theory of narrative, whereas he would like to proceed to stage three, which consists in meditation on God's law (*meditari in lege tua* (11.2.2)): to move forward from narrative, which takes place in time, to a meditative state of mind, which is outside time. He also desires to proceed from a narrative to a hermeneutic mode: to confess to God what he has learned and to reveal his lack of skill in interpretation; to talk about the enlightenment, whose first signs have come from God, and the obscurities that will remain with him until his personal weakness in understanding is overwhelmed by God's strength. Like Ambrose, whom he earlier portrays in meditation (6.3.3), he wants to ascend through these levels whenever he is free from restoring his body, his intellectual labors, and his obligations as bishop.[143]

God is implored to listen to his soul: otherwise, to whom is he to address his heart and mind? For time belongs to God, who is eternal: day and night are his (Ps. 73:16), as well as the tiniest instants of time, which fly by at his bidding. He begs God to expand the space for his meditations: *Largire inde spatium meditationibus nostris*. He anticipates the solution to the problem of time at 11.27.35 and provides its justification – the enjoyment of the contemplative life. It is God's will that so many pages of scripture contain dark secrets: *neque enim frustra scribi uoluisti tot paginarum opaca secreta*. He humbly requests that God perfect him, so that these can be revealed and he can confess whatever treasures of wisdom he finds in his books: *Confitear tibi quidquid inuenero in libris tuis* (11.2.3); *Ipsos [thesauros sapientiae] quaero in libris tuis* (11.2.4). Meditation is thus linked to confession as the inner and outer expression of Augustine's self-knowledge.

This effort at interpretation has to begin with the beginnings, when God made heaven and earth, and to extend to the end of the world, when his reign will begin again. Moses, who wrote Genesis, has departed: having come into the world with God, he then left the world to return to

[141] *Conf.*, 11.1.1: "Numquid, domine, cum tua sit aeternitas, ignoras quae tibi dico aut ad tempus uides quod fit in tempore?" Cf. *Conf.*, 10.2.2.

[142] *Conf.*, 11.1.1; quoted as the epigraph to this chapter.

[143] Ambrose anticipates Augustine's meditations, and Augustine fills the gap created by his observation of Ambrose, in which he sensed above all his isolation and confusion.

God. His soul was first embodied, then disembodied, like that of Christ, whom he foreshadows. He is not present to answer Augustine's questions or to reveal the secrets of scripture, first among them the meaning of the phrase *In principio*. Augustine therefore asks himself, in soliloquy, in what sense God "created" heaven and earth. His solution incorporates the ancient view, according to which the concept of a beginning normally means both the first principle of the physical universe and the point of departure for the discourse about that beginning.[144] This was transformed by the church fathers into the conviction that, in the Greek and Latin translations of Genesis, ἀρχή and *principium* refer simultaneously to God's speech about creating and to the process of creation itself.[145]

Book eleven of the *Confessions* is an original exposition of this parallel theme, which is divided into two parts, 11.6.8–11.13.16 and 11.14.17–11.27.38. These treat respectively the meaning of the phrase *In principio* and the problem of time. The argument concerning the nature of time proceeds in logical steps to the conclusion that time, as noted, is measured subjectively in the mind with the aid of memory.[146] In other respects, the organization of book eleven is thematic: the discussion consists of a set of variations on a single topic – the human inability to comprehend God or eternity. This topic is introduced in the initial stage of the exposition (11.9.11), reiterated in the central paradox concerning time (11.14.17), and restated in the concluding prayer (11.30.40). The structure of book eleven thus reflects the principle of organization of Augustine's early dialogues, in which the presentation of options is succeeded by the exposition of a single position. The fictive dialogue with Moses and the discursive section that follows act as the point of departure for a contemplative experience by focusing Augustine's attention so that in the second part of the discussion he can concentrate on a purely internal discourse concerning time.

The argument of the first segment, therefore, can be described as a set of meditations on the theme of time and eternity in relation to the understanding of the biblical text *In principio*.[147] The principle themes are God's Word and the incarnation, both of which are explained using the three-stage theory of narrative that involves sensory, mental, and

[144] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1.1.

[145] Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 10.23, citing Porphyry; cf. 11.23, where Origen's interpretation is criticized.

