

Augustine's *Confessions* and the Origins of Contemporary Psychology

BY

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*Et direxi me ad me et dixi mihi, 'tu quis es?'*  
“And I directed myself toward myself and I asked myself, ‘Who are you?’”  
- Aug. *Conf.* X. vi. 9

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*To all who have inspired me to be a curious, courageous, and open learner*

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## PREFACE

Scholars have been studying St. Augustine of Hippo, particularly his *Confessions*, for centuries. Trying to unravel the complexities of this work in hopes of extrapolating some further meaning from his words, philosophers, theologians, psychoanalysts, teachers, and students stand in awe at his brilliance, while simultaneously scratching their heads in bafflement. The *Confessions* provide wide scope for analysis and intensive study from the perspectives of a variety of fields. As a student with major concentrations in both the Classics and Psychology, I find that the *Confessions* presents the ideal opportunity to connect the two fields, and to demonstrate the significance not only of Augustine, but of Classical texts in general, in modern society.

Even in narrowing down the study of the *Confessions* to a Classical and primarily psychological perspective there is still a great number of issues to be addressed. There is a temptation to address every issue of psychology in relation to Augustine's *Confessions*, but a focused argument is undoubtedly more effective. The following thesis argues for Augustine's significance to the origins of contemporary psychology. I argue that the *Confessions*, through its conceptualization of the inner self in Book X, constitutes the earliest contribution to modern psychology, specifically to introspection and to more contemporary cognitive psychology. I emphasize the direct relationship of Augustine's theory of inner self and memory to introspection, the relationship between introspection

and cognitive psychology in the progression of the modern field, and the consequent indirect relationship between Augustine's inner self and cognitive psychology.

Before drawing this connection, it is imperative that I oppose the confused modern notion of "Platonic psychology" in order to establish the difference between this Platonic "soul talk" and the advanced theories of Augustine. Because Augustine drew significant influence from Platonic theory, his theories of soul can be considered in the same realm of thought. On some levels, this is true, as Augustine did have his own theories on the life and the nature of the soul. The inner self he encounters and explains in the *Confessions*, however, is a separate realm of innovative thinking and far more advanced than his late Platonist counterparts.

Though it appeared too late to be integrated into my research, I still find it appropriate to acknowledge the issues addressed in Holmes' *The Symptom and the Subject: The Emergence of the Physical Body in Ancient Greece*, a study of the original Greek conceptualization of what is human. According to Gabor's review (2011), Holmes argues that the Greek understanding of body (*soma*) came before that of the soul (*psukhe*). She moves away from the concept of dualism and instead describes the Greeks' original, Homeric understanding of human as falling under two different categories: what is seen and what is felt. There are external, physical or behavior changes that others can see in a person, and also changes in a person that the individual alone can feel internally. Overall, Gabor stresses Holmes' innovative thought and original analysis about Greek origins in these matters, but I think that this approach is a useful way to look at Augustine as well. Once Augustine comes to the realization that self is distinct from soul, the relationship between internal self and external environment proves to be much more

complex than the dualistic view of soul and self as separate entities. This suggests, therefore, that in a sense Augustine affiliates himself with this Homeric and undoubtedly more complex understanding of the relationship between body and mind in antiquity that Holmes addresses. This helps me to see that this dualistic view may have been an obstruction to this other understanding of the relationship between internal and external realities in antiquity. Augustine was certainly faced with such an obstruction, but he expanded his thinking beyond dualism, recognizing the difference between soul and self, and advancing further to conceptualize the inner self.

Once I establish the misleading nature of “Platonic psychology” in Chapter I, I offer a definition of psychology as a modern discipline and elaborate on the two specific realms of psychology pertaining to my argument: introspection and cognitive psychology (Chapter II). Chapter III gives an account of Augustine’s presence in the history of psychology in order to document when his work was mentioned in psychological texts, when his works faded out from these texts and why, and, finally, when he was reintroduced to the history of psychology and why his presence is significant. I also present a focused discussion of Philip Cary’s *Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (2000), in order to emphasize the innovative nature of Augustine’s inner self (Chapter IV).

In Chapter V, I give an overview of the *Confessions*, identifying passages in books I-IX and XI-XIII relevant to Book X, as I give a detailed analysis of Book X with a specific focus on the inner self, memory, and God. Finally, the Conclusion argues for the *Confessions* as a valuable and necessary component in any student’s understanding not of

the prehistory, but of the living history, of contemporary psychology. Augustine's vast influence on contemporary philosophy I leave to others.

# CHAPTER I

## PLATONIC PSYCHOLOGY: A MISUNDERSTANDING

Histories of psychology sometimes include Augustine and sometimes they do not. From the beginning of the twentieth century, Brett (1912) and Morgan (1932) include Augustine, the former on historical grounds and the latter on religious ones. He returns to histories of psychology in the late twentieth in Robinson (1986), Macnamara (1999), and Hunt (2007). They all begin with Plato and his tripartite soul, and some make room for Augustine, but usually in connection with cognition. What happened in between? In the mid-twentieth century, psychology turned its focus to more objective and technological methods of measuring cognitive functioning. This left no room for the theoretical internal examination that Augustine provides as the sole possible mechanism for recovering the whole self through introspection. One organization, the American Catholic Psychological Association, was active during the middle of the century, but this disbanded in the early 1970s, when its members decided that there was no specifically Catholic psychology and so returned Augustine to the philosophers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Baron notified me and provided me with a link to the archives of the American Catholic Psychological Association (ACPA), which was founded in 1948 and existed until 1970. According to Kugelmann (2000), the two aims of the ACPCA were to introduce more advanced practices of psychology to Catholic psychologists and encourage study of psychology and also to integrate Catholic tradition into the field of psychology. Baron notes that though Augustine is not discussed in Kugelmann's history of the ACPA, it can be understood that he, as all theorists

