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It is hard to overestimate the importance of Augustine's work and influence, both in his own period and in the history of Western philosophy after it. Patristic philosophy and theology, and every area of philosophy and theology in the later medieval period, manifest the mark of his thought. In fact, at least until the thirteenth century, when he may have had a competitor in Thomas Aquinas, Augustine is undoubtedly the most important philosopher of the medieval period. Furthermore, although his influence is somewhat less after the medieval period, it is still important. Many of his views, including, for example, his theory of the just war, his account of time and eternity, his understanding of the will, his attempted resolution of the problem of evil, and his approach to the relation of faith and reason, have continued to be important up to the present.

He was born around 354 AD in north Africa to Monica, who was fervently Christian, and Patricius, who was a non-believer for most of his life. His family was not especially wealthy or distinguished, but they were able to afford a good education for him of the sort common at the time, focusing on rhetoric. His family's plan, with which he initially concurred, was that he should marry well and make his way in the world by means of his skill in rhetoric. While he was waiting to make a suitable marriage, he took a concubine who bore him a son, Adeodatus. When Augustine sent his concubine away, Adeodatus stayed with him. The boy seems to have been remarkably bright, as he is described in Augustine's treatise *De magistro*, which also gives us an interesting witness to the relations between Augustine and his son. Adeodatus did not live to manhood; he died not long after the time of the dialogue portrayed in *De magistro*.

Augustine's mother Monica was determined that Augustine should become a Christian, but initially he joined the Manichaeans instead. Although most of Augustine's life was lived in Africa, in 383 AD he went to Italy, where he made the acquaintance of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, himself one of the most forceful and important Christian thinkers of the time. Many influences, including that of Ambrose, came together to bring about Augustine's conversion, and he was baptized in 387 AD. Moved by stories of desert ascetics that were then popular,

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Augustine also committed himself to a life of celibacy, a decision made famous by his moving description in the *Confessions* of the process leading up to it. In 391 AD he was ordained priest, and a few years later he became bishop of the African town of Hippo, an office he held until his death in 430 AD.

As bishop, he exercised a widespread influence. He was especially vigorous in combatting Manichaeism and the Christian heresies of Donatism and Pelagianism. His controversies with these three common Patristic theological views shaped his philosophy on such issues as free will and the problem of evil. In addition to his pastoral and administrative duties as bishop, he managed to write extensively. His surviving works include roughly two hundred letters, five hundred sermons, and a hundred philosophical and theological works.

His life spanned a turbulent period in the Church and in the Roman empire. He lived through the sack of Rome in 410 AD, and there were barbarian armies outside Hippo when he was dying. The Church during this period was also often in tumult. It was hammering out not only the shape of orthodoxy but also its relations to the state, and theological quarrels tended to become entangled with political strife. The tenor of the time and the difficulties of understanding Augustine's life in its historical context are laid out in detail in the chapter which opens this volume, James J. O'Donnell's "Augustine: his time and lives."

Augustine made important contributions to every area of philosophy, and there are many appropriate ways of ordering the various topics on which he wrote. Furthermore, in Augustine's work – much more than in the work of a medieval philosopher such as Aquinas, for example – disparate topics are interwoven in such a way that trying to disentangle them would do violence to the thought. So, for instance, Augustine wrote a great deal on the nature of the will, but his views on the will are also integral to his position on the relation of faith to reason, his account of virtues and vices, his attempted refutation of Pelagianism, and a host of other issues. There is, then, ineluctably some overlap among the topics discussed in the chapters of this volume.

Augustine himself would certainly have put first, in importance to himself and to a philosophical comprehension of the world, an understanding of the nature of God and God's relations to the world. Consequently, after O'Donnell's introduction to Augustine's life and time, the volume opens with a series of chapters on philosophy of religion.

John Rist's chapter, "Faith and reason," examines Augustine's view of human reasoning and its relation to religious belief, which has been taken as a charter for Christian philosophy from Augustine's time to our own. Faith is an epistemic starting point, in Augustine's view, especially for religious truths, but it is not the ending point. The role of reason is to bring a person who believes to understand what he believes. Although faith is necessary for understanding, it is not sufficient; reason is necessary as well.

