

# **Inner Peace and Personal Identity. Reflections on the Unity of the *Confessions***

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Paz interior e identidad personal.  
Reflexiones sobre la unidad en las *Confesiones*

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## Abstract

The division of the *Confessions* into an autobiographical part (book 1-10) and an exegetical part to Gen. 1-2: 3 (book 11-13) has raised questions with respect to their unity. While the view that the *Confessions* cannot be regarded as a unitary whole is now considered as a marginal position, there are various approaches to an integrating interpretation. This contribution elaborates on the proposal that the unity of the *Confessions* arises from their interpretation as a narrative identity construction of Augustine. The underlying meta-narrative in the *Confessions* is Augustine's own doctrine of grace and original sin, which he has worked out in *Simpl.*, 1, 2, shortly before. In the *Confessions*, Augustine illustrates the effect of divine grace and the transformation of man from *homo sub lege* and *homo sub gratia* to *homo in pace* exemplarily on the basis of his own life story. This understanding is supported by the further thesis that Augustine himself deals extensively with the question of "personal identity" in the *Confessions* and perceives identity in the context of neoplatonic conceptions as an inner-soul unity and harmony, which he conceives as *unitas*, *quies/requies*, and *pax*. The source of this unity is the eternal, unchanging one God. In Augustine, *pax* also stands for the condition of spiritual balance and represents the Christianized version of epicurean *ataraxia* and stoic *tranquillitas animi*. In addition, the contribution shows the systematic interlinkage of the Augustinian concepts of *pax*, *unitas*, *caritas*, *requies*, *beatitudo*, *uti-frui*, *res mutabiles-res immutabiles*, *creatio-creatura*, *temporalia-aeterna*, and *peregrinatio*.

**Keywords:** *Confessions*, harmony, mutability, peace, personal identity, self.



## Resumen

La división de las *Confesiones* en una parte autobiográfica (libro 1-10) y una parte exegética de Gen. 1-2,3 (libro 11-13) ha suscitado preguntas con respecto a su unidad. Si bien la opinión de que las *Confesiones* no pueden considerarse como un todo unitario, ahora se considera una posición marginal, pues existen varios enfoques para una interpretación integradora. Esta contribución profundiza en la propuesta de que la unidad de las *Confesiones* surge de su interpretación como una construcción de identidad narrativa de san Agustín. La meta-narrativa subyacente en las *Confesiones* es la propia doctrina de la gracia y el pecado original de san Agustín, que él desarrolla un poco antes en *Simpl.*, 1, 2. En las *Confesiones*, san Agustín ilustra el efecto de la gracia divina y la transformación del hombre de *homo sub lege* y *homo sub gratia* a *homo in pace* de forma ejemplar, lo anterior sobre la base de la historia de su vida. Esta comprensión se apoya en la tesis adicional de que san Agustín trata ampliamente la cuestión de la “identidad personal” en las *Confesiones* y percibe la identidad en el contexto de las concepciones neoplatónicas como una unidad y armonía del alma interior, que él concibe como *unitas*, *quies/requies*, y *pax*. La fuente de esta unidad es el Dios eterno e inmutable. En Agustín *pax* también representa la condición del equilibrio espiritual y la versión cristianizada de la *ataraxia* epicúrea y la *tranquillitas animi* estoica. Además, la contribución muestra la interconexión sistemática de los conceptos agustinianos de *pax*, *unitas*, *caritas*, *requies*, *beatitudo*, *uti-frui*, *res mutabiles-res immutabiles*, *creatio-creatura*, *temporalia-aeterna* y *peregrinatio*.

*Palabras clave:* Paz, identidad personal, uno mismo, confesiones, armonía, mutabilidad.



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## Introduction

The division of the *Confessions* into an autobiographical part (book 1-10) and an exegetical part to Gen. 1-2: 3 (book 11-13), which was noted by Augustine himself (*retract.*, 2, 6, 1), has raised questions with respect to their unity. While the view that the *Confessions* cannot be regarded as a unitary whole is now seen as a marginal position, there are various approaches to an integrating interpretation (Feldmann). The variety of interpretations ranges from attempts to prove the unity of the *Confessions* on the basis of formal, stylistic and motivic criteria (Knauer; Steidle “Augustins Confessiones”; “Gedanken”; Fuhrer 107), to the interpretation as a theology of creation (Nygren) or as proof of God (Steur), as a contemplation of the development of salvation (Kusch), an anti-Donatist project (Wundt), or as a trinitarian analysis showing the obnubilation of the image of God in human beings after the Fall and its restoration by grace (O'Donnell, 2005, pp. 65-86).

My contribution elaborates on a new proposal, which has the advantage of being largely compatible with the above-mentioned interpretations. The unity of the *Confessions* arises from interpreting them as a narrative identity construction of Augustine. According to the contemporary concept of *narrative identity*, personal identity as an answer to the question “Who am I?”<sup>1</sup> is constructed by narrating the story of our life, and interpreting it with reference to philosophical, religious or other cultural meta-narratives, thus giving meaning and significance to it (Klessmann 148). The underlying meta-narrative in the *Confessions* is Augustine's own doctrine of grace and original sin, which he worked out in *Simpl.*, 1, 2, shortly before. In the *Confessions*, Augustine illustrates the effect of divine grace and the transformation of man from *homo sub lege* and *homo sub gratia* to *homo in pace* exemplarily with reference to his own life story, and thus endows it with unity and coherence.<sup>2</sup> According to this interpretation, the *memoria*-analysis in *conf.*, 10, as well as those of time in *conf.*, 11, is reasonable, since man as a temporal being develops his identity in a chronological process, and changes and (re-)constructs it from memory. Insofar as man is *creatura*, and as such is related to the whole creation and to the creator himself, and because his individual identity must be formed based on the *conditio humana*, the embedding of Augustine's identity construction

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<sup>1</sup> In the philosophy of antiquity, personal identity is therefore addressed under the heading of “self-knowledge”. See Hager.

<sup>2</sup> For the interpretation of the four-stage doctrine as a salvation-historical as well as an individual-historical perspective see Drecoll 183.

into his theology of creation (*conf.* 11-13) is meaningful. This understanding is supported by the further thesis that Augustine himself addresses explicitly the question of personal identity in the *Confessions* (10, 2, 2; 10, 37, 62).

The compatibility with widely accepted interpretations is particularly evident in the common understanding of the *Confessions* as a confession of guilt, praise and faith; as part of the narrative elaboration of his identity—based on the meta-narrative of his teachings of grace and original sin—Augustine confesses both his culpable affiliation with the children of Adam and his personal sins up to the time of the composition of the *Confessions* (*confessio peccati*), and the testimony of God's graceful attention which he demonstrates exemplarily by his own life also shows features of a *confessio laudis* as well as that of a *confessio fidei*. In addition, the reference to meta-narratives which is implied in the concept of personal identity can be based on interpretations of the *Confessions* as autobiography (Misch, 1947); at the same time, it allows their extension to the specifically theological context of the work and its intention to turn the reader to God (*conf.*, 10, 3, 4). Augustine's concept of personal identity brings the topic of peace (*pax*) into play. In accordance with the pagan philosophical tradition of antiquity, Augustine discusses personal identity in a eudaimonistic context and understands it—following the Platonic as well as the Stoic tradition—as inner-psychoic coherence, unity and harmony which is realized by virtue (Kiesel “Die Emotionstheorie“ 93f).<sup>3</sup> This ideal constitution of the soul can be conceptualized as “inner peace.”<sup>4</sup> However, unlike the schools of philosophy mentioned above, Augustine believes after his turn to the theology of grace that, firstly, this virtuous perfection cannot be achieved in this life, secondly, that all moral progress is a gift of God's grace, and thirdly, that perfect virtue as well as fulfilled inner peace can only be realized in eternal blessedness (*conf.*, 13).

A characteristic feature of the Augustinian concept of peace is the diversity of its fields of application (Atkins; Budzik). In addition to a social concept of peace, which is the prerequisite for a functioning communal life in any human

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<sup>3</sup> See the Platonic analysis of the virtues as a harmonious unity of the three soul parts (*logistikón*, *thymoeides* and *epithymêtikon*) in *Rep.*, IV, 441c-441a. See also Seneca, *ep. mor.*, 20, 2, and Aristotle, *NE*, IX, 4, 1166a: “For [the *spoudaios*] is in agreement with himself, and he strives with all his soul for the same things.”

<sup>4</sup> *Pax* stands in this sense for the state of mental balance and represents the Christianized version of the Epicurean *ataraxia* or the Stoic *tranquillitas animi*. While the Old Testament *shalom* is almost never used in the sense of “inner peace,” there is a New Testament link between participation in the Christian community and inner peace in Phil 4, 6-9. See Atkins 567.

community, Augustine discusses a closely related political concept of peace as an essential goal of earthly governance in domestic and external policy, as well as the peace of the Church founded by Christ (*pax ecclesiae*), and the perfect heavenly peace (*pax caelestis civitatis*), which the members of the citizenship of God will enjoy in the coming kingdom of God. The common feature underlying all manifestations of peace is that of order (*ordo*).<sup>5</sup> Order assembles various parts of an entity (living being, human, soul) or a community harmoniously in a unity (*unitas*) and is defined by Augustine as “fair distribution of equal and unequal things” (*civ.*, 19, 13).<sup>6</sup> Augustine understands inner peace as “peace of a rational soul in the ordered accordance of thought and action”, as well as “peace between body and soul in the ordered and believing obedience to eternal law” (*civ.*, 19, 13). In the eighth book of the *Confessions*, Augustine discusses this concept of inner peace in more detail and analyses it as a harmonious unity of strivings (*voluntates*), emotions (*affectus*) and deliberate decisions (*liberum arbitrium*) of a person, which are interconnected by their shared orientation to the divine order of values (*lex aeterna*). It is at this point that the relation of the Augustinian definition of inner peace to personal identity becomes clear. This connection is already etymologically obvious in the term *identity*. It comes from the Latin *idem*, “the same”. According to Augustine, to be “the same” in all respects is synonymous with the shared axiological orientation of all mental aspirations and phenomena to the *lex aeterna*, and where there is this kind of inner-soul “sameness”, there is also inner peace. The theoretically conceivable accordance of all relevant mental conditions in the sense of a shared orientation towards evil (*malum*), on the other hand, is for Augustine in many respects neither an expression of order, unity, tranquillity or peace, nor does it realize the genuine identity of a person. A human soul that does not follow the divine order of values misses its destiny as a creature of God (*creatura*). It falls into an ontological and ethical state of disorder and gets into a state of strife and disturbed unity with God and fellow human beings as well as with himself: “That is why the unholy, who have no peace due to their unholiness, are lacking the peaceful order in which there is no disturbance” (*civ.*, 19, 13). Since the orientation toward sin ultimately leads to eternal damnation, it is also self-destructive, so that there is also in a final sense a lack of peace in the realm of the self. For the same reasons, the sinner cannot succeed in a peaceful construction of

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<sup>5</sup> For the concept of *ordo* in Augustine, see Enders.

<sup>6</sup> Translations that are not listed in the bibliography are mine. Regarding the *Confessions*, I have always consulted the excellent German translation by Flasch and Mojsisch together with the English translation by Hammond.

personal identity.<sup>7</sup> According to the essentialist position of Augustine, the individual must answer the question “Who am I?”, based on her or his essential nature as a human being and thus as a creature of God. The person who sins out of conviction gives a wrong answer to the question “Who am I?,” and misses her or his identity as *creatura* directed toward the Creator. In this sense, the Augustinian concept of personal identity must be understood in a normative way.