Historians of psychology are forced to use the word psychology in two very different senses when they write their histories. On the one hand, psychology refers to the modern theoretical and practical discipline; on the other hand, psychologists use psychology to refer to ancient, Platonic phenomena. There is no word *psuchologia* in Greek. The word, a modern invention, itself means “soul talk” or “soul theory”. Plato talks about the soul in two ways, both of which are confusing when you think of the modern term psychology. One has to do with the life of the immortal soul, its origin in the world of the Forms and its reincarnation in bodies, the other has to do with soul as a principle of animation; the famous tripartite soul with its charioteer of reason trying to keep in line the two horses of drive (*thumos*) and passion (*eros*). Further confusing an already complicated situation is the presence of Classicists who can talk about Platonic psychology as if modern psychology did not exist at all. For example, Elkaisy-Friemuth and Dillon’s (2009) *The Afterlife of the Platonic Soul: Reflections of Platonic Psychology in the Monotheistic Religions* includes nothing at all about what we consider the modern practice of psychology. This collection of articles only focus on the preexistence and immortality of soul, the separate parts of the soul, and soul/body dualism and how each of these theories are expressed in Platonic, Christian, Islamic, and Jewish traditions up into the early middle ages.<sup>2</sup>

The modern understanding of psychology is concerned with the internal, mental processes of an individual. There is no spiritual component or study of the parts of soul,

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before Descartes, was dismissed back to the philosophical world upon the disbanding of the ACPA.

<sup>2</sup> When I had acquired this book, I had high hopes that it would talk about psychology in antiquity, but it is solely concerned with competing religious and philosophical doctrines on the preexistence and survival of the immortal soul.

or the external reality in which the soul preexists the body. In what follows, I discuss Plato's *Phaedrus* and four other ancient philosophers' works subsequent to Plato, and their theories of the nature, geography, and immortality of the soul and theories of the inner man.<sup>3</sup> Augustine's great innovation needs to be seen in light of this development, but also demonstrates how careful we have to be in using the word "psychology" when talking about these ancient texts. In all of these discussions what will be an issue is the various inner parts of a person; even in a Christian Platonist tradition which speaks freely of an inner man, this is only in reference to the rational and irrational parts of soul, not the Augustinian inner self.

Plato: *Phaedrus*

Plato's most extended discussion of this "Platonic Psychology" is in the *Phaedrus*. The *Phaedrus*, one of Plato's middle dialogues, focuses on the significance of love and rhetoric as well as the concept of truth and reality in regards to the life and nature of the soul. Each component is discussed in the context of a dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus. Included in this dialogue is a conceptualization of the life and nature of the soul— the tripartite soul— through the allegory of the charioteer and his horses.

The *Phaedrus* begins as a dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus, in which they address the role of love in the life and nature of the soul. Phaedrus reads Lysias' speech, which argues that a person not under the rash influence of love can still be attracted to

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<sup>3</sup> For the presence in Christian Platonism of the New Testament term "inner man", see Cary 47.

and sexually engaged with another, and is in fact superior to him who is love struck, because he is without these maddening effects of love. Socrates continues this argument in his subsequent speech, saying that love is driven by an irrational desire that prevails over rational thinking and an otherwise innate drive to achieve excellence (*Phaedrus* 237-238).<sup>4</sup> Hunt identifies Plato's concept of love (*eros*) as an aspect of "Plato's psychology" usually having a "sexual or romantic connotation, but in Plato's larger sense it refers to a desire to be united with the Idea or eternal Form that the other person exemplifies" (28). Though referring to human interaction and emotion, Plato's theory of *eros* as a means of experiencing ultimate Reality is not psychological. Hunt's reference to Plato's concept of Eros as psychological fuels the misunderstanding that Platonic "soul talk" belongs in the realm of psychological study.<sup>5</sup>

At the conclusion of Socrates' first speech, a "divine sign" overcomes him, forcing him to recite a second speech because he "must make reparation for the blasphemy involved by his treatment of love as evil."<sup>6</sup> Love, when considered a deity, cannot be referred to as evil, as it is blasphemy to refer to a deity as such: *Phaedrus* 241.<sup>7</sup> Socrates' second speech argues for the benefits of love as a result of divine madness inflicted upon a lover. In order to make this argument, he must describe the nature and

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<sup>4</sup> All quotations from the *Phaedrus* are from Hamilton's 1973 translation. Citations from the Plato text will be based on his edition, as the standard Stephanus system with the "a, b, c, d..." sections is not used. Direct quotations or brief paraphrases of this translation will be cited in text using the section numbers from the given Plato text.

<sup>5</sup> If Plato were just talking about desire and overwhelming irrational impulses, this would be a proper field for modern psychological study, but *eros* serves as a reminder of the soul's origin in the eternal world.

<sup>6</sup> Socrates' notorious divine sign is an inner voice that tells him when he is doing something wrong; it always says "no" and never says "yes".

<sup>7</sup> For more on the divine sign, see Calder et al. 2002, 266-267.

immortality of the soul as well as the different types of divine madness. He then describes the immortality of the soul on two levels: the soul is constantly moving itself, and anything that is constantly moving itself is immortal; and soul, because it is a “prime origin”, cannot be created or come into being and therefore cannot perish (*Phaedrus* 245). A soul, preexisting its mortal body, experiences an ultimate reality. Once the soul has descended into its mortal body, it must relive and/or remember this ultimate reality in order for the soul to regain its immortality and live on for eternity after the physical body has perished. Socrates argues that love between two mortals aids in the soul’s remembrance of the vision of reality at the edge of the universe. Clearly this is not the province of modern psychology.