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William E. Mann's chapter, "Augustine on evil and original sin," and James Wetzel's chapter, "Predestination, Pelagianism, and foreknowledge," examine Augustine's contribution to particular topics in philosophy of religion, including the problem of evil and the apparent incompatibility of divine foreknowledge with human free will. In the process, each chapter also touches on a variety of related topics. Mann examines Augustine's account of the nature of goodness and its relation to being; he also explains Augustine's interpretation of the doctrine of original sin, which plays a role in Augustine's understanding of the problem of evil. Wetzel considers Augustine's theory of divine knowledge, including knowledge of the temporal future, and he shows the connection between this theory and Augustine's position on two closely associated theological topics: divine predestination and the role of divine grace in human salvation.

The last chapter in this section, Thomas Williams's "Biblical interpretation," serves as a useful guide to Augustine's biblical commentaries and his exegetical theory. Augustine wrote a large number of biblical commentaries, and some of his most important philosophical and theological positions are hammered out in them. In addition, Augustine thought extensively about what it is to interpret a text, especially a text taken to constitute divine revelation, and his views on this subject are instructive not only for their approach to the subject of biblical interpretation but also for their contribution to the topic of hermeneutics.

The next three chapters are on metaphysics and theology. These are intimately connected for Augustine and cannot readily be separated from each other. This fact is made plain by the first chapter, Scott MacDonald's "The divine nature." As MacDonald explains, Augustine finds his way into Christianity by means of a certain metaphysics which is heavily indebted to Platonism. This metaphysics includes a ranking of natures, with matter nearer the bottom of the hierarchy and immaterial minds closer to the top. At the very top is the divine nature itself. God's nature is the foundation for all the others, not only because God is the creator of everything in the world, but also because God is the highest good and being itself.

Mary T. Clark's chapter, "*De Trinitate*," considers the way in which this metaphysics is interwoven with the specifically Christian doctrine of the Trinity. In the process of elucidating Augustine's interpretation of the doctrine, Clark also takes up various metaphysical issues, such as the concept of substance, which are foundational for Augustine's thought, as well as some elements in Augustine's philosophy of mind that he uses to illustrate his view of the relations among the persons of the Trinity.

Finally, Augustine's view of God as the atemporal creator of a temporal creation is at the heart of his philosophical theology, and Simo Knuuttila addresses this view of Augustine's in his chapter, "Time and creation in Augustine." Knuuttila explains Augustine's account of time and eternity, which was very

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influential in the later medieval period. He also discusses Augustine's understanding of various other divine attributes, including divine freedom, omnipotence, and omniscience. A certain theory of modality and its connection to the actualization of possibilities in time is crucial to this part of Augustine's thought as well, as Knuuttila brings out.

The next section, Augustine's philosophy of mind, begins with Roland Teske's "Augustine's theory of soul." Augustine accepted an account of the soul as intimately connected to the body and yet incorporeal and able to exist without the body. Augustine's views on this subject are influenced by Platonism; but, in his mature thought, he emphasizes that a human being is one substance constituted of body and soul. Teske also explores Augustine's speculations regarding the soul's origins, its creation and/or propagation, and its destiny after death.

The next chapter, my "Augustine on free will," is concerned with Augustine's struggle to understand the nature of the freedom to be found in the will. There is widespread controversy over this part of Augustine's thought, so much so that it is sometimes hard to believe the participants in the controversy can be reading the same texts of Augustine's. I argue that part of the problem stems from the fact that contemporary theories about free will have formed the lenses through which scholars have read Augustine's texts, and that these theories are inadequate to capture his position. For this reason, the chapter begins with a careful consideration of theories of freedom of the will in order to outline a theory not canvassed in contemporary philosophy but more illuminative of Augustine's position. With this theory in hand, it is possible to produce a more or less irenic compromise among competing interpretations of Augustine's account of free will.

The section concludes with Teske's chapter "Augustine's philosophy of memory." As Teske points out, it is not possible to present Augustine's theory of memory without bringing in his whole philosophy of mind, because for Augustine memory is intimately connected with all the other powers of the mind, including sense perception, intellectual cognition, and emotion or affection. Augustine is at pains to understand the way in which memory retains not only previously acquired information and previous experiences but also previously felt emotions; and he puzzles over the fact that it is possible, for example, to remember the experience of feeling joyful without feeling joyful while remembering. In his early work, he entertains the notion that memory preserves knowledge from a previous state of existence, but in the end he rejects this idea. Finally, the concept of memory is also important for Augustine's philosophical theology. The relations among the persons of the Trinity can be modeled, on Augustine's view, by considering the relations among human understanding, memory, and will; and the modeling elucidates Augustine's views of the mind as well as his interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity.