The fact that the concept of inner peace in the context of Augustine’s narrative identity construction in the *Confessions* plays a major role, is evident from the frequency of relevant terms. The term *pax* is found 20 times—the associated adjective *pacificus* three times—, and thus corresponds numerically to the occurrences of *confessio* (23 times). Given the contextual overlap, it is not surprising that related terms, including *quies*, are also found 23 times (Lawless 45). As the following reflections shall show, Augustine uses the terms *pax*, *ordo*, *unitas*, and (*re-*)*quies* in the context of the systematic connections of inner peace and personal identity almost synonymous (Atkins 568).

## Inner Peace and Personal Identity in the *Confessions*

### Confessions I

The famous first passage in *conf.*, 1, 1, 1, “our hearts are restless until they rest in you (*inquietum est cor nostrum, donec resquiescat in te*),” shows that the question of peace of mind and personal identity in the sense of a harmonious unity of the self is one basic theme of the *Confessions*. The source of restful peace is the triune God, and the longed-for peace will only be fulfilled in the “Sabbath of eternal life” (*conf.*, 13, 36, 51), as Augustine will explain in the course of the other books. The formal framework of the longing for peaceful rest at the beginning and the description of the fulfilment of this yearning at the end of the work, points to the substantial insight that the existence of man originates from the creator and strives back to him: “For you have made us toward yourself (*quia fecisti nos ad te*)”<sup>8</sup> (*conf.*, 1, 1, 1). Augustine conceptualizes this return to origin as *peregrinatio*,<sup>9</sup> as a rocky path in the foreign land, and a restless as

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<sup>7</sup> On the connection between the sinless soul and a peaceful self-constitution see the liturgical *Agnus Dei*: “...Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.”

<sup>8</sup> My translation. Hammond reads: “for you have made us for yourself.”

<sup>9</sup> See Ps. 149: 5 and the implicit reference to the parable of the lost son (Lk. 15: 11-32) in *conf.*, 1, 18, 28. For further reading see Stewart-Kroeker.



well as a peaceless enterprise. Augustine's question, whether it is more precise to say that he would not exist, if God were not in him, or he exists only because he is in God (*conf.*, 1, 2, 2), shows that man's profound submission to God can be described only in paradoxes. But it is not only his creatureliness that refers man completely to God. God, as a punishment for the Fall, struck all children of Adams with ignorance of the good (*ignorantia*) and moral weakness (*difficultas*) (*lib. arb.*, 3, 18, 52), and changed human nature to such an extent that he ceases to be capable of a sinless life (*non posse non peccare*), the rescue out of this misery requires the intervention of divine grace. By himself, man is only free to sin, to which he is driven by the overwhelming sinful desire (*concupiscentia*) as the source of his restless strife.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, man is only "a part of your creation... [that] bears everywhere its own mortality, ...the evidence of its own sin" (*conf.*, 1, 1, 1). The almost complete moral depravity can only be healed by the perfectly good God. Between the good and just God and the sinful and corrupt man a gap opens up whose overcoming in the act of grace evokes the praise of God: "Great are you, O Lord, and surpassingly worthy of praise (*laudabilis valde*)" (*conf.*, 1, 1, 1). Augustine makes it clear that this praise of God is also a gift of grace ("You inspire us [*excitas*] to take delight in praising you" (*conf.*, 1, 1, 1), in this way packaging his recently elaborated doctrine of grace in the *confessio laudis* of the first passage of the work. In addition to this enormous ethical hiatus, Augustine also emphasizes the ontological gap between the restlessness of man and the tranquillity of God; while man as *creatura* exists in space and time and is subject to physical as well as psychic changes, the timeless eternity of God ensures his everlasting active rest: "Semper agens, semper quietus" (*conf.*, 1, 4, 4). This, too, is an insight that can only be formulated by the limited perspective of man in the form of a paradox. In contrast to God, the changeable human being is inevitably subject to a diachronic change in his or her identity and finds ontological survival in the realm of immutability: "You bind us together [*conligis nos*]" (*conf.*, 1, 3, 3). The underlying Neoplatonic motive of dispersing man,<sup>11</sup> who is trapped in changeability and turning towards the temporal, is illustrated by Augustine's metaphorical self-characterisation as "earth and ashes" (*conf.*, 1, 6, 7).

The radical being of man in relationship to God also becomes apparent in another point. Although Augustine undoubtedly has his readers in mind

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<sup>10</sup> On the Fall as the cause of mental strife see *Iul.*, 3, 23, 2: "For there should be peace in the interior of man before sin, not war"; and 5, 24, 4: "In the whole soul and in the whole body I have the creator as the God of peace, who sowed the struggle in me?"

<sup>11</sup> On the thought of dispersion into multiplicity see Plotinus *enn.*, VI, 4, 7.

when writing the *Confessions* (*conf.*, 10, 3, 3), he considers his work as a dialogue with God, whose gracious attention makes him a worthy subject of his deliberations. For this reason, Augustine begins his life story with a hymn to God (*conf.*, 1, 1-5, 6) and indicates through numerous direct addresses in the thirteen books that he sees the *Confessions* as a dialogue with the Creator. Therefore, the theoretical insight of man's focus on God is designed by Augustine in the *Confessions* as a performative act.

Following the proem, Augustine begins with the narrative of his life, which he formally divides into the previously completed four of the seven stages of life according to the Roman counting. The reconstruction of his infancy (*conf.*, 1, 6, 7-7, 12) is characterized by his meta-narratives of original sin and grace as well as by the dichotomy between the greatness of the Creator and the weakness of man, both ontological and moral. Augustine now concretizes the general realization that man is grounded in God with reference to his own person, hereby making it the basic truth of his own formation of identity.

In this context, too, it becomes clear that Augustine, within his biographical narrative, makes the topic of "personal identity" an explicit subject of theoretical reflections: "My infancy is long ago, dead: and I am alive" (*conf.*, 1, 6, 9); and "What was before that [i.e. before my birth, D. K.], my sweetness, my God? Did I exist somewhere? Was I someone at all?" (*conf.*, 1, 6, 9). Also, the transition from *infantia* to *pueritia* in *conf.* 1, 8, 13-20, 31, is an example of man's fluid and elusive identity: "Was it really I who went onward from infancy and progressed to boyhood? Or was it rather that boyhood entered into me and took the place of my infancy? Infancy did not leave me—for where did it go to? Yet it was no longer there" (*conf.*, 1, 8, 13).<sup>12</sup> (This becoming of the creatures contrasts Augustine with the timeless being of God: "And still you yourself remain the same (*idem ipse*)", *conf.*, 1, 6, 10). As *idem ipse* and "the most high [*summus... es*]" (*conf.*, 1, 6, 10), God is the ideal of identity in the sense of selfsameness and unity. All finite forms of physical and mental "wholeness (*incolumitatem*)" (*conf.*, 1, 20, 31) have their origins in this "mystical unity (*secretissimae unitatis*) of yours from which my existence derived" (*conf.*, 1, 20, 31).

Beyond the gift of life, God is also the donor of all natural goods of living beings, of those who are in their species-specific nature, such as the life-sustaining "instincts" (*conatus*) (*conf.*, 1, 7, 12), as well as of those given to him

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<sup>12</sup> This consideration is a reference to the analysis of time in book 11 and the volatility of the three *tempora*.

from the outside: “But neither my mother nor those who nursed me filled their own breasts with milk. You were the one who used to give me nourishment through them” (*conf.*, 1, 6, 7). The moral condition of the underage baby—little Augustine claims no more than what is necessary for him—is just as much as the willingness of responsible caregivers to attend for the child a gift of God (*dabas*) (*conf.*, 1, 6, 7), while the sin of which no one is free must be attributed to man himself (*conf.*, 1, 7, 11). Augustine’s theology of grace shows here as well as his teaching of original sin: “But if I was also conceived in wickedness [*in iniquitate*], and in sin [*in peccatis*] my mother nourished me in the womb...” (*conf.*, 1, 7, 12).

Relevant for the present question is the connection between the sin, which is caused by man, and the spiritual strife caused by it, which Augustine already states in the context of his boyhood narrative. The train of thought is the following: in a well-ordered creation, the existence of sin is in need of explanation because it seems to conflict with the idea of a perfectly good God. Augustine seeks a solution to the problem by differentiating between God-given natural phenomena, and the sin brought into the world by man. Both the natural world and the sin are integrated by God in an all-embracing *ordo*: “And though you are both disposer and creator of all natural phenomena, of sins you are the disposer only” (*conf.*, 1, 10, 16). The divine *lex aeterna* not only determines the *ordo* of all things hierarchically, but at the same time it enacts the punishment of the sinner. By perverting the order of things, the sinner also perverts his own nature, upsetting his soul, and is consequently punished with unrest and peacelessness: “For this is your decree... that every disordered (*inordinatus*) mind becomes its own punishment” (*conf.*, 1, 12, 19). Man finds inner peace and spiritual unity only by turning toward God, the highest unity, while the sinful boy Augustine “was carried away into vain pursuits” because he “went outside [*ibam foras*]” (*conf.*, 1, 18, 28).<sup>13</sup>

The attention to these lesser goods (academic or sporting success, enjoyment of games instead of learning) is punished by aversive affects associated with them. Augustine notes “fear of disgrace and beatings” (*conf.*, 1, 17, 27), “fear [of] grammatical solecisms”, “envy” (*conf.*, 1, 19, 30), and, more generally, “distress, disorder, delusion [*dolores, confusiones, errores*]” (*conf.*, 1, 20, 31).

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<sup>13</sup> My translation.

## Confessions II

In the second book, in which Augustine reports on the aberrations of his youth (*adulescentia*), the dichotomy of rest in God on the one hand, and the peaceless disposition as well as the mental fragmentation of the slaves of sin, are prominently featured. Augustine begins his remarks with the call to God: “For you are... a sweetness which brings happiness and peace [*secura*], pulling me back together from the disintegration [*et conligens me a dispersione*] in which I was being shattered and torn apart [*discissus sum*], when I turned away from you who are unity and dispersed into the multiplicity that is oblivion” (*conf.*, 2, 1, 1)<sup>14</sup> and finishes them in the same way: “With you there is deep peace [*quies*] and life which cannot be disturbed [*vita imperturbabilis*]. ...in my teens I was too inconstant in your steadfastness [*stabilitate*]; and I made myself a barren land” (*conf.*, 2, 10, 18).

The youthful sins reported by Augustine are unspecified sexual debauchery and the famous pear theft. Using the example of sexual desire (which is not ordered in the legitimate paths of marriage and the procreation of offspring), the paradigm of sinful desire and generic term for all kinds of misguided desire (*concupiscentia*), he demonstrates the difference between love for God and the neighbour (“the purity of love [*serenitas dilectionis*]” (*conf.*, 2, 2, 2), and the “darkness of lust [*caligine libidinis*]” (*conf.*, 2, 2, 2) or perverted love that “turns away from you and looks away from you for what is untainted and pure, but cannot find it except by returning to you” (*conf.*, 2, 6, 14). This distinction is relevant in several ways. On the one hand, the difference between pious love of God and neighbour and sinful desire, the primary object of which are external, physical or specific spiritual goods (intelligence, good memory, quick comprehension, etc.), coincides with the distinction between virtue and vice (Kiesel “*Voluntas, amor*”). Augustine extends the ancient catalogue of virtues with the three Pauline virtues of faith, love, hope (1 Cor. 13: 13), and understands with Paul the rightly guided love (*agapê, caritas*) as the epitome of virtue. Accordingly, he summarizes his ethics with the imperative “Love and do what you will [*dilige, et quod vis fac*]” (*Io. ep. tr.*, 7, 8). This love is determined by the orientation toward the hierarchical divine order of goods, whereby love itself takes the form of an ordered love (*ordo amoris*) (Bodei, 1993). In book II, Augustine mentions sensually tangible beautiful objects, honour, power, life, and friendship among others as examples of low-ranking goods with a certain

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<sup>14</sup> See *conf.*, 6, 14.