Following Socrates’ second speech comes the predominant focus of the *Phaedrus*: the conceptualization of the tripartite soul through the charioteer allegory. The three parts of the soul are identified as a charioteer who is driving two horses. The white horse represents the rational part of the soul, while the black horse represents the irrational part.<sup>8</sup> This blood-red horse, however, has many positive qualities and represents the passionate component of the soul. Plato does refer to the red horse as “bad” initially, but is not inconsistent in his description here. In addition, the white horse is not necessarily everything good, but can also be timid and reluctant, in which case the blood-red horse can balance this with its strength and determination. The white and blood-red horses, therefore, are warring against each other. This internal complex is the soul, so both horses

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<sup>8</sup> Hamilton refers to the irrational horse as black throughout his translation, though nowhere in the Greek text is this horse referred to as black, but in fact *uphaimos*, meaning, “blood-red”, “blood-shot” or “infused with red”. This suggests that this horse has a reddish tint both in its eyes and coat. Hamilton falls short of his translation here in his description of the “black” horse as having all qualities opposite to the white horse and that it is essentially bad.

have the incentive of pursuing absolute truth. The charioteer is understood as winged. The soul whose charioteer has all wings intact ascends to the heavens and “governs all creation” (*Phaedrus* 246). The soul that has lost its wings (having succumbed to the irrational blood-red horse) falls to the earth and becomes a mortal being inhabiting a physical body.

This imagery of the charioteer and two horses portrays the nature of the soul and its descent from ultimate truth to its incarnation, then its journey back to this ultimate truth after death. Socrates describes this place of ultimate truth and reality: “the abode of the reality with which true knowledge is concerned, a reality without color or shape, intangible, but utterly real, apprehensible only by intellect which is the pilot of the soul” (*Phaedrus* 247). The soul, driven by the charioteer but being pulled in different directions by each horse, struggles to reach this destination. The soul, therefore, can follow two different paths. The first path is following the white horse to this place of ultimate reality, experiencing true knowledge: “the soul that has seen the most enters into a human infant who is destined to become a seeker after wisdom or beauty or a follower of the Muses and a lover” (*Phaedrus* 248). The second path is an ascent to this reality, but the wings are lost early due to the red horse pulling the soul down. All souls, therefore, have experienced at least a glimmer of this ultimate reality. If a soul in its mortal body cannot remember this reality easily, it must find ways to remember, either through love or living a life of virtue, in order to re-grow its wings and therefore reclaim its immortal life in a world of unchanging truths.

Plato’s conceptualization of the nature and life of the soul in the *Phaedrus* epitomizes what modern psychologists refer to as “Platonic psychology.” This Platonic

theory of the tripartite soul has been called “psychological” because it focuses on the significance of intellect and the creation of a life; it includes the role of memory; and, most generally, this theory is a study of soul. The Platonic “study” of soul deals with the conflict between the rational and irrational components of soul as well as the mediator role of intellect, while also conceptualizing the spiritual preexistence of soul, its “fall” or incarnation into a mortal being, and its returning “rise” to ultimate reality through remembrance of its encounter with ultimate reality, truth, and intellect in its preexistence. Hunt refers to the above as Plato’s “psychological conjectures about the soul” (27), which portrays the misconception that Plato’s theory of soul can be considered psychological study.

This conception of the life of the soul requires external processes and a clear distinction between body and soul.<sup>9</sup> Psychology, when referring to memory, does not include any implications of a preexisting soul, but memory of the mortal self. And according to Augustine, the self is all of what we remember, and what we cannot remember, we can never know. There is no required remembrance of the soul’s preexistence and encounter with reality, truth, and intellect in psychology, but a concern with the internal, mental processes of an individual. Note that Plato does not speak of the soul’s of memory of its human life, which will be Augustine’s great concern, but only of its pre-human life.

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<sup>9</sup> Soul, in Platonic terms, is considerably synonymous with self, which is not the case in psychology (and in Augustine – to be discussed further in a later chapter). Psychology requires internal processes of self-examination and a study of self — a self that is distinct from soul and also not necessarily entirely separate from the body.

Aristotle: *de Anima*

Aristotle gives his theory of the soul in *De Anima*. He is in agreement with some Platonic theory, while some of his understanding of soul is fundamentally different. Above all, he approaches the nature of the soul from a scientific standpoint and addresses the souls of not only humans, but all living animals. He seeks to define the nature of the soul by attempting to answer four primary questions: whether the soul is a substance, whether it is in potentiality or actuality, whether the soul is one part or has multiple parts (including their functions), and whether every living animal has the same type of soul or if souls differ across species; noting that many preceding him only addressed the human soul; 402a-b. The following is a brief summary of his understanding of the nature and life of the soul.

The soul is the source of all living things, particularly the source of movement in all living things. Soul is defined as Form and Form refers to the senses, emotion, and thought of the body. The body, therefore, is the soul's instrument.<sup>10</sup> There are three primary characteristics of soul (Arist. *de Anima* 405b.11): the soul moves (*kinêsei*), perceives (*aisthêsei*), and is incorporeal (*toi asômatôî*). Aristotle conceptualizes soul in a different manner in *de Anima* than we saw in Plato's *Phaedrus*. Of course they do share some common understanding, specifically that the soul moves itself and is the source of movement in living things and that the two primary motivations of soul are desire and intellect. There are, however, fundamental differences, specifically Aristotle's notion that

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<sup>10</sup> Plato would disagree with this statement. Platonic theory is predominantly dualistic: body and soul are completely separate. Aristotle understands body and soul as separate entities, but one cannot exist without the other.

soul is Form, soul is substance, the body is the soul's instrument, and that the only component of the soul that is immortal is mind.<sup>11</sup> Soul is a principal of movement, of animation, and cannot exist without a body to move.