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The next section, Augustine's theory of knowledge, begins with Gerard O'Daly's "The response to skepticism and the mechanisms of cognition." O'Daly's chapter sets Augustine's views on human cognition in their historical context by showing how they developed in response to a kind of skepticism popular in his period. At an early point in his career, as he was becoming alienated from Manichaeism, Augustine gave serious consideration to the skepticism of the Academics, who held that nothing can be known for certain. Augustine's earliest surviving work is a dialogue that attempts to refute this Academic position, and he returned to the subject several times in later works. In the course of developing his position against skepticism, Augustine worked out his views about the way in which human cognitive faculties make contact with extra-mental reality and achieve knowledge of all sorts. His theory of sensation is based on the biology of his day, and it is surprisingly sophisticated.

Gareth B. Matthews's "Knowledge and illumination" focuses on Augustine's understanding of the nature of knowledge. Augustine's theory of knowledge is forged from different elements in his thought. His attempt to refute skepticism is certainly one; his struggle to understand language acquisition is another. In elucidating Augustine's account of perceptual knowledge, Matthews also examines Augustine's theory of sensation, but his conclusions are in disagreement with those of O'Daly. O'Daly argues for a claim that Matthews disputes, namely, that for Augustine the objects of perception are images of the objects perceived. One uncontroversial hallmark of Augustine's theory of knowledge is his insistence on the need for divine illumination. Matthews investigates the objects of divine illumination and Augustine's reasons for taking illumination to be requisite for knowledge.

For each of the remaining sections except the last, one contributor to the volume has taken on the task of expounding an entire area of Augustine's philosophy. Christopher Kirwan's essay "Augustine's philosophy of language" considers Augustine's view of the nature and uses of language. Kirwan argues that Augustine's theory of language is largely derivative, and he examines the extent to which Augustine's views were shaped by Stoic as well as Aristotelian theories of language. Augustine takes words to be signs, which are significative of things, although he is aware that there are different kinds of words and that some kinds of words do not readily fit this model. Kirwan also discusses Augustine's notion of an inner word and the role of an inner word in human communication through language.

Bonnie Kent undertakes the daunting job of examining Augustine's rich and complicated ethics. This part of his work includes his account of the nature of human beings and human happiness, and this topic in turn leads unavoidably into certain theological matters. Kent considers Augustine's much-discussed dictum that only God is to be loved for his own sake and other human beings are

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to be loved only for the sake of God. To contemporary readers, this line can sound as if Augustine were recommending that we treat human beings as means to some theological end, but Kent explains the line differently. On Augustine's theory of value, every created thing has the value it does, however great that value, only in relation to the Creator. An important part of Augustine's ethics is built around his recognition that the will can be divided against itself, and Kent shows the way in which Augustine struggled to reach a philosophical understanding of conflict within the will. Augustine's philosophical understanding of the will is interwoven with his interpretation of such theological doctrines as original sin and what he takes to be the correct doctrine of grace and free will, and so Kent considers Augustine's controversy with the Pelagians in this context. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Augustine's theory of virtues and vices.

Paul Weithman's chapter, "Augustine's political philosophy," deals with those elements in Augustine's writings that make a contribution to what we now call political philosophy. Although Augustine did not write any treatise specifically in this area of philosophy, certain of his positions have been very influential in the history of political philosophy. In one or another philosophical or theological context, Augustine wrote about slavery, property, the nature of justice, the purposes of human government, the relations between Church and state, and the conditions for just war, among other such topics. His political theory is based on his foundational notion of the world as divided into the city of God and the earthly city, which are identifiable on the basis of the loves that move the people in them. Augustine's theory of the distinction between Christian and pagan virtues also plays a role in his theory of the two cities, and Weithman shows the way in which Augustine's rejection of pagan virtues is connected to his theological views of human happiness.