“dignity [*decus*]” (*conf.*, 2, 5, 10), and emphasizes their subordination to “God, and your truth and your law” (*conf.*, 2, 5, 10).

The connection of right love and virtue or of misguided love and vice also lies in the Augustinian interpretation of the pear theft he committed as a teenager together with his friends. While certain attitudes which are believed to be virtues (according to worldly conventions), are in truth vices (sovereignty is arrogance, false love is lust, pretended zeal is mere curiosity) because they strive for temporal goods and not for the eternal God as the epitome of honour, true love and highest knowledge, the pear theft is a paradigm for the radical perversion of divine law and a “versuchte Umkehrung des Verhältnisses von Schöpfer und Geschöpf” (Brachtendorf “Augustins Confessiones” 68). As is well known, the intention of the theft is not to eat the juicy fruits (Augustine throws them away, *conf.*, 2, 6, 12), but the joy of breaking the law itself. Thus, it is at the same time the paradigm of a false attitude that misses the creaturely nature of human beings and results in a disturbed and unstable identity leading to self-destruction: “My soul was foul and, becoming alienated from your firm foundation, it was disintegrating into oblivion” (*conf.*, 2, 4, 9).

Important for our topic is the connection between emotions and spiritual peace. According to the Stoic conception, the sage develops only so-called “good feelings” (*eupatheiai* or *constantia*) that do not cloud emotional well-being, but no excessive and peace-disturbing affects (*pathê* or *perturbationes animi*) (Halbig). By contrast, Augustine emphasizes that even Christians gifted by the Holy Ghost with divine love (*amor Dei, caritas*) are not free from stressful emotions. As Augustine shows by using the example of his mother and her concern for the son’s salvation (*conf.*, 3, 11, 9), even pious fears can be existentially threatening and severe. In addition, Augustine considers the Stoic conception of a fundamental human capacity to eradicate harmful and morally dubious emotions in this life to be illusory (*civ.*, 9, 4). In this respect, *homo sub gratia* differs from *homo in pace*.

Significant, however, is the difference between aversive affects that evolve in the value context of a godly life and those that are grounded in an orientation toward lower-ranking goods. Indeed, the former also have their origin in the punishment of sin: Adam and Eve, before biting into the forbidden fruit, knew only joy (*gaudium*) and love (*amor*) (*civ.*, 14, 10) and, moreover, were not yet submitted<sup>15</sup> under original sin and its threatening deadly consequence,

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<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, Augustine’s choice of words is clear when he speaks of his coming into “this life which is mortal—or is it perhaps life-giving death?” (*conf.*, 1, 6, 7), as well as of the

eternal damnation.<sup>16</sup> Yet, pious fears are set within the divine order because they spring from the love of God and charity, while affections directed to inferior goods turn this order upside down. Thus, while God looks upon the former with pleasure and shows willingness to comfort and answer the prayers of the burdened,<sup>17</sup> the latter carry their punishment within themselves, as the aversive character of these emotions cause mental pain and peacelessness: “I transgressed all your true ordinances, but I did not escape your scourges” (*conf.*, 2, 2, 4). In the context of his narrative identity construction against the background of the meta-narrative of his doctrine of grace, Augustine interprets the inner peacelessness that causes painful affects not only as a punishment, but also as a remedy that should remind the youthful sinner of the ungodliness of his doings:

After all, you were always there..., sprinkling all my forbidden pleasures with the bitterest of disappointments, so that I would seek a kind of pleasure that is free from disappointment, and when I did so I would find none other but yourself, Lord, yourself alone (*conf.*, 2, 2, 4).

### Confessions III

These motives continue in the third book, in which Augustine reports on the period of his rhetoric studies in Carthage and his spiritual aberrations. The promising reading of Cicero’s protreptic script *Hortensius*, which gives him a first impulse to search for “immortal wisdom” (*conf.*, 3, 4, 7), is followed by a disappointing study of the Bible and the so motivated turn to Manichaeism. Augustine relates how he did not bind his identity to the creator, who as the true one (*unum*) can also produce the peaceful inner unity of man, but to the world of external things as well as to sensual pleasure. The latter cuts through “that actual union that we ought to have with God” (*conf.*, 3, 8, 15): “So my soul was in a poor state of health, and covered in sores [*ulcerosa*], it lay prostrate out of doors” (*conf.*, 3, 1, 1). This attachment of the self to the outside world goes hand in hand with the false Manichaean image of God as well as with the alienation from the divine and the self: “I was wandering far from you. ...I was seeking you not be following my mind’s understanding... but according to my capacity for physical

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“pestilent odor (*pestilentiosum*)” (*conf.*, 2, 3, 8) (my translation) of his father’s encouragement to sex.

<sup>16</sup> Since the Fall, humanity has formed a *massa peccati* (*Simpl.*, 1, 2, 16).

<sup>17</sup> Augustine demonstrates this with the example of his mother, who is comforted in her fears for Augustine’s salvation by the words of the bishop: “...it is impossible that the son of your tears should perish!” (*conf.*, 3, 12, 21). See also 11, 19.

sensation” (*conf.*, 3, 6, 11). The inner emptiness that Augustine feels in himself and that could only have been filled with spiritual “incorruptible food” (*conf.*, 3, 1, 1) cannot be filled with the Manichaean God, “but instead was utterly drained” (*conf.*, 3, 6, 10).

In the consequence, Augustine seeks solace in sensual passions. The false love that underlies his escapades is the cause of sorrowful afflictions, which Augustine once again interprets as God’s discipline and means of correction:

My God, my mercy, how good you were, sprinkling that sweet gratification of mine with so much bitterness! ...and I was happy to be constrained by burdensome bonds—with the result that I was being beaten with glowing iron rods of jealousy, mistrust, anxieties, rages and quarrelling (*conf.*, 3, 1, 1).

In this sense, the punishment for wrong love is inherent in this love itself,

Because when they sin against you, they also profane their own souls, and iniquity is self-deceiving whether in harming and perverting their nature, which you have created and set in its proper place (*conf.*, 3, 8, 16).

The mentioned connection between sin as the reversal of the divine *ordo* and the destruction of the peaceful order in man’s soul as its immediate consequence is expressly described here, as is the dichotomy between love of God and neighbour and misguided love (*conf.*, 3, 8, 15). The fact that Augustine connects love of God and neighbour with the commandment of self-love fits in the framework of his presentation: whoever acts against God and his neighbour harms first and foremost his own soul and its peace.

## Confessions IV

At the heart of the fourth book are Augustine’s ethical-theological reflections on the early death of his childhood friend. Using the example of his young self’s emotional responses to the loss, Augustine analyses the devastating consequences a misguided love can have for the lover’s identity and peace of mind: “I had become the subject of my own questioning” (*conf.*, 4,6,9). The systematic context is this: according to Augustine, the lover identifies with the object of his love and strives for union to complete the integration of the beloved into his own self. Hereby, the lover externalizes his identity through attachment to outside things as well as to persons (Kiesel, “Die Emotions-theorie Augustins” 104–107). If love is directed to the eternal and unchanging God, the object of love is always available, and the unity and integrity of the

loving self are assured. Identification with changeable and perishable things (*res mutabiles*), on the other hand, threatens the integrity of the self. Because the objects of love can be torn away by loss, robbery or death, the lover is always threatened by personal fragmentation, and in a state of inner peacelessness and unrest. Pain, fear, overflowing lust and insatiable desires are the emotional manifestations of this perverted love:

What is all love, if it does not want to become one with the beloved and embraces it in a way that it will be united with him? ...What makes pain what it is, if not the violent separation of once united things? Therefore, it is bitter and dangerous to become one with things that can be separated (*ord.*, 2, 11, 8).

Augustine illustrates this phenomenon by the example of the love for his friend, whom he felt to be his “twin self [*ille alter eram*]” (*conf.*, 4, 6, 11). With reference to Horace (*Odes*, 1, 3) and Ovid (*Tristia*, 4, 4, 72), Augustine describes the integration of the friend into his own identity: “How rightly someone once called his friend, ‘half of my own self [*dimidium animae suae*]’. For I felt that my soul and his were one soul in two bodies...” (*conf.*, 4, 6, 11). The loss of the friend as part of his self thus destroys the integrity of the ego<sup>18</sup> and causes emotional confusion: “And that was why life was dreadful to me because I did not want to live as half a person” (*conf.*, 4, 6, 11). Augustine finds no peace because the identification with himself is disturbed: “I was carrying about with me my shattered, bleeding soul; it could not endure being carried by me” (*conf.*, 4, 7, 12). This inner peacelessness motivates an unfulfillable desire for escaping his own self: “Where could I flee, to escape from myself?” (*conf.*, 4, 7, 12). Augustine summarizes his personal experience of the mental turmoil that follows the death of such a loved one in a general insight: “I was miserable, as every mind is miserable that is fettered by its love of earthly things yet torn into pieces [*dilaniatur*] when it is deprived of them” (*conf.*, 4, 6, 11).

The negative assessment of friendship with mortals suggests a general prohibition of affectionate interpersonal relationships and raises the question of whether this does not—against the biblical testimony—nullify the commandment to love one’s neighbour. Augustine seeks a solution to this problem by differentiating between two types of love for fellow human beings. The harmful form of affection for the neighbour is not able, “to love humanity in a hu-

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<sup>18</sup> See also *conf.*, 4, 8, 13: “For how else had that pain pierced me so easily and so deeply, if not because I had poured out my soul upon the sand by loving someone mortal as if they were immortal?”



man way [*diligere homines humaniter*]<sup>19</sup> (*conf.*, 4, 7, 12).<sup>20</sup> To love people in this right way is to love them as creatures in the creator: “Only those who hold everyone dear, in the One who can never be lost, never lose anyone dear to them” (*conf.*, 4, 9, 14).<sup>21</sup> In particular, friendships as most intimate and intense relationships should be borne out of a Christian spirit: “Blessed are those who love you, and love their friend in you and their enemy because of you” (*conf.*, 4, 9, 14). Such interpersonal relationships are endowed by God and firmly united in the love of God as a gift of the Holy Spirit (*conf.*, 4, 4, 7). This love also binds together and makes “from many [minds], one” (*conf.*, 4, 8, 13). Unlike misguided love, however, it fits into the love of God and thus has a share in its stability (*conf.*, 4, 9, 14): friends who are attached to each other in God will one day complete their love in the eternal unity of the community of the blessed.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the imperishable love of God not only guarantees the inner peace of the lover, but also, through the common orientation toward the divine law, social peace among men.

This pious form of loving affection for a friend remains for the time being just as impossible for Augustine as the divine comfort: peace, tranquillity, and the healing of mental division and identity diffusion can only be granted by the eternal triune God as the source of all peaceful unity: “Stand with him, and you will stand fast indeed; take your rest in him and you will find peace” (*conf.*,

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<sup>19</sup> My translation.

<sup>20</sup> See *conf.* 4, 8, 13.

<sup>21</sup> See *conf.* 4, 12, 18.