Many modern psychologists include Aristotle along with Plato as having some of the earliest discussions concerning psychology. Hunt dedicates a section to Aristotle and Plato in "The Conjecturers", the first chapter in his first division "Prescientific Psychology". Robinson and of course Brett dedicate sections to the "psychology" of Aristotle as well. The inclusion of his theories in psychological texts would seem plausible for Aristotle, especially because of the mere title of this work, translated "on the soul", would connect to the basic etymology of "psychology" as "study of soul". And one may even consider Aristotle's theories of soul to be even more psychological because of his "scientific" perspective. But again, the conceptualization of soul, though referring to "scientific" notions (movement and perception, substance, and immortality of soul through reproduction of species) is not "scientific" or psychological by standards of contemporary study. The notion of the soul as incorporeal, driven by desire and intellect, and the immortality of the mind are unrelated to modern psychology. Aristotle is not focused on the internal, mental processes of an individual but rather on the soul as its own Form, and though inhabiting the body, it is still studied as an external thing. His approaches to the nature of soul may seem concrete and "scientific", but his philosophical manner is unrelated to contemporary psychology.

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<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the most seemingly "scientific" understanding of soul is that the immortality of soul (mind) occurs through the reproduction of species, rather than the incarnation and/or reincarnation of one particular soul.

Philo: *On the Migration of Abraham*

Much like Plato's *Phaedrus*, Philo's *On the Migration of Abraham* discusses the life and nature of the soul, but does so through an exegesis (or an allegorical reading) of Abraham's migration as directed by God in Genesis. Philo, a Jewish philosopher writing in Greek at the beginning of the first century C.E., argues that the Migration of Abraham is a metaphor for the migration of man's soul, the "migration" being a soul's cleansing process as fueled by God's will. Philo states that the three stages of Abraham's migration are departing from his land, departing from his kindred, and departing from his father's house. Philo then establishes what each stage of this migration corresponds to in regards to soul cleansing: the land corresponds to body, kindred to sense-perception, and father's house to speech. Philo argues that in order for the soul to be cleansed, it must migrate from each of these localities, so as not to be fully controlled by them. The body is a prison for the soul here as in Plato (Philo is in fact so influenced by Plato that he is counted among the so-called Middle Platonists): we as humans are driven by our external senses, and our speech can stray from the true intention of the matter we wish to express. A "migration" from each of these components cleanses the soul, so that it can continue its migration to a life of virtue and wisdom and therefore to immortality of soul.<sup>12</sup>

This cleansing process is achieved by following the path of righteousness and God's commandments, thus fully understanding the works of God. This can only be achieved, however, by two means: God's offering of full salvation in all three regions

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<sup>12</sup> The migration of the soul to immortality corresponds to Abraham's migration to the land God promises to show him once he has completed the first three stages of his migration.

listed above (body, sense-perception, and speech) and an individual's complete understanding of the nature of one's own mind (Philo. *Migr.* xxxiv.189).<sup>13</sup> This understanding of one's own mind will allow the individual to understand the nature of God and the universe. Once this has been achieved, the migration of the soul can continue as the soul departs from the body, seeking immortality (Philo. *Migr.* xxxiv. 190).

Philo's focus is on how a person achieves a life of virtue and therefore on how his soul achieves immortality: through cleansing of the soul and through a deep understanding of one's own mind in order to understand God and the Universe. This work can be considered psychological because it is a study of soul and mind. Note that here, Philo begins to detach mind from soul. It is not important for this study whether Philo understands Genesis correctly. But it is important to see that in using distinct terms for soul and mind, he is separating life experience from soul's immortality. This puts us a step or two closer to Augustine. But the mind component must not be construed as psychological, because Philo argues that one must completely understand the inner workings of one's own mind before one can conceptualize the external world (and must do so in order to achieve the soul's immortality). Philo does not appear in history of psychology texts, but it is important to note that his theories do not correspond to modern psychology. Though understanding the inner-workings of one's own mind is seemingly psychological, the motive for doing so is an external, spiritual process if living a virtuous life.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Philo uses distinct terms for soul (*psukhê*) and mind (*nous*) though he considers the mind to be the primary *component* of soul.

<sup>14</sup> Dillon's article "Philo of Alexandria and Platonist Psychology" specifically refers to "Philo's psychology" (17). Furthermore, Dillon writes: "his psychology is explicable as an interpretation of contemporary Platonism. I will address in turn the topics of

Marcus Aurelius: *Meditations*

Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor, Greek philosopher, and Stoic, died in 180 C.E. The twelve books of his *Meditations*, a loosely edited collection of his personal thoughts from the last decades of his life, were probably published upon his death.<sup>15</sup> I am particularly concerned here with his discussions of the derivation of the mind, its significance in relation to other components of being, and its function.

The *Meditations* describe the Universe as a commonwealth to which the entire human race belongs. This common place is the mind's derivation. His theory is that everything comes from some other source, and it is no different with the mind. All human minds derive from this common Universe, including the two primary components of the mind: "our reason and our sense of law" (Aurelius. *Med.* iv.4, Farquharson).

According to Marcus Aurelius, we humans are made up of three components: body, vital spirit, and mind (Aurelius. *Med.* ii. 2). The mind presides over the other two as it defines the self. The self owns the body and vital spirit, in that they must be maintained, though only the mind is "in the strict sense your own" (Aurelius. *Med.* xii. 3).

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the nature and structure of the soul, and of its immortality" (18). "Psychology" and "Platonism" are in the same sentence, while "nature and structure of the soul" follows immediately after. Dillon directly relates psychology, specifically "Philo's psychology", to the nature and immortality of soul - a considerably philosophical and theological study that is unrelated to the modern understanding of psychology.<sup>15</sup> He uses both *nous* (literal: mind) and *noêron* (literal: intellect) for "mind". Soul is distinct from mind as *psukhê*.

There is no specification in the *Meditations* as to the relationship between mind and soul. Both are discussed separately, though seem to have similar, overlapping functions. For example, both are described as the driving power of the self. To give a specific example, external and possibly injurious pressures are said not to harm the mind directly, but it is in the mind's power to determine whether the self will be affected as "disturbances only come from the judgment within" (Aurelius. *Med.* iv. 3, Farquharson). In addition, regarding the soul's response to pain as an external pressure, the text suggests that "...it is in the soul's power to preserve its own quiet and calm, and not to judge pain to be an evil" (Aurelius. *Med.* viii. 28, Farquharson). The mind and the soul have control within the inner self to make judgments on external pressures and either allow these pressures to affect the self, or remain unaffected and stable in its internal sanctuary. Interestingly enough, the soul is not included in the three components of the self—yet another suggestion that the mind is strongly related to soul or in fact the soul may embody all three components of a person (body, vital spirit, and mind), which more largely becomes the self.