The final section is an exploration of Augustine's influence in the later medieval period and afterwards. M. W. F. Stone's chapter, "Augustine and medieval philosophy," shows the variety of influences that Augustine had on philosophy in the Middle Ages. Boethius, Eriugena, Anselm, and philosophers important in the twelfth-century renaissance of Neoplatonic philosophy were all heavily indebted to Augustinian thought, not only for particular theological and philosophical positions but also for his advocacy of the role of reason in human understanding. Augustine is also often seen as the source of a thirteenth-century school of thought, popular especially among the Franciscans, which was hostile to the reception of Aristotle. Stone argues that this scholarly commonplace is in some ways a caricature of a much more complicated reality. As Stone points out, even such leading proponents of Aristotelianism as Albert and Aquinas frequently cite Augustine and take his views as authoritative. Stone goes on to consider the various attitudes taken towards Augustine's thought in the fourteenth

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century, where there is a distinctive neo-Augustinian movement, and in the early Reformation period, where Augustine was an important influence on humanist thinkers.

Matthews's "Post-medieval Augustinianism" concludes the volume with a discussion of Augustinian concepts and views (whether explicitly recognized as Augustinian or not) in modern philosophy. Matthews argues that Descartes was thoroughly Augustinian in his approach, particularly in his focus on a first-person perspective, as well as in certain of his philosophical views, such as his view of the mind. Malebranche was explicit about his debt to Augustine, especially for his theory of knowledge. Others, such as Grotius, were more influenced by Augustine's theory of just war. Leibniz acknowledged himself indebted to Augustine for certain views in philosophy of religion, including the problem of evil. Matthews goes on to canvass an array of other philosophers, including Mill, Berkeley, Wittgenstein, and Russell, arguing that in one respect or another these philosophers show the continuing power of Augustine's thought.

Augustine's thought is so rich and the scholarship on it is so diverse that capturing it adequately in one short volume is not possible. But the sixteen scholars whose work is presented in this volume have provided a stimulating contribution to our understanding of Augustine. Their chapters constitute a provocative next step in the on-going project of comprehending, critically assimilating, and making use of Augustine's deep and insightful legacy to Western philosophy.

NOTE

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I

JAMES J. O'DONNELL

Augustine: his time and lives

Our knowledge of Augustine's world has transformed itself in the last generation. Ever since the work of Gibbon, at least, the fourth and fifth centuries had been marginalized in the historical imagination even of specialists. Gibbon described the decline of the Roman empire as "the triumph of barbarism and religion" (in the form of Christianity). This was too good a story to disregard, and the evidence was overwhelming and unambiguous.

But from the 1960s onward, the concept of "late antiquity," born earlier in the century, was used to transform our grasp of the period. French Catholics, Italian Marxists, and German philologists all had a part to play, but late antiquity's most persuasive apologist and the real shaper of the revolution is the liminal figure of Peter Brown – an Irish-born Protestant on whom, as an infant, the emperor Haile Selassie laid ecclesiastically potent hands claiming descent from Solomon. Brown made his mark as Augustine's biographer and leads, thirty years later, the continuing reimagination of Augustine's age. The diversity of that world and the ambiguity of its transformations are painted in richer and richer colors, and with each few years new tracts of space and time are infused with fresh vitality. The barbarians and the Christians of the age now appear to have had more in common with each other and with their fellow Romans than we once thought, and the many cultures of that Roman world now stand out in greater and more differentiated relief.

Old conventionalisms about Augustine are quite true. He was born in the reign of Constantius II, in a Roman world flea-bitten at its borders by outside armies but fundamentally secure, and he died in the reign of Theodosius II in a part of the empire that no longer recognized Constantinople's sway, in a city surrounded by besieging armies that all agreed were "barbarian" in origin and that would capture his city and his province shortly after his death. In the world of his youth, it was still easy to imagine a world without Christianity; in the world of his old age, it was beginning to be impossible to do so. Augustine continued to live in the imaginary world of his youth and never fully realized the implications of a Christianized society. He lived most of his life as a member of one religious

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minority or another, and yet his writings have had wide influence among his followers in ages when they were in an unchallenged position of dominance.