<sup>22</sup> This understanding of right and misguided love is systematically linked to the *uti-frui* distinction. See Mayer 65: “Zu den Prinzipien der in *De doctrina christiana* zusammengefassten Hermeneutik gehört die mit Hilfe des ontologischen Schemas <mutabile-inmutabile> vorgenommene Unterscheidung der Dinge (<res>), in solche, die sich verändern, und in solche, die bleiben. Unter Hinzuziehung weiterer Schemata aus der Erkenntnislehre (Signum-res) und der Ethik (Frui-uti) teilt A. die <res> auf in <significantes> und <significatae> sowie in <fruendae> und <utendae>. ...Diese [Hermeneutik] hat nicht zuletzt die Klärung der mit dem <creator> identischen <aeterna atque incommutabilia> sowie der mit den <creatura> identischen <temporalia atque mutabilia> zum Ziel und steht zugleich im Dienste des Programmes <redire in patriam>.” See also Chadwick 72f; and Budzik 65. The interpretation by Dupont explains why the pious love of one’s neighbour guarantees, on the one hand, the longevity of the beloved and, on the other hand, why, in a certain sense, humans may also be enjoyed: “Only as far as the Lord is present in humans, are humans enjoyable (498).” See also the reading by Verheijen 180-182. Canning explains Verheijen’s view: “Human beings are also to be objects of *frui* in the proper sense of the term, but this is a heavenly not an earthly *frui*, and it is *frui in deo* because God alone, and not human beings, brings human life to full beatitude” (324).

4, 12, 18).<sup>23</sup> The Manichaean deity, to which Augustine continues to cling, as a “imaginary being” and “heretical belief” (*conf.*, 4, 7, 12), on the other hand, can be no haven of peace and rest.

## Confessions V

In the fifth book, Augustine describes his gradual estrangement from Manichaeism and the ongoing turn toward Christianity. Decisive for the former is the disappointing encounter with the Manichaean bishop Faustus of Mileve in Carthage, who cannot scientifically substantiate and make plausible the cosmological myths of his faith (*conf.*, 5, 6, 11-7, 13). The indiscipline of his students in Carthage leads Augustine on a career change to Rome, where he again gets into a Manichaean environment and, despite his doubts, continues to cling to the Manichaean conception of God and biblical criticism as well as to the substantiality of evil (*conf.*, 5, 10, 18-21, 21). As the students in Rome also turn out to be refractory and unwilling to pay, he successfully applies for the position of rhetorician at the Milan Imperial Court, where his acquaintance with the allegorical biblical exegesis of Bishop Ambrose shows him an intellectually satisfying way of dealing with Holy Scripture (*conf.*, 5, 14, 24). A short phase of turning to academic scepticism is followed by the catechumenate in the Christian Church (*catholica ecclesia*) (*conf.*, 5, 14, 25).

As in the previous books, Augustine explicitly addresses the question of his personal identity in the context of his way of life in separation from God.<sup>24</sup> Because God cannot be found in the external material world, but only in the interior of man,<sup>25</sup> the self-exodus of the young rhetorician goes hand in hand with the unintended rejection of God: “So where was I, when I was searching for you? You were right in front of me, but I had even abandoned myself, and I could not find myself, never mind you!” (*conf.*, 5, 2, 2). Again, Augustine puts viciousness, remoteness of God, and peacelessness into one (“the wicked, those who are without rest”, *conf.*, 5, 2, 2), and contextualizes this as part of his *ordo*-concept: “you [have] arranged all things so that they have magnitude, number and weight (*mensura et numero et pondero*)” (*conf.*, 5, 4, 7). He also sees the audacity of his students in Carthage as a disturbance of order (*perturbant*

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<sup>23</sup> See *conf.*, 4, 7, 12; 10, 15; 11, 16.

<sup>24</sup> See *conf.*, 5, 6, 10: “For almost nine years, in which my mind was aimless and destitute, and I continued a ‘hearer’...”

<sup>25</sup> On the connection between knowledge of the divine and the self, see *sol.* 1, 7: “I want to get to know God and the soul. Then nothing? No, nothing!”

*ordinem*, *conf.*, 5, 8, 14), as well as the insolvent students in Rome whom he describes as “untrustworthy and [mentally, D. K.] crooked (*pravos et distortos*)” (*conf.*, 5, 22, 22). While the teacher Augustine felt personally disturbed by this impudence of his disciples, the author of the *Confessions* desires their improvement “for your sake” (*conf.*, 5, 22, 22), and defines this improvement as a recognition of the hierarchical order of goods: “If they come to prefer, instead of money, the true teaching that they master, and over that to prefer you, who are God” (*conf.*, 5, 22, 22). The subordination of all goods under God, who is “of assured good [*certi boni*]” (*conf.*, 5, 22, 22), would impart to them a stable self as well as “purest peace [*pacem castissimam*]” (*conf.*, 5, 22, 22) in their souls as well as within their social environment.

The dichotomy between ordered and disordered love is also mentioned in the fifth book—this time exemplified by Augustine’s mother Monica. The misguided and egocentric love for her son is demonstrated by her unwillingness to let Augustine go to Rome without maternal accompaniment, and Augustine characterizes it as “fleshly desire [*carnale desiderium*]” (*conf.*, 5, 8, 15).<sup>26</sup> The inner-soul peacelessness that results from this false love manifests itself in the emotional pain, which Augustine in this context, too, interprets as a divine chastisement and “righteous scourge of sorrows” (*conf.*, 5, 8, 15). On the other hand, Monica’s concern for the salvation of her son springs from an upright love of God and neighbour. This love too is accompanied by restlessness: “... how much more she struggled (*sollicitudine*) to give me spiritual birth than when she had given birth to me physically” (*conf.*, 5, 9, 16). In contrast to the peacelessness of perverted love, the concern of pious love finds divine appreciation and is rewarded with God’s answers to prayers:

Would you have spurned this woman’s tears, not shed in pleading for... some fragile or changeable good, but for the salvation of her own son’s soul? Or driven her from your help though it was by your gift that she was what she was? (*conf.* 5, 9, 17).

Augustine uses the interpretive pattern of his theological meta-narrative at this point as well, attributing Monica’s sin to herself, but all the best in her personality to God. In addition, he emphasizes the providence of his fate by God, who did not let him die in separation from him of a disease contracted in Rome: “though you did not allow me, such as I was, to endure a double death” (*conf.*, 5, 9, 16).

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<sup>26</sup> My translation. Hammond reads: “the physical element of her attachment.”

## Confessions VI

The sixth book reports (including some side stories) on the arrival of mother Monica in Milan and her contact with Bishop Ambrose, Augustine's separation from his concubine, and subsequent marriage plans. In spiritual terms, Augustine is still in a state of upheaval: the abandonment of Manichaeism does not yet result in a definite turn toward Christianity, because Augustine continues to cling to a materialistic idea of God.

Following the Socratic-Platonic self-understanding of philosophy as care of the soul (*epimeleia tês psychês*, Plato, *Phd.*, 107c), Augustine reconstructs this phase of life as a "cross over from sickness to health" and considers it as "critical" (*conf.*, 6, 1, 1).<sup>27</sup> The salvation of the soul, which Augustine sees as a peaceful inner-soul unity, can only be found if man grasps his true identity as a creature of the one and spiritual God: Self-knowledge and knowledge of God are directly linked. Paradoxically, it is precisely the consciousness of this connection that prevents Augustine from true knowledge of God. Believing that "you have made humanity in your image" (*conf.*, 6, 3, 4), he seeks "this image of yours" (*conf.*, 6, 4, 5) not in the inner world of his mind but "restricted you on all sides to the configuration of human limbs" (*conf.*, 6, 4, 5). This false image of God is responsible for Augustine's spiritual peacelessness, because it offers no safe place for his "storms of emotion" (*conf.*, 6, 3, 4). The moral maladjustment of a perverted love orientation and his greed for "honours, profits, marriage" (*conf.*, 6, 6, 9), as well as his "disease of the flesh with all its deadly desirability" (*conf.*, 6, 12, 21), have not yet been cured and are pushing on "the sickness of my soul" (*conf.*, 6, 4, 6): "By so desiring, I endured the bitterest of struggles" (*conf.*, 6, 6, 9).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Augustine discusses Alypius' addiction to the circus games in the context of the salvation of the soul ("At once he was struck by a wound to his soul that was deeper (*graviore vulnere*) than the wound the combatant he was now eager to watch suffered to his body" (*conf.*, 6, 8, 13), and parallelizes the successive effect of grace on Alypius with his own: "This, however, was being stored up in his memory as a medicine for him in the future [*medicinam futuram*] (*conf.*, 6, 9, 14). Just as Monica's warnings indicate the divine will, Augustine's criticism of the games is in truth the work of God: "It was not I who had reproached him, though, but you" (*conf.*, 6, 7, 12).

<sup>28</sup> Augustine also sees this peaceless constitution of the soul as a lack of freedom when he describes himself as a "slave of lust" (*conf.*, 6, 15, 25). Hereby, he refers to his emphatic concept of freedom as freedom for good. See *lib. arb.*, 1, 15, 109: There is "no true freedom except the freedom of the happy and those who are attached to the eternal law." This idea refers to the Platonic *Gorgias* (466a-479c), where Socrates explains that only he who knows and acts

Augustine suffers from the aftermath of his glory (“it confused [*vertebat*] my mind even more”, *conf.* 6, 6, 10), and consumes himself with sorrows (*conf.*, 6, 6, 10), being “in the same mud of hungering [*fruendi*] after the momentary, fleeting things that were tearing me apart [*dissipantibus me*]” (*conf.*, 6, 11, 18). Because, by enjoyment (*frui*) of transient goods, he inverts the divine order which commands only to use them (*uti*), he misses the goal of his pursuit of happiness: “And if any good fortune smiled on me, I was reluctant to grasp it because just before I seized it, it always fluttered out of reach” (*conf.*, 6, 6, 10). The desperate attempt to find happiness in the enjoyment of perishable and corruptible things disturbs his peace of mind and leads to “sighing and groaning” (*conf.*, 6, 14, 24), because “winds were blowing and driving my heart first one way and then another” (*conf.*, 6, 11, 20). Augustine describes the climax of his emotional suffering, the separation from his long-standing concubine, in the context of his view that the lover integrates the object of his love in his or her own identity, as intrapsychic fragmentation and tearing out a part of his self: “My heart [...] was broken and pierced, leaving a trail of blood” (*conf.*, 6, 15, 25). This mental rupture in the turn to lower goods or to evil threatens to lead to a dissolution of the personal self, “as if I were already dead” (*conf.*, 6, 1, 1).

As a doctor and therapist of his mental illness Augustine sees, unlike the philosophical tradition,<sup>29</sup> not philosophy but the triune God. Again, within the frame of his narrative construction of identity relating to his doctrine of grace, he interprets his mental peace- and restlessness as a divine indication of his moral and theological misorientation, which should point to the right path: “I became more pitiable, and you drew closer still” (*conf.*, 6, 16, 26).<sup>30</sup> This divine providence of Augustine’s journey through life “is everlasting” (*conf.*, 6, 14, 24) and brings “that broad and well-worn way of the world” to a happy end (*conf.*, 6, 14, 24). At the end of the book, Augustine notes that this goal is peaceful rest, thus harmonizing the content of his claim that absolute calm is granted only to *homo in pace* at the end of time with the formal composition: “You are the only rest (*requies*)” (*conf.*, 6, 26, 26).

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for the good does truly what he wants, because only through the good the *eudaimonia* as the goal of all human aspiration can be achieved.

<sup>29</sup> See Plato, *Charm.*, 157ab; Epicurus, *gnom. vat.*, 54; Cicero, *Tusc.*, 3, 6, and (after Augustine) Boethius, *cons.*, 1, pr. 1.

<sup>30</sup> See *conf.*, 6, 9.