[146] It is here, rather than in his discussion of past, present, and future, that Augustine's originality arises; on anticipations of his remarks on temporal divisions in earlier thinkers, see Malcolm Schofield, "The Retrenchable Present," in *Matter and Metaphysics: Fourth Symposium Hellenisticum*, ed. Jonathan Barnes and Mario Minucci (Naples, 1988), pp. 332–349.

[147] Cf. Goulven Madec, *Saint Augustin et la philosophie. Notes critiques* (Paris, 1996), pp. 94–95.

contemplative levels. When one reads the text of the Bible, the words are heard (or seen) by means of the senses. In a comparable manner, when Christ appeared on earth, he was known through his physical presence. When one hears a text of the Bible read,[148] the external ears hear words spoken in time, which begin and end,[149] whereas an internal ear, tuned to thought, listens for God's eternal Word. In the case of the incarnation, the Word speaks through the flesh: this Word first sounded externally in humans' ears in order that its message might be sought inwardly and discovered in the permanent truth of the "good teacher" who instructs his followers from within.[150] At the end of this segment, Augustine returns to the central paradox of creation. In the beginning, God made heaven and earth. But who can understand it? Who can give an account of what took place? (*Quis comprehenderet? Quis ennarabit?*). The answer implies not only a logical solution to the problem of time but a transcending of narrative time in order to move to a higher level of understanding (11.9.11).

The second segment is an attempt to justify the focusing of mental attention in the present as a way of attaining this frame of mind.[151] This section begins with the well-known question, what then is time: *Quid est enim tempus*? (11.14.17). Again employing the soliloquy, Augustine asks whether anyone can explain time easily and briefly, or whether anyone can comprehend his thinking about time sufficiently to make a statement about it. These questions repeat what was already said about the opening line of Genesis, quoted above: *Quis comprehenderet?* (11.9.11), and the theoretical issue is the same, namely, the articulation of thoughts, which are viewed as being non-temporal, into words, which are spoken and heard in time. The nature of the problem is incorporated into the form of the question. The speaking of the words *Quid est enim tempus?* is a witness to the fact that the answer cannot be found through a sequential, temporal flow, such as takes place in speech. The true paradox, therefore, is not in the nature of time, but in the insolubility of the problem as it is posed through question and answer, i.e., through dialogue. It is in this sense that Augustine says: if no one asks him what time is, he knows what it is, but, if someone asks,

[148] The example is in fact God speaking from a cloud, saying "Hic est filius meus dilectus" (11.6.8; Matt. 3:17; 17:5).

[149] *Conf.*, 11.6.8: "Vox acta atque transacta est, coepta et finita." This may be the first reference to the notion of a "speech act."

[150] *Conf.*, 11.8.10; on the "good master," taken from Matt. 19:16, see *De Mag.*, 14.46.

[151] Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, 11.21.

he does not know (11.14.17). Recall Adeodatus's criticism of the dialogue at *De Magistro* 3.5: by employing words, he and his father are imprisoned in language.

In the ensuing argument, the three divisions of time (past, present, and future) correspond loosely to the stages in Augustine's theory of narrative. The sensory level relates to the past, since, as the syllables of a word make up a sound, their meaning is established through the memory. The mental level reflects the present, since, in realizing that meaning, *distentio animi* is created: this is an extension of the mind which expands the present in order to give continuity to meaning. The contemplative level pertains to the future, since Augustine is convinced that we generate this meaning in an active, intentional manner. We transform the inherent pastness of our modes of thought – since these, to establish meaning, must be past – into a project to be realized, namely ourselves. The parallel between modes of time and stages of narrative also suggests that in the final analysis Augustine utilizes narrative for a non-narrative purpose. His theory implies that narrative, like all language, is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. In converting the device of telling a story into an instrument for self-analysis in the *Confessions*, he constructs an ethical position which derives its support from both literature and philosophy and serves the interests of his theology. Plato and Plotinus believed that the ontology of being and the logic of narrative were incompatible. Augustine answers them by suggesting that narrative thinking is one of the activities that defines us as humans, and is therefore the starting point for our ascent towards any higher form of experience.