To return the theory that the mind has control of the self and what affects it. This is significant to the mind's role in living a righteous, fulfilled life before death, under certain conditions. Marcus Aurelius argues that if one frees the mind from internal and external troubles and pressures from the self and from others, "and practice only to live the life you are living that is the present, then you will have it in your power...to live...untroubled with kindness and reconciled with your own good Spirit" (Aurelius. *Med.* xii. 3, Farquharson). When the self retreats to the cleared mind, therefore, no other

burdens can affect it, allowing one to live the life of truth, righteousness, and happiness, the life all humans must strive for.

Though slightly different from Platonic “soul talk” because its primary focus is on the life of the mind rather than the rise and fall of the soul and its rational and irrational components, *The Meditations* still belongs in the category of philosophers in antiquity discussing the life of the mind and soul in a spiritual manner. Some authors consider this psychological: Robinson and Brett include him in their histories of psychology when discussing Stoicism. Marcus Aurelius’ primary importance for this thesis is his constant urge to look within through a kind of spiritual introspection. He does not just consider divisions of soul, but says that building and maintaining a relationship to the whole Universe can all be tied to a kind of introspection. It is the Stoic attempt to relate an individual to the machinery of the Universe in a metaphysical (supernatural, incorporeal) sense which separates this from psychology.

Porphyry: *On the Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey*

Porphyry conveys some of his theories on the life and nature of the soul through his analysis of the cave of the nymphs passage in the *Odyssey* (XIII.102-112). He provides a concise, though profound analysis of Homer’s supposed subtext. Porphyry, a neo-Platonist philosopher of the late third century C.E., is expanding from Cronius’ assumption that Homer is writing allegorically in his lengthy description of the cave.<sup>16</sup> He

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<sup>16</sup> Cronius was a revered neo-Pythagorean philosopher, who Porphyry claims studied the fables of Homeric poetry from a philosophical perspective.

insists on finding an even deeper explanation than Cronius and other readers who preceded him.

The physical cave of the nymphs is a symbol of the Cosmos and home to the water nymphs (naiads).<sup>17</sup> There are explanations of several objects in the cave and what each corresponds to: the stone mixing bowls and the amphorae represent the naiads because they preside over water, which pours from stone; the stone loom represents the souls, because the stone symbolizes bones and the loom weaves the body (Porph. xiv.11). Souls, as understood by Porphyry, are attracted to moisture and therefore attracted to the cave, because of the eternal flow of water within it. The souls are also lured by the honey in the amphorae. The souls are attracted to moisture because it symbolizes their embodiment of flesh, like that of a cloud, and moisture allows the soul to be visible. Souls are also lured by honey because the honey symbolizes purification. Being lured into the cave, therefore, is a symbol of the soul's descent into genesis; that is, the world of becoming as opposed to the world of absolute being.<sup>18</sup>

The designated entrances of the cave are explained as well as more specific theories on the life and nature of the soul through this allegory. The northern entrance is for mortals, thus marked for the descent of souls coming down from heaven into genesis. The southern entrance is for souls ascending to the gods and/or the heavens from genesis.<sup>19</sup> The soul descends into genesis to become pure, the cave serves as a waiting

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<sup>17</sup> "Cave is *spêlaion* in Porphyry, just as in Plato's Myth of the Cave (*Republic* Book VII, 514a-520a). Homer's word for cave, *antron*, is poetic only.

<sup>18</sup> Porphyry also argues that Homer uses Odysseus allegorically to describe the descent of a man's soul to and ascent from genesis.

<sup>19</sup> Porphyry acknowledges Homer's emphasis that this entrance is not for the gods: but for immortals (Porph. xxiii. 21-22), so this entrance includes common souls ascending from genesis to the immortal world.

station (at the base of Athena's olive tree) in the midst of this purification process, and then the soul ascends to heaven, stripped of unnecessary desire. The life cycle, or rather journey, of the soul in this context, is centered around this process of purification and a relinquishing of external desire, from which the soul achieves immortality and understanding of divine intellect.

Porphyry's analysis of Homer's cave of the nymphs in the *Odyssey* as a metaphor for the life journey of the soul contains themes similar to those works of the philosophers discussed previously. Again, this spiritual understanding of the soul's life external from the mortal body, cycling through the stages of genesis and ultimately reaching immortality and an understanding of divine intellect have nothing to do with the internal mental processes of an individual and therefore have no relation to modern psychology. Robinson mentions Porphyry briefly in his chapter on Patristic Psychology (118-119).<sup>20</sup>

## Conclusion

"Platonic psychology" is concerned with various studies of the nature, life, immortality, and parts of soul unrelated to contemporary psychology. Discussing these ancient philosophers' works emphasizes how careful we must be when using the word "psychology". Though it is important to recognize Augustine as present in this progression of "soul talk", it is also important to identify his theories of self as separate and more advanced than these Platonic theories. And distinguishing this "soul talk" from

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<sup>20</sup> Adamson and Pormann (2009) briefly mention Porphyry's *Introduction (Isagoge)* as contributing to some of al-Kindi's ideas (95).

modern psychological practices aids in the identification of Augustine's theory of inner self as more closely related to modern psychology.

## CHAPTER II:

### DEFINING CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOLOGY: A FOCUS ON INTROSPECTION AND COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

In order to convey Augustine's *Confessions*' connection to modern psychology, I must first define my understanding of modern psychology. In addition, I also need to define the specific realm of psychology I am referring to in relation to the *Confessions*.