## Confessions VII

The seventh book, which deals with Augustine's transition from youth (*adulescentia*) to manhood (*iuventus*), points out the connection between a failed identity constitution and a mistaken image of God too: "I was not even transparent to my own self. Whatever was not extended through some degree of space..., I judged that no such thing could exist [not even God, D. K.]" (*conf.*, 7, 1, 2). Nevertheless, Augustine's image of God has evolved: "I believed with all my heart that you were imperishable and invulnerable and immutable [*incorruptibilem et inviolabilem et incommutabilem*]" (*conf.*, 7, 1, 1). With the *immunitas* of God, Augustine highlights an essential characteristic of the divine nature, which goes hand in hand with his inviolable rest. However, because physical natures bound in space cannot have this immutability, Augustine's conception of God is not only wrong but also inconsistent, and consequently cannot be a haven of peace and tranquillity: "Meanwhile I was scrutinizing those things that are contained in space, and there I found no place to rest [*ad requiescendum*]" (*conf.*, 7, 7, 11). The idea of a physical but unchanging God is a reversal of the true order and prevents Augustine from fitting in with this order and thus finding inner peace: "This was the proper median and central zone of my salvation, to remain in your image and serve you by governing my body" (*conf.*, 7, 7, 11). As pure spirit, God is at the head of ontological and moral order, while man as a bodily as well as a spiritual being is created in the image of God only in his spiritual nature and occupies an intermediate position by exercising the dominion of the spirit over the body and by submission to God. In this sense, the integration of corporeality into the conception of God turns everything upside down.

In presenting his indoctrination on the true nature of God, Augustine revisits his interpretation of God as a healer in the sixth book as well as the therapeutic character of aversive affects:

Thanks to the unseen touch of your hand doing its healing work, my swelling began to go down, while my mental perception, formerly agitated and obscured, was getting better day by day thanks to the effective ointment of wholesome afflictions (*conf.*, 7, 8, 12).

This healing takes place through the acquaintance with the *Platonicorum libri* (*conf.*, 7, 9, 13), which proclaim the spirituality of God and locate the knowledge of God in the spirit of man: "All this warned me to come back to myself. I

entered deep within myself under your guidance, for you became my helper”<sup>31</sup> (*conf.*, 7, 10, 16). This new realization is, firstly, linked to the insight that knowledge of God and pious love are connected with each other (“Love knows it”, *conf.*, 7, 10, 16), and secondly, that the fragmented and broken identity has been a salutary chastisement by God: “And I realized that... you have made my soul dwindle away (*tabescere fecisti*) like the threads of a cobweb” (*conf.*, 7, 10, 16). The bitter remedy motivates misguided Augustine to continue with his search for God—with success: “And you called from far off, ‘Truly I am who I am’ [*immo vero ego sum qui sum*]” (*conf.*, 7, 10, 16). The biblical name of God (Ex. 3: 14) is an emphatic reference to the fact that the Christian God as well as the Neoplatonic divine is the paradigm of identity in the sense of selfsameness: “You who are the same [*idem*] forever” (*conf.*, 7, 20, 27).<sup>32</sup> Even the problem of evil, which Augustine saw satisfactorily clarified for many years only by Manichaean dualism, can be solved now by referring to the Neoplatonically inspired *privatio boni*-theory: While only God “abides unchangingly” (*conf.*, 7, 11, 17) in the emphatic sense of the word, all other things are *qua* being creatures subject to becoming and change. Because the notion of destroying implies harm, and the concept of damage presupposes the existence of a good diminished by the damage, all created destructible things must be good. The fact that things are good to varying degrees is not a shortcoming, but a sign of the well-formed order of goods (*conf.*, 7, 13, 19).<sup>33</sup> Against the Manichean idea of a struggle between a realm of darkness and a realm of light Augustine states: “... because there is nothing outside of it [i.e. of God’s created world, D. K.] that could burst into it and cause the order that you have placed upon it to become perishable” (*conf.*, 7, 13, 19).

Augustine no longer conceives sin as substantial, but as a “deviation of the will that is misdirected away from the highest essence, which is you who are God” (*conf.*, 7, 16, 22). Interesting is Augustine’s explication of this will: the evil will is, firstly, a will that turns to lower-ranking goods in a way that is only due to those of higher rank—this will coincides with the perverted love that we have already discussed (*conf.*, 7, 16, 22). Secondly, it is a will “that casts out what lies

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<sup>31</sup> This is a critique of the Neoplatonic *superbia* as well as a reference to his theology of grace.

<sup>32</sup> See also *conf.*, 7, 20, 26.

<sup>33</sup> See *lib. arb.*, 3, 9, 91: “Likewise, you should think about the differences of souls, so that you too realize here that the misfortune that hurts you also serves to ensure that the perfection of the universe does not lack those souls who have had to become unhappy because they wanted to be sinful.”

deep within it” (*conf.*, 7, 16, 22)—this describes the externalization of identity through the integration of the transitory object of love into the self, which thereby is threatened in its integrity. Moreover, the evil will is a will that “puffs itself up” (*conf.*, 7, 16, 22). Augustine here hints at pride (*superbia*) as the central human vice and mainspring of the Fall (*civ.*, 14, 13), which favours perverted self-love over the love of God and strives to take on the rank of God himself.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, the *humilitas* (*conf.*, 7, 18, 24) exemplarily shown by Christ is the central virtue of those who are gripped by the true love of God. In *conf.* 7, 10, 16, and 17, 23, Augustine reports on two Neoplatonic ascensions to God. He describes their aftermaths by revival of the metaphor of spiritual food intended to fill the inner emptiness: “...carrying with me no more than a loving memory and, as it were, longing to smell the sweet savour of food that I could not as yet consume” (*conf.*, 7, 17, 23). The lasting enjoyment of God as well as the integration of God into his own self (metaphorically described as incorporation) and its healing transformation will only take place when Augustine recognizes Christ as “mediator between God and humanity” (*conf.*, 7, 18, 24). Until then, he remains in the *regio dissimilitudinis*: “Then I discovered that I was far away from you, in a place of unlikeness” (*conf.*, 7, 10, 16). This *regio dissimilitudinis* is relevant to our topic (“being unlike” is a counter-concept to “identity” in the sense of “sameness” and “self-sameness”), and can be interpreted in various ways.<sup>35</sup> Enlightening in this regard is Augustine’s statement about the works of creation in the context of the interpretation of Gen. 1: 1: “The further things are from you, the more unlike you (*dissimilius*) they become—and not in terms of physical distance” (*conf.*, 12, 7, 7). “Unlikeness” thus refers to the relationship with God: if Augustine doesn’t succeed in integrating the divine into his own self through enduring enjoyment (*frui*) of God, and in doing so becomes like him (as far as this is possible for human beings), he is still estranged from God and himself as a living being created in the image of God (*imago Dei*) and thus misses his genuine identity. In a certain sense, he is also “dissimilar” to himself in his striving and pursuits, because he is tormented by the unpacified discord between right and misguided love or good and evil will—it is no coincidence that Augustine elaborates on this struggle of will in the following book in detail. Thirdly, he is also alienated from the mind as the core of his self.<sup>36</sup> The mind acts as the place of reunification of the individual which is divided in

<sup>34</sup> See Augustine’s narration of the pear theft in *conf.*, 2, 4, 9; 4, 14. Overall, there are 32 references to *superbia* in books 1–9 of the *Confessions* (Trelenberg 271).

<sup>35</sup> For the Platonic origin of this thought, cf. Plato, *Pol.*, 273e; and Ferguson.

<sup>36</sup> See Plato’s characterization of the rational soul part (*logistikón*) as “inner man (*anthrôpos*)” (*rep.*, 9, 588c).



past, present and future, thus creating unity in the diachronically developing self.<sup>37</sup> It identifies the present with the past self as well as with the future self and makes these different selves similar to each another. With regard to social peace, false enjoyment of transient goods generates difference (*dissimilitudo*) and opposition between people too. While those who enjoy God are like each other in their shared pursuit of the vision of God and live in peace (*en. Ps.*, 84, 10), those who cling to temporal things struggle for limited goods that cannot be common possessions of all, and thereby become dissimilar and hostile to one another.

The seventh book closes with reference to rest and peace in God together with Augustine's Christian demarcation to the Platonic tradition. While the Neoplatonists teach "to see the homeland of peace [*patriam pacis*] ...[they] fail to find the way to it" because of the disregard for Christ's salvific act (*conf.*, 7, 21, 27).

## Confessions VIII

The gracious gift of being "more firmly established in you" (*conf.*, 8, 1, 1), which far exceeds mere knowledge of God and at the same time goes hand in hand with a greater firmness and stability in the self, is the theme of the eighth book. The familiar motifs from the previous books are taken up again. People burdened by "those things that seem good [*quae videntur bona*]" (*conf.*, 8, 1, 2) are characterized as "vain [*vani*]" (*conf.*, 8, 1, 2), so that their inner emptiness is grasped conceptually. Rightly guided love is called again the therapeutic of this emptiness as well as of mental peacelessness: "Let my very bones be flooded with love for you [*dilectione tua*]" (*conf.*, 8, 1, 1). The absence of a lasting peace in the self is related to the changeability of the created world: "Why is it that one part of things alternates between advance and decline, conflict and reconciliation?" (*conf.*, 8, 2, 8).

While the previous books spoke primarily of the dichotomy of right and misguided love, Augustine now discusses intrapsychic peacelessness as a struggle between the remaining perverted will, solidified by time and habituation, and the new will. In contrast to the evil will, which strives for the enjoyment of perishable goods, the pious will implies "to enjoy you, o God" (*conf.*, 8, 5, 10).<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See Augustine's analysis of time in book 11.

<sup>38</sup> Emotions, which Augustine summarizes under the generic term "love", are closely connected with the will: "They are all ...nothing other than volitions" (*civ.*, 14, 6). Reversely, Augustine also sums up the will as love (*amor*) (*conf.*, 13, 9, 10). Accordingly, he describes the struggle of

The designation of God as “the only sure pleasure” (*conf.*, 8, 5, 10) refers to the lastingness of God and the spiritual peace of those who love God. But Augustine is not that far yet. There still rages in him a painful volitional war:<sup>39</sup> “And so my two wills, one old, the other new, one physical, the other spiritual, were in conflict with one another and by their strife [*discordando*] were shattering [*dissipabant*] my soul” (*conf.*, 8, 5, 10). This inner struggle causes a split in the self and frustrates a harmonious identity formation. In addition to tendencies of striving (*voluntates*), Augustine also knows a decision-making faculty (*liberum arbitrium*),<sup>40</sup> which judges the *voluntates* and expresses a preference regarding their effectiveness to come into action. But weakness of the will (*difficultas*),<sup>41</sup> as one of many punishments for original sin, prevents this preference of goodwill from being put into action. Augustine explains the fact, that hereby the personal self is divided in several ways, as follows:

I was enmeshed in both but more in the form of desire that I approved of in myself than in the one I disapproved of. For in that which I disapproved, my ego was less itself [*magis iam non ego*], because I was to a great extent already enduring it against my will [*invitus*] rather than engaging in it willingly [*volens*] (*conf.*, 8, 5, 11).<sup>42</sup>

Augustine is at war with himself:<sup>43</sup> “With what rods of condemnation did I not lash my soul, to make it follow me as I tried to go after you? And it resisted, recoiled, but did not excuse itself” (*conf.*, 8, 7, 18). During this time, Augustine hears several conversion reports: the public confession of the rhetorician Marius Victorinus to Christianity, Pontician’s report on the Egyptian ascetic

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will as a conflict between the love of God and the perverted desire: “Likewise I was convinced that it was better for me to give myself up to your love than to give myself up to my desire; but although the former course of action was both attractive and convincing, the latter was more tempting and had me in its coils” (*conf.*, 8, 5, 12, Hammond’s translation slightly modified). See also Kiesel “Die Emotionstheorie”; and “Voluntas.”