Augustine's physical world was far smaller than the whole of the Roman empire. Apart from a few years in Italy in the 380s, he lived his life chiefly in three places: Tagaste, Hippo, and Carthage. His trips elsewhere in north Africa were few and limited. Though his words traveled widely, his spatial limitations are important to remember, not least because they kept him chiefly in the more urbanized and coastal north of Africa, away from the high plains and the frontier, away from the districts where a rougher form of life and perhaps a more native form of religion held sway.¹

Augustine himself is a figure whose life we know too well.² He has offered us such a variety of materials, of such high quality, for reconstructing his life that it would be almost impossible not to use them, gratefully, to good advantage. But if we would use them, it is equally almost impossible not to use them to tell the story in the way he would have us tell it – and therein lies the danger.

The evidence of the danger lies in the biographies of Augustine, on large canvas or small, that accumulate in our libraries. In the case of Brown, fully 40% of the book is taken up with the narrative of Augustine's life before his ordination as bishop – before he achieved the position that made it possible for him to exercise a significant influence in his lifetime and after. Narratives of briefer compass regularly find it impossible to restrain the narrative of early life into even so little as 40% of their bulk.

The reason for this preoccupation is famously not far to seek. The *Confessions* are not, indeed, an autobiography in any useful sense of the word, as those of us who write on them regularly aver. But they contain autobiographical narrative and vignettes whose power no recounter of Augustine's life can resist. Consider the episode at the end of *Conf. 2* in which Augustine tells how he and a few youthful friends stole pears from a neighbor's tree and threw them to the pigs. An hour at most, ten minutes more likely, in the life of a man who lived near half a million waking hours, but the episode is unavoidable, even for those (the majority of readers today) who are baffled or disapproving at finding the episode at all or at finding it made much of.

The *Confessions* are the chief instrument by which Augustine shaped the narratives of his life. The achievement of that self-presentation lies in the way the narrative is made to revolve around a defining moment of conversion, localized to a specific place and time and dramatized in a particular way. From infancy to age 18 and again from age 27 until his death, any reasonable person who knew Augustine and was asked his religious affiliation would have said "Christian." For the intervening nine years, many would still have said the same, while others would have named a group, the Manichees, that non-Christians would have distinguished from Christianity at large only with difficulty. And yet Augustine has

persuaded us that the religious drama of the years 386–387, when he decided to accept Christian baptism at the hand of Ambrose, is the interpretive key to his whole life. The issue has generally been not whether he is right in the frame he gives his narrative, but rather whether we have adequately tested his narrative in detail at all points against the other facts.

But he is virtually our sole source of facts. Even those documents of Augustine's life that come from other pens usually reach us because he allowed them to. We have today some five million words from Augustine's pen, vastly more than we have from any of the famous writers of antiquity. None of that material survives against Augustine's will. Though from time to time we hear of scandalous accusations made against him, we hear of them only from him, or if he quotes them to take polemical advantage.

Augustine shaped his own survival with great care. Late in life³ he compiled a catalogue of his own written works under the evasive title *Retractationes* ('Reconsiderations').⁴ Each work was listed with some description of the circumstances of its composition and its purpose, as well as corrections or explanations of difficult or controversial passages. The work does not so much record changes of mind as dig defensive trenches around things said imprudently, or simply in a different spirit, when he was young. The result is a catalogue of Augustine's authentic works, reinforced by the survival of a hand-list from Augustine's library, written by his disciple and authorized biographer Possidius (bishop of Calama, not far from Hippo, and a lifelong follower of Augustine).⁵ Possidius' list not only includes "books" but also lists sermons and letters. Augustine left for the afterlife with a vastly better than average chance that his works would survive, be collected, and be read as his. The survival of so much of what he wrote is extraordinary.⁶ (At least we may be sure that the surviving books are his. Judicious skepticism will stand alongside piety in the presence of the relics of his body presented to view in Pavia.)

The purposes of the modern student of Augustine may best be served if we come to the personal core of his life from the outside, working in. Accordingly, this essay will present Augustine's life not as a conversion narrative but as the unfolding of a dazzling piece of origami. We will begin with the textual Augustine who lies heavy on our shelves, proceed through the public Augustine (or rather the several Augustines known to different publics in his lifetime), and come only at the end to the man and his ultimate self-presentation. Such an approach gives more value to the social context within which he worked and more value to his social interactions with others. It will remain an open question how far the imperial individualism that Augustine practices and implicitly teaches is a useful discipline, whether for self-presentation or for historical analysis.

Augustine's books range from the highly personal and polemical to the lofty and abstract, but even the loftiest and most abstract are charged with a