Tavris and Wade's introductory psychology book, *Psychology in Perspective* (2001), defines psychology as "the discipline concerned with behavior and mental processes and how they are affected by an organism's physical state, mental state, and external environment" (5). This is the broadest possible definition, designed to embrace the broad spectrum of studies included in the psychological field.

In order to achieve its current proliferation of sub-studies, psychology has undergone extensive development and growth over time. It has changed and modernized, abandoning some older theories while maintaining others as a basis for the development of new theories. Robinson makes the interesting claim that modern psychology "pursues the same objectives that prompted all earlier endeavors, but it begins with more elemental processes and does not advance to complex phenomena until these processes have been understood" (360). These earlier endeavors include the works of Plato, Aristotle,

Aquinas, Hobbes, Descartes, and Locke, and their broad queries and investigations of human thought processes Richardson covered in his earlier chapters (359). He also raises the issue of whether these advanced and more “scientific” studies of psychology are developing in order to settle the “ageless issues of epistemology” (360). Epistemology is the theory of knowledge: the nature of knowledge and how it is obtained. It poses the question: “how do we know what we know?” These “ageless issues of epistemology” are referring to the above philosophers’ studies of the mind as too broad and lacking modern resources to reach sensible and definite conclusions. This awareness of distinction between “psychology” in antiquity and contemporary psychology will be useful in arguing that Augustine’s *Confessions* is a precursor to modern psychology.

Psychology constantly undergoes the same processes of change, growth, and development as does any of the more established academic disciplines. Psychology began from some early theories which may or may not be accepted today, and it will continue to advance in the centuries to come. Janz & van Drunen (2004) recognize the significance of understanding the early developments of psychology and their ramifications in present day psychology, as well as the transformation of such early theories into the psychological theories of the present. They acknowledge not only the role of early psychological theories in the development of the field, but also “socio-historical trends” that contributed to its development and success, namely individualization.

Individualization marked the historical shift of focus (spanning from 1400-1800) from the group to the individual and the “focus on the inner world of feelings”(13). Janz & van Drunen claim that this shift was a great contributor to the development and success of modern psychology. But it is obvious that such individualization and focus on the internal

self is largely apparent in the pre-modern *Confessions*. Tavris & Wade, Janz & van Drunen, Galotti (2007), and Hunt (1993), among several other authorities, recognize that the birth of modern psychology originated with Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) and his determination to formulate psychology into a science (Tavris & Wade 15) in 1879 (Janz & van Drunen 12).<sup>21</sup> He conducted the first psychological experiments along with two of his graduate students in his private institute in Germany. “Largely because of this institute, Wundt is considered not just one of the founders but the principal founder of modern psychology” (Hunt, 141). His experiments focused mostly on “sensation, perception, reaction times, imagery, and attention, and they avoided learning, personality, and abnormal behavior” (Tavris & Wade 15). His most renowned research method was trained introspection, “in which specially trained people carefully observed, analyzed, and described their own sensations, mental images, and emotional reactions” (Tavris & Wade 15). Though this seemed to be an effective and objective start, psychologists later dismissed the theory of introspection as an ineffective approach to understanding of the inner workings of the mind; they objected that the process was be too biased, as it relied primarily on self-reporting.

As modern psychology has continued to develop, the field has become broader, generating a variety of specific fields of study within the single discipline. These specific studies include developmental, abnormal, and cognitive psychology, to name a few.

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<sup>21</sup> Lawson, Graham, & Baker (2007) claim René Descartes’ (1596-1650) work served as the first contribution to modern psychology (83). This is plausible considering his work with rationality and science (85). There are undoubtedly additional arguments made for other early theorists as the first contributors to modern psychology, but for the purposes of this thesis and in support of my argument, I use Tavris & Wade’s proposal of Wilhelm Wundt as the first real psychologist to contribute to modern notions of psychology.

Cognitive psychology (more indirectly related to the *Confessions*),<sup>22</sup> in tandem with Wundt's early theories of introspection (more directly related to the *Confessions*), are the specific areas of modern psychological study I am focusing on.<sup>23</sup>

Introspection, as described in brief previously, is the intense study of the mind, specifically individual internal conscious experiences. Wundt's goal in his research and in the development of this method was to generate a scientific study of the mind and to characterize the different sections and functions of the conscious experiences of the mind, information from which he ultimately wanted to create "a table of 'mental elements', much like a chemist's periodic chart. Once the set of elements was identified, Wundt believed, psychologists could determine how these units combine to produce complex

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<sup>22</sup> I will discuss these indirect and direct relationships in a later section.

<sup>23</sup> At this point in my identification of the specific realms of modern psychology I will focus on, it would seem logical that I would talk next about Freud and his relation to Augustine. Due to the succinct nature of my argument, and so as not to drift too far into discussions of psychoanalysis and the *Confessions* (Bakan (2010) and Fredriksen (1978) focus on Augustine's self analysis, sexual endeavors, and family construct and how they relate to psychoanalysis), I have not included Freud in the main text, but it is important that I acknowledge his theories of the subconscious/unconscious mind that do relate to the *Confessions*. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was the next great theorist to emerge in the field of modern psychology with his theory of the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious mind. Freud argued that the conscious mind reveals only the surface of the self, whereas the "unconscious part of the mind contains unrevealed wishes, passions, guilty secrets, unspeakable yearnings, and conflicts between desire and duty. We are not aware of our unconscious urges and thoughts as we go about our daily business..." (Tavris & Wade 16-17). Freud, like Wundt, believed in self-analysis as a means to recovering information about the unconscious mind that is hidden from awareness. This corresponds to Augustine's understanding of the inner self as existent in memory and not fully known to the conscious mind. Thorough internal investigation of memory, according to Augustine, recovers information about this inner self. I debated discussing Freud's theory of the id, ego, and superego as well as repressed memories, but as I was researching, I made the decision to only cover Freud's basic notion of the unconscious mind in relation to Augustine, as the former theories are more concerned with understanding behavior. My argument is not concerned with the behavioral aspect of psychology, but only internal, mental thought processes.

mental phenomena” (Galotti 6-7). Many psychologists (primarily behaviorists) questioned the plausibility of introspection and dismissed it as an adequate research method for modern psychology. Galotti makes a valid point, however, regarding Wundt and his innovative technique: “...modern cognitive psychologists owe Wundt more than a historical debt. A pioneer in the study of many cognitive phenomena, he was the first to approach cognitive questions scientifically and the first to try to design experiments to test cognitive theories” (7).