<sup>39</sup> For different interpretations of the will struggle see Brachtendorf “Augustine’s Notion”; Müller; and Kiesel “Wille und Personalität.”

<sup>40</sup> See den Bok.

<sup>41</sup> On the Augustinian concept of *difficultas* see Drecoll and Kudella 117. See also *conf.*, 8, 10, 22: “So I was in conflict with myself, and my very identity was disintegrating, and the actual disintegration was in fact taking place quite against my will... for I was a son of Adam.”

<sup>42</sup> I changed Hammond’s translation slightly.

<sup>43</sup> In connection with our topic it is noteworthy that, analysing his will-struggle, Augustine speaks of his refusal “to serve in your army [*militare tibi*]” (*conf.*, 8, 5, 11). See also *conf.*, 9, 8, 17, where Augustine tells us about his friend Evodius: “Then he put military service (*militia*) behind him and girded himself for your service instead.”

Antonius, and the instruction of two imperial officials in Trier, who had been inspired to a Christian departure from all secular aspirations by a coincidental encounter with the biography of Antonius. But these narratives result in even greater self-hatred: “The more intensely I loved [*amabam*] those salutary intentions that I heard of... the more I came to detest and loathe myself [*oderam*] in comparison with them” (*conf.*, 8, 7, 17).

As in the sixth book, Augustine sees his mental state as a “disease [*morbo*]” (*conf.*, 8, 7, 17), culminating in a state of crisis necessary for healing. Augustine also interprets this emotional pain as divine chastisement: “So I was sick and tormented. ...You redoubled the lashes of fear [*timoris*] and shame [*pudoris*] to stop me from giving up again” (*conf.*, 8, 11, 25). His healing and devotion to *continentia* is described by Augustine in the famous garden scene (*conf.*, 8, 12, 28-30) in the context of his meta-narrative as the work of divine grace.

## Confessions IX

In the ninth book Augustine reports on his retirement from the profession as a rhetorician, the retreat with his friends to an estate in Cassiciacum, and the subsequent return to Africa. During the trip, the mother dies in Ostia. Shortly before her death, she and Augustine share a Christian and Neoplatonic-inspired vision. All these decisions and experiences are based on the fact that God has “pierced our heart with your love [*caritate tua*]” (*conf.*, 9, 2, 3). The heart, which in antiquity was the seat of the spirit, is now so permeated with the love of God that the identity of Augustine has changed: he has become another. The identification with the divine Word is summarized by Augustine again in metaphors of the incorporation into the self: “And so we carried with us your words fixed deep within” (*conf.*, 9, 2, 3). For that very reason the good will gains in strength (*conf.*, 9, 2, 4), the emptiness of the heart fills with “joy”, and God begins “to grow sweet to my taste” (*conf.*, 9, 4, 10). The attachment to the “eternal simplicity [*aeterna simplicitate*]” (*conf.*, 9, 4, 10) motivates the desire to no longer fall into a splitting of the self in the manifold of the variable: “I no longer wanted to be dragged out into the diversity [*multiplicari*] of worldly goods,<sup>44</sup> both devouring time and being devoured by it” (*conf.*, 9, 4, 10).

In the context of a meditation of Psalm 4: 9, Augustine reflects on the rest (*requies*) in peace (*pax*) and on the selfsameness of the divine essence (*id ipsum*), and in this way explicitly binds together these three issues systematically

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<sup>44</sup> I modified Hammond’s translation.

(*conf.*, 9, 4, 11).<sup>45</sup> Since the burden of his past sins disturbs this newfound peace, he signs in for baptism in Milan. The reference to the motif of peace is accompanied by the dominant presence of mother Monica in the ninth book. As a formative characteristic of Monica, Augustine names her peacefulness: She was “behaving as a peacemaker [*pacificam*]” (*conf.*, 9, 9, 21), providing for reconciliation between those who quarrelled. Patiently she endured both her husband’s infidelity without instigating “acrimony [*simulatatem*]” (*conf.*, 9, 9, 19), as well as the initial dislike of her mother-in-law, “who was stirred up against her by the mutterings of spiteful servant girls” (*conf.*, 9, 9, 20). This maximum peacefulness is only possible because Monica has been taught by Christ, “her inmost teacher” of peace (*conf.*, 9, 9, 21). Generally, Augustine also emphasizes in the narrative of his mother’s life story the initial sinfulness of human beings trapped in concupiscence, which must be healed by the divine doctor. In the case of Monica this happened through the sharp tongue of a slave woman who caught little Monica nibbling on her parents’ wine supply and called her a “drunkard”:

How did you restore her, how did you heal her? Surely what you did was to provoke a harsh and sharp reproof from another soul, and use it as a surgeon’s knife from your secret storehouse; and with one stroke you cut away that rottenness! (*conf.*, 9, 8, 18).<sup>46</sup>

The communion between mother and son in Christ culminates in the Vision of Ostia. The contemplative, Neoplatonic-Christian ascension<sup>47</sup> leads to the “food of truth” which “does not have the capacity either to *have* existed, or to *come* to exist. It simply is, because it is eternal” (*conf.*, 9, 10, 24), and where the being in relationship with the creator becomes impressive:

Imagine... that anything which comes into being through transition grew silent to that person (for all these things make the same declaration, if only one

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<sup>45</sup> See Augustine’s comment on the death of his son Adeodatus, who now rests in the peace of God: “You were quick to take his life from this Earth, but I am not at all anxious when I remember him, for there is nothing for me to fear from his boyhood, or adolescence, and certainly not from his manhood” (*conf.*, 9, 6, 14).

<sup>46</sup> According to Augustine, physical pain can also be a divine chastisement, as it is shown by the following anecdote: “But I have not forgotten... the harshness of your punishment, and the marvelous swiftness of your mercy. You were tormenting me with toothache; and when it grew so severe that I could not even speak... As soon as we were knelt down in a suppliant posture, the pain vanished” (*conf.*, 9, 4, 12).

<sup>47</sup> For a detailed interpretation see Brachtendorf “Augustine’s Notion” 189-197.

could hear it—we have not made ourselves, but the One who abides for ever has made us (*conf.*, 9, 10, 25).

Important to our question is the immediate chronological connection between the ascent to timeless beings and the death of the mother, which on the one hand illustrates the ontological difference between the eternity of the creator and the transitoriness of the creatures, and, on the other hand, shows the way to eternal life and the enduring fellowship with beloved fellow creatures through the pious bonding with the creator. Nevertheless, as with the death of his childhood friend, Augustine portrays his grief in terms of a torn and divided self, and thus as a disruption of the personal identity arising from false love and “affection according to the flesh [*carnalis affectus*]” (*conf.*, 9, 13, 34): “Since, therefore, I was bereft of that great consolation that she provided, my soul was hurt and my life was in torment, for my life and hers had been as one [*una facta erat*]” (*conf.*, 9, 12, 30). His prayer is not answered by God with a relief of the pain of separation in the first place. As in the previous books, he interprets this as divine discipline and doctrine with the aim of bringing the “habitual behaviour” of carnal love orientation as “fettters” [*consuetudinis vinculum*] home to Augustine.

But devout love is also not immune to worries, fears, and mental peacelessness in a fallen world. While, immediately after her death, Monica’s “manner of life” and “her unfeigned faith” (*conf.*, 9, 12, 29) let Augustine feel safe in the knowledge that the deceased would enter eternal blessedness, at the time of writing the *Confessions* he shed “a very different kind of tears for her, your servant. They flow from a spirit struck by the thought of the dangers threatening every soul that dies in Adam”<sup>48</sup> (*conf.*, 9, 13, 34). His request for forgiveness of Monica’s sins in the name of *Christus medicus*<sup>49</sup> (*conf.*, 9, 13, 35) takes up the topic of grace-induced salvation and at the same time reverses the relationship between Monica and her son: as Monica had prayed during her lifetime for the salvation of her son, Augustine now appeals as an advocate of his mother to God, thus referring to the mutual care and peace in the Christian community of love. This “peace” (*conf.*, 9, 13, 37) in Christ, as the embodiment of which he has described Monica, he solicits now for her and thus gives the ninth book a worthy conclusion.

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<sup>48</sup> That is why the dying Augustine has David’s penitential psalms hung on the wall, being able to pray for the remission of his sins without interruption. See Possidius, *Vita Augustini*, 31, 1–4.

<sup>49</sup> On the Augustinian concept of *Christus medicus* see Arbesmann 1954.

## Confessions X

Although Augustine's autobiographical account concludes with the ninth book, the tenth book is central to his narrative identity construction in several ways. On the one hand, it offers the author's self-analysis at the time of writing,<sup>50</sup> and in this way links the past with the present self as well as the historical with the writing self, which selects and interprets subjectively certain experiences:<sup>51</sup> writing Augustine describes young Augustine and his experiences in the context of his current convictions and thus gives his narrative a specific colouring with his theology of grace. In addition, Augustine analyzes the faculty of memory in the tenth book, thereby addressing a mental faculty that is indispensable for the identity construction of temporal beings, and deals with the inner man, whom he understands as a place of divine and self-knowledge.

Already the beginning of the book points to the connection between knowledge of God and personal identity: "You know me: let me know you, let me know even as I am known" (*conf.*, 10,1 1,1), and "I am open to you, Lord, whoever I am" (*conf.*, 10, 2, 2). This connection has a paradoxical character. On the one hand, the knowledge of God requires self-knowledge, and on the other hand, knowledge of God is the presupposition of self-knowledge. The fact that Augustine deals with memory to solve both is motivated by his Platonic heritage: according to the Platonic doctrine of *anamnêsis*, the soul has seen the divine (the ideas) prior to being incarnated in the body, and must remember this vision for the purpose of self-knowledge and alignment with God (*homoiosis theô*).<sup>52</sup>

Augustine discusses as possible memory contents the images of physical things perceived through the senses, scientific teaching contents (grammar, dialectics, arithmetic, geometry) as well as affects developed in the past with

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<sup>50</sup> There are about ten years between the death of his mother and the writing of the *Confessions*.

<sup>51</sup> To be sure, Augustine himself would see his narrative construction of identity as objective in the sense that he regards his meta-narrative (i.e. the doctrine of grace) as biblically founded and thus as divine truth. Nevertheless, the uncertainties about one's own identity and the requests to God often expressed in the *Confessions* show the fundamental epistemic uncertainty (*ignorantia*) of fallen man, and Augustine himself confesses that the (subjective) interpretation of one's own experiences can change in the course of personal development (*conf.*, 10, 14, 21).

<sup>52</sup> See Plato, *Phd.* 72e-77a; and *Phdr.* 249bc. On the question of *a priori* knowledge see *conf.*, 10, 10, 17, and on the connection of memory and identity *conf.*, 10, 16, 25: "I am a creature who remembers; I am a mind."

certain experiences. For all memory contents, Augustine establishes a link with the topic of personal identity. In the course of discussing sensually perceived natural phenomena, he expresses his astonishment on the power of memory with a metaphor that considers the internalization of these things: “Even so, when I looked at them with my eyes, I did not absorb [*nec... absorbui*] them into myself by the act of looking at them”<sup>53</sup> (*conf.*, 10, 8, 15). The concluding insight that it is not the objects themselves, but merely their pictures that are within Augustine, expresses their significance for Augustine’s identity too: Before he can ask the question of the origin of natural beauties and powers or the place of man in the natural order within the framework of a sophisticated identity construction, he must first perceive their existence and incorporate this into his memory as permanent knowledge.

