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.

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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
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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 deal-
ing with the volume’s themes at the Collège de France, the University of
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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 tan-
tillus 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” 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
ANRW Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt

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
List of abbreviations

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. Eccl. Cath. De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae et de Moribus Manichaeorum
De Mus. De Musica
De Onat. Cicero, De Onatore
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
Enn. 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 Linguarum Latinarum
Tusc. Disp. Cicero, Tusculanae Disputationes