Cognitive psychology is the study and investigation of people’s thought processes and the “origin and consequences of people’s cognitions: their thoughts, memories, beliefs, perceptions, explanations, and other mental processes” (Tavris & Wade 25). Cognitive psychology moved away from Wundt’s method of introspection, but can be considered an advancement and a more modern and sensible practice of what Wundt was trying to achieve. This is a general description of cognitive psychology, but a specific realm of the discipline—memory—is relevant to Augustine. In the *Confessions*, Augustine describes the “fields of memory” within his mind, in which he can discover the innermost parts of himself: *et venio in campos et lata praetoria memoriae*: “and I come into the fields and vast palaces of my memory” (Aug. *Conf.* X. viii. 12, my translation).<sup>24</sup> He describes events or parts of himself he remembers and can retrieve rapidly and those which he must seek deeper in his memory to find.<sup>25</sup> He also describes the parts of his inner self that he cannot remember, and thus will never know. Cognitive psychology, in its study of the mind, involves the study of memory on a more scientific

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<sup>24</sup> Unless otherwise stated, quotations from the *Confessions* come from Wills (2006).

<sup>25</sup> O’Donnell vol. III, pp. 174-175, notes that Augustine in his work *On the Trinity* 11 compares memory, intellect, and will to the Trinity with memory corresponding to the first person. I owe this observation to Professor Keeley Schell.

level, though Augustine's conceptualizations of memory remain relevant to this modern study of memory, as I will argue later.

Philosophy, theology, and science have all been trying to decipher the inner workings of the mind. Different disciplines use different methodologies and generate different theories, but all share the common goal of understanding the complexity of the mind (Levitin 2002). Early modern psychology, specifically the practice of introspection, began the psychological journey to understand the mind on an individualistic level. The psychological field has advanced and other scientific disciplines have advanced their theories and technologies as well. So with confidence in and support from these new developments, cognitive psychology can successfully study and understand the mind: "We can now turn our attention inward, to exploring the nature of thought, and how our mental life comes to be what it is" (Levitin xiii).

There are areas of cognitive psychology, such as perception (understood as external perception, not internal), in which some realize the value of Augustine's contributions, but they are not relevant to my argument.<sup>26</sup> I am more interested in the following sequence: from Augustine's inner self to introspection, and from introspection to cognitive psychology. There is a seemingly direct relationship between Augustine's conceptualization of the inner self and the early modern psychological study of introspection, which advanced into the even more modern study of the individual mind in cognitive psychology—a more recent (and more well-received) practice of modern psychology.

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<sup>26</sup> Macnamara (1999) refers to perception of the external in relation to Augustine, which I will address further in my chapter on the history of Augustine in a psychological context.

## CHAPTER III

### A HISTORY OF AUGUSTINE IN A PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTEXT

This thesis is by no means the first work to address Augustine in the context of psychology. People have been relating Augustine and his works to psychology from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century up until today. Although Augustine is present in the history of psychology from a variety of perspectives (not necessarily related to mine), he holds a presence in the general field. There is a large gap of time, however, when Augustine is not mentioned in standard history of psychology texts. Most of the psychological texts that do mention Augustine are either early twentieth century or towards the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century (1980s into the early 2000s).<sup>27</sup> Only recently has he been minimally reintroduced and the significance of his works is only slightly recognized in the current histories of the development of contemporary psychology. The following is a discussion of three histories of psychology—Brett (1912), Morgan (1932), and Macnamara (1999)—to give a sense of Augustine’s presence in the history of psychology in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Brett and Morgan), his hiatus, and his

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<sup>27</sup> The American Catholic Psychological Association was active during the middle of the century (1948-1970), but disbanded in the early 1970s, returning theorists preceding Descartes, like Augustine, to the philosophers so that psychology could proceed on a scientific, non-theological basis.

most recent recognition (Macnamara).<sup>28</sup> In my discussion, I will also address how parts of the two earlier works seem outdated, though are still significant in their recognition of Augustine. But I will primarily try to convey how Augustine's innovations directly relate to notions of contemporary psychology and therefore can situate my work within the trend of this contemporary scholarship.

Brett: *A History of Psychology: Ancient and Patristic*

Brett's *A History of Psychology* appears outdated as a text on "modern" psychology, especially when it is read in the twenty-first century amidst all of the developments and advances in the psychological field. But it does present a clear survey of the history of psychology, and includes an entire chapter devoted to Augustine. In his prologue Brett discusses ancient psychology as being more in the realm of philosophy; in my first chapter I have taken pains to show how misleading the word "psychology" can be in these contexts. On the other hand, Augustine's theory of the inner self (while maintaining some level of Platonic influence) ultimately surpasses the theories of ancient philosophy and better fits into the early developments and studies of modern psychology.

Brett concludes his *History* with a chapter devoted exclusively to Augustine: "The Doctrine of St. Augustine." I think that this chapter comes last not merely because of chronology. While other chapters discuss groups or schools of thinkers, this chapter gives Augustine pride of place, even if Brett does not argue that Augustine is a direct

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<sup>28</sup> I had hoped to discuss a selection of articles from Capps and Dittes (1990) collection, but the articles' primary focus is the *Confessions'* relation to psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, which is not a focus of my argument.

precursor of modern psychology. In this chapter he addresses three main topics of inwardness, free will, and memory.