Augustine describes the learning of sciences and corresponding intellectual operations in terms of a synthetic and order-setting unity: “This is nothing than using our thought processes to bind together (*cogitando quasi conligere*) things that our memory contains in a random disorder” (*conf.*, 10, 11, 18). It is noteworthy that Augustine uses in his etymological interpretation of the verb *cogitare* (“to think”) the same terminology as in his analysis of personal fragmentation and dissolution of the self in the transient manifold of the external world. Because the contents of knowledge “must be gathered up again so that they can be known: that is, out of their diffusion [*ex quadam dispersione*] they must be bound together: from this comes the term ‘cogitate’” (*conf.*, 10, 11, 18). Augustine’s insight that only the mind (*animus*) is capable of this synthesizing activity, is also not surprising. It is true that the human mind belongs to the mutable works of creation,<sup>54</sup> but insofar as it is an intangible nature and actualizes the god-like image of man as well as, ideally, the orientation towards God, it is the unifying faculty in the human being par excellence. Also, moods and feelings preserved in the mind are central in the context of human identity formation. On the one hand, the reconstruction of experiences is essential to the memory of emotions associated with these experiences: without the depth and density, aversive affects as well as pleasurable emotions bring about, human experiences are empty. On the other hand, the reflection and emotional mirroring of past emotions impressively show changes in self-image and identity over time: “When I happily recall my past sadness, my mind experiences

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<sup>53</sup> I modified Hammond’s translation slightly.

<sup>54</sup> See *conf.*, 10, 35, 36: “So too you yourself are not the mind, because you are God and Lord over the mind. And all these things undergo change, but you remain unchangeable over all things”.

happiness and my memory contains sadness” (*conf.*, 10, 14, 21). As we have seen in the previous books, the author of the *Confessions*, in remembrance of once-enjoyed sexual lust, may feel sadness, repentance, and revulsion for his former moral depravity, or gratitude for emotional pain, motivating him to long for God. The thought of mental processing or “digestion”<sup>55</sup> of previously emotionally troubling experiences can also be found here: “...happiness and sadness are like sweet and bitter food for it. When they are committed to memory, it is as if they were transferred into the stomach to be stored there; they can no longer impart any taste” (*conf.*, 10, 14, 21). This motif of incorporation as a metaphor for integration into one’s identity can also be found in the following passages, where Augustine ponders the divine presence in human mind: “You breathed your fragrance onto me: and I drew in my breath and I pant for you. I have tasted you: and now I hunger and thirst for more. You have touched me: and I have burned for your peace (*pacem tuam*)” (*conf.*, 10, 27, 38).<sup>56</sup> Augustine defines the divine food, which he has tasted in small bites, more closely as the “blessed life” (*conf.*, 10, 17, 29), “enjoyment of the truth” (*conf.*, 10, 22, 33), and—as in the above quote—as peace. Because only God can offer reliable happiness, true peace of mind and its unclouded joy are found exclusively in him: “And that is the real ‘blessed life’—rejoicing toward you, about you, because of you” (*conf.*, 10, 22, 32). This joy again is an expression of pious love which enjoys God alone. In this material world, however, people are only “blessed in their hope of it” (*conf.*, 10, 20, 29): “You shine brightly and are pleased, and loved, and longed-for” (*conf.*, 10, 2, 2). Only in eternity God is “present experience” (*conf.*, 10, 20, 29). Even in the state of grace, man is still threatened by the disturbing invasion of perverted love, and suffers of mental strife: “Surely human life on earth is a time of interminable trial?” (*conf.*, 10, 28, 39).<sup>57</sup>

In the last third of the book, Augustine describes his present state of mind as still tormented by wrong love which he outlines through the triad of lusts in 1 Joh. 2: 15-17: “Anyone who loves something else as well as you, but does not love it for your sake, loves you the less as a result” (*conf.*, 10, 29, 40). Again, Augustine points repeatedly to God’s unerring insight into the depths of the human soul: “After all, Lord, what is there of myself that could stay hidden before you—in whose sight the bottomless pit of human guilt is laid bare—even if I did not want to make confession to you?” (*conf.*, 10, 2, 2). God knows the trials and tribula-

<sup>55</sup> The metaphor of digesting emotional experiences is found excessively in Nietzsche. See *Nachlass 1881*, 11[258]; *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* V 364; and see Also *sprach Zarathustra* III, Vom Geist der Schwere 2.

<sup>56</sup> See *conf.*, 10, 17, 26.

<sup>57</sup> See *conf.*, 10, 32, 48.



tions of Augustine's soul, which make him question his own identity: "Before your eyes I have become a puzzle to myself" (*conf.*, 10, 33, 50). False human self-love and the penalty of ignorance prevent true insight into the inner self, which can only succeed with divine help: "But I do not know whether I am like this."<sup>58</sup> In this matter I know myself less well than you. I beg you, O my God, make me clear to myself as well" (*conf.*, 10, 37, 62). God also knows the authenticity of his grief over the remaining false desires: "On this subject you know how my heart groans to you" (*conf.*, 10, 37, 60). Only the temporary despair of God's grace and the self-induced relapse into concupiscence can alienate man from God and thus from himself too: "I have been cast out from before your eyes" (*conf.*, 10, 41, 66).

Among the lusts of the flesh (*concupiscentia carnalis*), especially sexual imaginations and nocturnal ejaculations torture him, in addition to culinary temptations, against which he leads "a daily war [*cotidianum bellum*]"<sup>59</sup> (*conf.*, 10, 30, 43). He reflects the latter in the context of self-alienation and a disturbed identity: "Surely, O Lord my God, I am still myself when sleeping? But there is such a big difference between my waking self and my sleeping self in that moment when I make the transition from here into sleep or back from sleep to here!" (*conf.*, 10, 30, 41). The pleasures of hearing and the "physical pleasure of my eyes" disturb peace and "rest" (*conf.*, 10, 34, 51) of the soul too. The temptation of curiosity "diverts my thoughts" (*conf.*, 10, 35, 57) from the turn to the inner self as a place of God's presence and of unity (*conf.*, 10, 34, 52), outward into the sphere of diversity and dispersion. The healing of "that pestilence" of bitterness (*conf.*, 10, 37, 60) takes place solely through the ministry of God's grace (*conf.*, 10, 29, 40; 30, 42). In the form of "continence [*continentia*]" through which "we are joined together and restored to wholeness, from which we trickled away into multiplicity" (*conf.*, 10, 29, 40), it unifies the personal self and creates a limited inner peace that leads to the "fullness of peace [*pacem plenariam*]" (*conf.*, 10, 30, 42; 38, 63; 11, 65) of the eternal blessed in the peaceful communion of "those who eat and are satisfied" (*conf.*, 10, 13, 70). The central notion of *continentia* should not be understood exclusively as sexual abstinence. As has often been said,<sup>60</sup> the literal meaning of *continentia* is "holding together", and, in the light of the dispersion and fragmentation of the self into manifold

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<sup>58</sup> I slightly changed Hammond's translation.

<sup>59</sup> My translation. For the remaining inner war in the baptized see. *Iul.*, 2, 7, 5: "...in the baptized, so to speak, survives a civil war of internal mistakes;" and 4, 33, 2: "You do not spend a day without an internal war."

<sup>60</sup> See Fischer 76; and von Herrmann, 33.

external things, it is to be understood as a desired accompanying phenomenon of the orientation towards God.

## Confessions XI

With the eleventh book begins the interpretation of the creation account in Gen. 1, 2, 3. For Augustine's narrative identity construction, this is just as relevant as the ontological location of man (and therefore his own) in creation and his relationship to the creator, as well as for his concept of personal identity as a peaceful inner-soul unity that can succeed only by turning to the creator.<sup>61</sup>

The interpretation of the first verse of the bible, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," evokes the question of God's activity before this beginning, and thus the idea of a temporality of God. Augustine solves the problem with reference to the concept of creation through the eternal Word that he equates with Christ (*conf.*, 11, 9, 11), and the fact that time itself is one of the works of creation (*conf.*, 11, 14, 17). On the other hand, the creator himself is "antecedent to all times (*ante omnia tempora*)" (*conf.*, 11, 13, 16), and his "eternity (*aeternitas*)" (*conf.*, 11, 1, 1) is, in contrast to the discursive and linear succession of temporal beings, an all-embracing presence of the "all at once" (*conf.*, 11, 8, 9): "Your 'today' is eternity" (*conf.*, 11, 13, 16). The very same thing is the reason for God's absolute identity, who is "always the same [*idem ipse*]" (*conf.*, 11, 13, 16), because he is not subject to diachronic change. As opposed to this, the presence of man is so fleeting that it cannot be grasped because it "has no extension in time" (*conf.*, 11, 15, 20).

The past and the future too are subject to volatility: "In eternity nothing passes, but everything is in the present" (*conf.*, 11, 11, 13). The fact that in a certain sense the "past no longer exists; and what is future does not yet exist" (*conf.*, 11, 15, 18), refers to the ontological inferiority of the temporal. It is also significant that the human mind, as an entity created in the image of God, has the function of visualizing the three times (*conf.*, 11, 20, 26) and thereby bringing them into being in an imperfect imitation of the divine act of creation (*conf.*, 11, 17, 22).<sup>62</sup> The diachronic change of man and his imprisonment in either re-

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<sup>61</sup> The reference to the topic "personal identity" in the last three books of the *Confessions* is, as will be shown below, remarkable. In this respect, Augustine's exegetical deliberations concerning the creation account in the *Confessions* differ from his remarks in *De Genesi adversus Manichaeos*, *De Genesi ad Litteram liber imperfectus*, and *De Genesi ad Litteram*. I am grateful for this comment to the reviewer.

<sup>62</sup> See the Platonic concept of time (*chronos*) as a moving image of eternity (*aiôn*) in *Tim.* 37d.

penitance or longing for the past and in his concern or desire for the future are partly responsible for disturbances of his identity: “My life is a kind of distraction. ...But I became alienated [*dissilui*] as I entered into time, not knowing the order in which it passes, and my thoughts, the inmost part of my soul, are ripped apart [*dilaniantur*] by turbulent vicissitudes, until I flow back together toward you, purged and shining with the fire of your love” (*conf.*, 11, 29, 39). Because times never rest (*conf.*, 11, 11, 13), Augustine’s heart, bound to temporal things, is without peace, “until I flow back together toward you, purged, and shining with the fire of your love” (*conf.*, 11, 29, 39). This confluence in God, which allows him to “stand fast and be established in you” (*conf.*, 11, 30, 40), is again expressed by Augustine metaphorically as an incorporation of spiritual nourishment into his own self: “Let me drink of you” (*conf.*, 11, 1, 4). This transgression of the ontological boundary between man and God becomes possible through Christ: “Your right hand has supported me in my Lord who as the Son of Man is mediator between you who are the One, and us who are many.... I forgot what is past, and instead of being distracted I reach out, not for what is in the future and so transitory, but for those things which are before me: I press forward, going in the right direction, rather than being distracted, to the prize of my highest calling” (*conf.*, 11, 29, 39).

Augustine wishes the peace which the harmonious unity of the self will bring with it, not only for himself, but in “brotherly love” (*conf.*, 11, 1, 3) also for the neighbour. In turn, the desire for universal peace expresses Augustine’s own activity as a peacemaker, thus fulfilling Jesus’ commandment to be peaceful (*pacificus*) (*conf.*, 11, 1, 1).