Proceeding from a concern with images and words, therefore, Augustine arrives at a theory of narrative. The stages of his progress on the various questions which on his opinions have to be addressed are spread about in different statements, as I have suggested, but the synthesis of his views in book eleven of the *Confessions* leaves no doubt about the consistency of his thinking on the subject. The early phases of the discussion take place in *Contra Academicos*, where the topic of ambiguity is introduced. Major progress is made subsequently in the *Soliloquia* and *De Magistro*, where, respectively, problems concerning images and words are resolved. Later contributions are found in letters, commentaries on scripture, and in *De Doctrina Christiana*, where a composite theory of signs is outlined. The final (and essential) link in this chain of reasoning takes place in *De Trinitate* and in the *Confessions*, where Augustine moves from atomistic considerations involving words to larger units of discourse, considering

along the way the rôles of memory and time in the narrative reconstruction of events. The result, as I have noted, is the West's first integrated theory in the field as well as a historical conception of the self. This was a significant philosophical achievement for a thinker who was reticent about calling himself *philosophus* even during his early years when doing philosophy was one of his important activities.

Conclusion

In this study I have proposed that the soliloquy, or inner dialogue, was Augustine's major type of spiritual exercise in works written between 386 and 400. This literary form was also employed in works written at later dates, for example in the *Confessions*, *On the Trinity*, and *The City of God*. His use of inner dialogue thus illustrates the continuity in his approach to metaphysical questions during the period in which theology replaced philosophy as the major discipline occupying his scholarly interests.

Augustine worked within an ancient tradition of such exercises which included such authors as Plato, Cicero, Seneca, and Plotinus. He drew inspiration from the Psalms, gospels, and Pauline epistles, and from exemplary Christian life histories, for example those of St. Antony, Paulinus of Nola, and his friend, Alypius, the remnants of whose *vita* may have been incorporated into the *Confessions*. Given the eclectic nature of his education, he was able to view the formal features of the soliloquy in the perspective of three disciplines, namely rhetoric, philosophy, and theology. But it was the philosophical dimension which chiefly interested him in the critical years between the writing of his dialogues and the *Confessions*, as well as later works, such as *On the Trinity*, in which books eight to fifteen revisited philosophical problems taken up at Milan, Cassiciacum, and Rome. He called this form of inquiry the *soliloquium* and it was he who brought this type of dialogue into the orbit of Western philosophical tradition.

If the record in the *Confessions* can be trusted, he began to soliloquize at an early age. In his recollection of how he learned to speak, the initial connection between words and things takes place in inner dialogue. The stages of his intellectual career are marked by inward conversations. They precede his taking up of philosophy in 373 and his conversion to the religious life in 386; they help him sort out his thinking about the *libri Platonicorum* and the letters of Paul; and under the influence of Ambrose they envehicle his nascent Christian hermeneutics. In book eight of the

Confessions the debate between flesh and spirit takes place in internal dialogue, as do subsequent discussions about will, chastity, and conversion. In books ten to thirteen Augustine's conversations within himself before God enable him to achieve victory over sensory, material, and worldly temptations. It is by means of inner discourse that he attains mystical altitudes in his dialogues; and in the "vision at Ostia" in book nine of the *Confessions* his ascent concludes with a foretaste of timelessness.

Augustine is unique among ancient writers in presenting his reasons for doing serious thinking in this form. Among his justifications are the control of emotion, which often disturbs open debates, and the curtailing of digressions, distractions, and outright confusion, which frequently surface in his conversations with his students. At a theoretical level soliloquies have their place in his philosophy of language. In his view, inner words are closer to truth than outer words within the hierarchy of communication which leads upwards to the Word of God. Augustine also sees internal dialogue as a way of uniting the rational methods of the Platonic dialogue with the inward, elevational, and transcendental orientation of Plotinian Neoplatonism. Finally, he views the inner dialogue as a way of demonstrating the limits of human rationality. In the *Soliloquies*, Reason clearly prefers this style of debate to open conversation, but she is unable to tell the inquisitive Augustine all that he wants to know about the soul and God.

Augustine's soliloquies exhibit two features which are unprecedented in the earlier tradition of the inner dialogue. First, he utilizes the soliloquy for framing the question of self-existence. He asks whether he can prove that he exists, and he responds positively and unequivocably that, as he speaks, he knows for certain, without any doubt, that he exists. As frequently noted, this is the starting point for the problem which is known after Descartes as "the *cogito*." Secondly, Augustine situates his soliloquies within a pair of narrative contexts: these are concerned, in the *Confessions* and *The City of God* respectively, with his personal life history and with the history of civilization as recounted in ancient writings and the Bible. His spiritual exercises thus become part of a temporal scheme, and the psychological conception of the self, whose existence the *cogito* demonstrates, is incorporated into a historical design. For this reason Augustine's philosophical soliloquies represent a novel type of inquiry, which I have termed narrative philosophy.