## Confessions XII

In the twelfth book Augustine presents a Neoplatonic interpretation of Gen. 1: 1-2. According to Psalm 113, 16, Augustine understands God’s “heaven” created in the beginning to be “the heaven of heaven” and “intellectual creation [*creatura... aliqua intellectualis*]” (*conf.*, 12, 9, 9), where the city of God (*civitas Dei*) is gathered with all angels and saints.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, he interprets the first created “Earth” in Gen. 1, 1 as unformed and dark matter (Gen. 1: 2), which represents the basic material for the formation of individual things. Due to the *creatio ex nihilo* (*conf.*, 12, 7, 7), all created things suffer to varying degrees from an ontological deficit: the higher the form of the creature, the closer it

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<sup>63</sup> It is uncertain what Augustin understood exactly by the “heaven of heaven.” This interpretation can be found in Fuhrer 120.

is to God, and the farther it is from him, the more “unlike [*dissimilius*]” (*conf.*, 12, 7, 7) it is to him. With man’s task of perfecting his spiritual image in God to be similar to him to the maximum extent possible, the stability of the self, personal unity, and inner-soul peace emerge: God as a paradigm of identity (he is “the same and the same, and the same (*idipsum et idipsum et idipsum*),” *conf.* 12, 6, 7), is a haven of peace and tranquillity, while the restlessness of creatures is related to temporality as well as to matter-based variability (*conf.*, 12, 6, 6). The spiritually gifted beings have the option to pursue either the eternal and unchanging God or temporal and variable things, and thereby strengthen or weaken both their inner peace and their diachronic identity: “It is true that anything that clings so closely to an unchanging form that it does not change [though it is capable of changing]” (*conf.*, 12, 19, 28). This approach to God manifests through the love of God and neighbour (*conf.*, 12, 18, 27), which is realized by the above-mentioned spiritual creature in the consummation of pure love and thus “rises above all the whirling fluctuation of time” (*conf.*, 12, 9, 9). With the stabilization of one’s self and the inner peace thus effected, the external peace of communion with one another in heaven’s heaven goes hand in hand with the connection to

your loveliness without the blemish of abandoning it for something else: it is the pure intelligence of holy and spiritual things, who are the citizens of your city that is in heaven (above this visible heaven), harmoniously at one upon a foundation of peace [*stabilimento pacis*] (*conf.*, 12, 11, 12).

Augustine now sees the time before his conversion as a departure from the Eternal, whose inviting voice was drowned out by the “outcry of the unquiet [*tumultus impacatorum*]”, and to whose life-giving “fountain” he now returns “to drink from (*bibam*)” (*conf.*, 12, 10, 10). Augustine will not leave the shelter “beneath your wings” (*conf.*, 12, 11, 13)—a reference to the dove of peace between God and man that Noah sent after the Flood to explore the water level (Gen. 8: 11), as well as to the peacemaker Monica—or “turn aside you until you bind up all that I am, from this disintegrating [*dispersione*] and misshapen state, into the peace of my dearest mother ...and establish me [*confirmes*] for ever” (*conf.*, 12, 16, 23).

Peace is also the subject of Augustine’s hermeneutical reflections on the multiple sense of Scripture in *conf.* 12, 14, 17 and 32, 43, underlying his remarks on various possible interpretations of the discussed Genesis passage. In conformity with his previous analysis, he defines God as the source of immutable truth (*conf.*, 12, 30, 41), who can “bring forth harmony amid such a variety of

true opinions” (*conf.*, 12, 30, 41), and determines his very hermeneutic approach as “brotherly and peaceable [*fraternam ac pacificam*]” (*conf.*, 12, 25, 35). At the same time, it is an expression of the pious “love [*caritatem*] on account of which he whose words are we trying to explain said it all” (*conf.*, 12, 25, 35). This love connects the siblings in Christ both with each other and with God (*conf.*, 12, 30, 41), and stands in contrast with the false (self-)love of those who move “from truth to lies [*mendacium*]” (*conf.*, 12, 25, 34; see also 13, 25, 38).

## Confessions XIII

The twelfth book presents an allegorical, historical and typological exegesis of the entire first creation account in Gen. 1-2: 3,<sup>64</sup> and at the same time offers a compilation of all theories that are systematically relevant to the topic of personal identity.

God’s absolute ontological identity (“for you yourself are the same” [*tu autem idem ipse es*], *conf.* 13, 18, 22)<sup>65</sup> is handled both from an ethical point of view (as the epitome of goodness he “can never be changed either for better or for worse”, *conf.* 13, 3, 4), and under the aspect of *beata vita*: “To you, it is not one thing to live, and another to live in bliss—because you are bliss itself” (*conf.*, 13, 3, 4). At the same time, the goodness of creation is described in terms of form, order, and unity: the divine design of the world by the shaping of unformed matter creates the unity (*unitas*) of things and subjects, and makes them a good (*bonum*) (*conf.*, 13, 2) that has a definite place in the *scala naturae* and the divine order. The fact that the individual works of creation are each judged by God to be “good”, and that only creation as a whole qualifies as “very good”, is due to Augustine’s explanation of the higher order of the tympanic structure of the world: “parts which, even though they are beautiful individually, come together to accomplish an even more attractive whole” (*conf.*, 13, 28, 43). By their giftedness with will and reason, natures who possess a rational mind (angels and men) are capable “to cleave [*haerere*] to you constantly” (*conf.*, 13 2, 3), and thus to reach “blessed rest [*ad beatam requiem*]” (*conf.*, 13, 8, 9), or by turning away from him fall into unrest and misfortune. While the attachment to the creator through the love of God as a gift of the Holy Spirit “sublimates us to that place” (*conf.*, 13, 9, 10), the sorrowful love and the oppressive burden of desires plunge us into the abyss (*conf.*, 13, 7, 8). Right love is inseparably connected with goodwill and, by being oriented towards the divine order of

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<sup>64</sup> For the sake of brevity, a detailed analysis will be omitted.

<sup>65</sup> See *conf.*, 13, 31, 46: God, “who is... existence itself [*est est*]”

goods, at the same time ensures the order in the human soul, which finds therefore rest and peace: “What is out of its proper place is restless” (*conf.*, 13, 9, 10), but “in having goodwill do we find peace” (*conf.*, 13, 9, 10).

The disciples of goodwill and true love, who consider God alone as the object of enjoyment, while using all other things for the sake of God, sees Augustine symbolized in the mainland (Gen. 1: 6-10) which is separated from the water (i. e. the adherents of “worldly, earthly happiness”, *conf.*, 13, 17, 20).<sup>66</sup> In the context of personal identity, the Augustinian attribution of earth to life and bitter water to death is significant: as we have already seen, love integrates the beloved object into one’s own identity, thus assimilating the loving person to the beloved. While the love of God approaches the epitome and creator of all life, and while its pleasures are “life-giving [*vitales*]” (*conf.*, 13, 21, 29; 22, 32), the sinfully loving one becomes the slave of,

pride in self-aggrandizement, and delight in excessive sexual appetite, and toxic curiosity [which, D. K.] are operations of a soul that is dead—not dead in the sense that it is utterly inert, but because it departs from the wellspring of life and is adopted by this passing age and is conformed to it (*conf.*, 13, 21, 30).

His pleasures are in this sense “deadly [*mortiferis*]” (*conf.*, 13, 21, 29) because they result in the second and final death of eternal damnation.

In keeping with his conviction of the inviolable integrity of God, Augustine states that evil also is subject to the “command” of God and his order: he sets firm “limits, as to how far the waters [of evil, D. K] are allowed to advance so that their waves break upon themselves” (*conf.*, 13, 17, 20).

The condition of the possibility of an approximation of the human soul to God is also suggested by Augustine in the thirteenth book with deliberations, that come to their systematic conclusion in *De trinitate* (399-419) (Brachtendorf “Augustine’s Confessiones” 285-289): the divine trinity is represented in man through the unity of being [*esse*], knowing [*nosse*] and volition [*velle*] (*conf.*, 13, 11, 12).<sup>67</sup>

Although Augustine in the thirteenth book still underlines the difference between that “which exists unchangeably, and knows unchangeably, and wills unchangeably” (*conf.*, 13, 11, 12), and man, who accomplishes all of this in the context of his *mutabilitas*, his already mentioned explanations of the spiritu-

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<sup>66</sup> This is a pre-reference to the doctrine of the duality of *civitas Dei* and *civitas terrena* in *civ.* (412-426).

<sup>67</sup> Remarkable is Augustine’s view that inner Christian peace is the prerequisite for being able to grasp the secret of the Holy Trinity (*conf.*, 13, 11, 12).

al creature, which, when fully connected to God, is not subject to temporal change (*conf.*, 12, 19, 28), show that he considers a substantial approximation with God possible. This too is, like all good things that come to man, due “to your grace alone” (*conf.*, 13, 3, 4). Augustine summarizes this effect of grace in terms that suggest that God gives himself to the blessed and thus integrates himself into their selves: in the human being God gives himself by creating man in the *imago Dei*. When Augustine chooses, with a view to human knowledge, to say, “Whatever they see as being good, therefore, in the Spirit of God, it is not they but God who sees that it is good” (*conf.*, 13, 31, 46), then he seems to refer to the doctrine of Christ as inner teacher in *De magistro* (388–391) as well as to his doctrine of illumination (*vera rel.*, 71). After all, right-will is accompanied by the “love of God” which “has been shed abroad [*diffusa*] in our hearts” (*conf.*, 13, 31, 46), and in this way man becomes similar to the triune god.

The formal conclusion of the thirteenth book and the *Confessions* as a whole, discusses what the *homo sub gratia* hopes (*in spe*), firstly, for the end of earthly history, and secondly, for the consummation of his own creaturely existence. While Augustine’s soul is still “sad [*tristis*]” and in a state of restless trouble [*conturbas me*] (*conf.*, 13, 14, 15) even after God’s act of grace, the rest of God at the seventh day after the completion of his creation points to the perfect and never-ending rest of the community of the blessed at the end of time: “Lord God, grant us peace (for you have bestowed everything on us) the peace of rest, the peace of sabbath, peace where evening never comes” (*conf.*, 13, 25, 50). The motif that comes up in this quote which is part of his meta-narrative of divine grace continues throughout the following considerations. God, who will endow his chosen children with the unclouded peace of eternal bliss, is also the giver of that which justifies the reward of that blissful rest: “...after our works (likewise ‘very good’ because you bestowed them on us), should rest in you in the Sabbath of eternal life” (*conf.*, 13, 36, 51).<sup>68</sup> The following lines bring out the closest possible alignment with the divine as well as the associated integration of the creator into one’s own identity through the love of God: “Even then you will rest in us, as now you are at work in us; and so that rest of yours will pervade us just as those works of yours pervade us now” (*conf.*, 13, 37, 52). Once again, Augustine refers to the connection between the timelessness of God and his absolute peace and immutability: “But you, Lord, are always at work and always in repose: you do not see in time, act in time, rest in time; but yet you create our seeing in time, and time itself, and rest in time” (*conf.*, 13, 37, 52). As Augustine has already shown, inner peace requires turning

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<sup>68</sup> See *conf.*, 13, 38, 53.

to the good. In this respect too, the holy goodness of God is the ideal: “You are the Good, you need no good thing, you are always at rest, since you yourself are your own rest” (*conf.*, 14, 38, 53).

His own alignment with and participation in this good is carried out by Augustine performatively with his final word, which also illustrates the prayer character of the *Confessions* as well as their form as a narrative identity construction under the guideline of a Christian meta-narrative: “Amen” (*conf.*, 13, 38, 53). Moreover, it etymologically refers to the theme of a peaceful and harmonious personal identity, secured by stability and permanence in God (the Hebrew verb root  $\text{נא}$  means “sustained...; reliable, firm, faithful; to last, to stay, to endure” (Fohrer 16f.), and at the same time it impressively reveals the peaceful *tranquillitas animi* of the one who blesses everything managed by divine providence with a “So be it”.





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