It is possible to chart the growth of Augustine's interest in narrative by means of two dialogues, *On Order* and *On Free Will*. The one is concerned with narrative at a personal level, the other at a universal level. In

On Order the general topic under discussion is the nature of order. In the course of the debate Augustine and his students conclude that they do not truly understand order from a scientific point of view, since the laws that govern this sort of order are not apparent. However, they can achieve a limited understanding of narrative order through their observation and interpretation of the events taking place around them. In book two of this dialogue Augustine turns to the question of how we can improve the ethical dimension of such lived narratives. Two solutions are proposed, namely adoption of an ascetic outlook and studies in the liberal arts, the one working through behavioral change, the other through the disciplined thinking which accompanies it.

The question of narrative order is taken up in a different perspective in *On Free Will*. In this dialogue Augustine argues that life narratives all have an omniscient author, which is God, and a universal strategy of emplotment, which is predestination. In books one, two, and three of this work he tackles different aspects of these principles of ordering. In book one, narrative is viewed in the perspective of society's agreed norms for moral behavior through case histories in adultery, homicide, and legalized killing. Books two and three are more philosophical and theological in focus, as Augustine turns respectively to the value of information supplied by the senses in making ethical decisions and to the potential benefits of organizing those decisions around transindividual narratives in the Bible. He concludes with a defence of freedom of choice within lived narratives which mirrors his demonstration of self-existence, the *cogito*, inasmuch as an anti-Sceptical position is adopted within the context of Sceptical doubt about what we can actually learn about the stories in which we take part. A deepening of Augustine's thinking on this dimension of narrative takes place in *On True Religion*, where a greater emphasis is placed on the lessons to be learned from biblical history. In this work Augustine questions the philosophical (and psychological) theses concerning human betterment in which he shows an interest in his earlier works and draws attention to two guiding principles for living an ethical life within Christianity, namely *disciplina naturalis* and *disciplina rationalis*.

Throughout his early writings Augustine takes up theoretical questions involving images, words, memory, and time, and these discussions form the backdrop for what may be called his theory of narrative. The term "theory" must be used with caution in this context, since he never intended to formulate a theoretical position which was independent of his practical interests. There are nonetheless some important general

conclusions reached in his statements on this theme. First of all, he argues that nothing that is sensory in origin, whether it is framed as images or words, can provide more than a transitory mental recreation of the object it represents. He is led, therefore, in his reflections on such representations, to the factor of time, which he approaches through the model of language, or more precisely, poetic language as it appears in quantitative verse. He proposes that words are perceived in a sequence of sounds, i.e., as syllables, and, with the aid of memory, they are given meaning. And at the moment when this meaning is created the passage of time appears momentarily to have been suspended. This solution to the problem of time is outlined in a number of early writings and defended in a lengthy soliloquy in book eleven of the *Confessions*. The form in which the problem is presented, namely an inner dialogue, and the solution, which concerns inner meaning, are aspects of the same subject, the literary form of exposition in this case paralleling the argument by which the problem is solved.

In the light of this demonstration, Augustine becomes convinced, as later Wilhelm Dilthey, that it is the narrative, experiential, and inward dimensions of our lives which principally characterize consciousness. As he reasons about the temporal element in a line of verse, so he reasons about the rôle of time in our conceptions of ourselves. We can affirm self-existence by means of a simple assertion, as Augustine does in the *Soliloquies*; but as soon as our thinking about the self moves beyond the response to Scepticism it comes up against the elements which chiefly account for the continuity of our identities over time, namely memory and history. It is through the study of these elements that the self becomes Augustine's "project" between the writing of the dialogues and the *Confessions*. Although his thinking is not the subject of an independent treastise, his reiterated interest in the theme effectively lays the foundation for a new understanding of selfhood. The novelty in his view consists in regarding the conceptualization of the self by the thinking subject as being inseparable from considerations of language. In this configuration of the self Augustine effectively becomes the third important contributor to reflection on the subject in the Platonic tradition, after Plato and Plotinus, and through the genre of autobiography, which makes a hesitant appearance in the dialogues, he opens a new chapter in its literary history.

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