For Brett, Augustine the philosopher looks to the inner self: “As a philosopher he seeks for truth, for knowledge that is without presuppositions and wholly certain, and this he finds in the inner experience” (334). He describes Augustine’s two main categories of knowledge as revelation and introspection. Introspection is more relevant to our understanding of modern psychology, as was discussed in the previous chapter. Brett goes further, arguing that, for Augustine, the basis of a metaphysical knowledge (understanding the philosophy of being) is the nature of the inner experience. He even goes further to say that “in psychological study the power of accurate introspective observation is supremely valuable; throughout the work of Augustine we find this power exhibited to a remarkable degree” (334).

Brett emphasizes Augustine’s belief in human free will as the most important element of life. Interestingly enough, the will, though seemingly an essence within the mind and body, has primarily physical effects and in turn controls a person’s actions.<sup>29</sup> In this realm of the physical aspects of Augustine’s psychology, Brett surprisingly discusses the fundamentals of neurology. He gives a minimal description of the role of soul in the anatomy of the brain according to Augustine:

Soul acts upon the body from its seat, the brain, which has three ventricles; the anterior is the nerve-centre, the posterior is the motor centre, and the middle ventricle is the seat of learning. The memory centre is required so that motions may be connected with one another, the past with the present. Such is the machinery of

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<sup>29</sup> Brett describes Augustine’s conceptualization of the human will: “The will exercises rule over the body; the nerves are filled with air which obeys the will, transmitting to the limbs the motions commanded by will” (337).

sensation and motion. Though Augustine is careful to assert that the physical and the psychic are distinct; the memory centre, e.g., is not itself memory (337-338).

It is noteworthy that Augustine, in his primitive understandings of neuroscience, achieves the sophisticated understanding that things physical and psychic are separate from each other (though highly interdependent: the memory center generates the function of memory).

Brett further expands on Augustine and memory. According to Augustine, in order for a person to maintain an idea and recall it from memory, he must think it or feel it. This denotes psychological understanding of memory recollection, appears loosely related to an understanding of repressed memories, and could even be considered pre-Freudian. As I have discussed before, Augustine's inner self is understood as a part of the self that cannot always be completely known: "It is not necessary that one should always be conscious of that which he knows; man, therefore, has knowledge as it were potentially, and memory is the act of restoring knowledge to consciousness" (340). In the process of thought and the acquisition of knowledge, all that we learn and know comes from within the self, though the self is not always aware or conscious that it knows. "The Self is the exhaustless mine from which the jewels of thought are raised into the light: all that we find is found in our own minds" (341). Augustine identifies the will to learn as the beginning of true knowledge. I relate this to modern notions of the personal psychological process: the process of change in one's self, feelings about the self and feelings about the external world begins with the will to do so.

Brett concludes the chapter by acknowledging Augustine's fundamental contributions to the field of psychology in the following ways. Augustine understands the

self, knowledge, and life as a unified entity. He understands that we only have knowledge of the world from what we have experienced and therefore from what is within us. And he understands that there is a deeper level of consciousness in the individual—a place where self is unified with self (essentially the inner self). Brett believes each understanding is related to psychology. Further, Brett says of Augustine’s states of awakening and realization in the *Confessions* that “whether we condemn them as illusions or explain them as pathological, they remain undeniable psychological data” (347). Brett argues that Augustine was the first to articulate the unknown parts of the self “so as to show the agony of his thought” in his writing of the *Confessions*. “Psychology reaches a second great climax when its expositor can say that the foundation of the soul is continuous self-consciousness and thought is simply life reflected into itself” (348), by which Brett implies a prefiguring of Descartes and “I think therefore I am.”<sup>30</sup>

Morgan: *The Psychological Teaching of St. Augustine*

Morgan devotes an entire book to the psychology of Augustine. Morgan’s book, similar to Brett’s, is outdated in the current psychological world. Furthermore, Morgan’s point of view is theological in how he explains Augustine’s investigation of the human soul. In fact, Morgan’s theological understanding of Augustine helps to explain why Augustine is missing from non-Catholic psychology for the middle of the twentieth century. It is still important to recognize, however, that within the context of this thesis I am considering Morgan a “modern” psychologist. Regardless of the validity of some of

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<sup>30</sup> Brett is unclear about what he considers to be the first great climax of psychology.

his arguments, his book still demonstrates Augustine's powerful presence in the early history of psychology.

Morgan pursues two arguments that would likely be dismissed in modern literature on psychology and Augustine: his discussion of Augustine's "psychological" theories is primarily about the nature of the soul and the soul's immortality, and he assumes that Augustine's interest in mind, body, and soul is primarily theological. Further, his basic understanding of the definition of modern psychology that it is primarily about maladaptive behavior is too narrow and simplistic, as is his understanding of memory and the subconscious.

In discussing Augustine's psychological theories and contributions to modern psychology, Morgan focuses on his theories of human soul. Though Morgan is arguing for Augustine's separating from Platonism and his originality in understanding the nature of the soul, his discussion sounds too Platonic. For example, the language he uses in stating Augustine's theory of soul seems purely Aristotelian. "The body is, indeed, the instrument of the soul, and the soul is the life of the body" (104). Morgan goes on to make the assertion that "Modern psychologists probe into the soul's hidden recesses in a manner similar to that of a geologist who digs into the bowels of the earth, but Augustine's discussions on the soul are wafted on the wings of angels; they all soar upwards..." (104).<sup>31</sup> Though justified in this book, this statement would not be accepted today, especially by Cary, because probing into the inner workings of the mind and self is

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<sup>31</sup> I would argue that Morgan's book can be considered more of a religious than a psychological text. This quotation suggests a contrast between Augustine's interest in God above and Freud's interest in what is repressed within, a comparison to Freud's disadvantage.

precisely what Augustine is doing as he tries to articulate his conceptualization of the inner self. The immortality of the soul is not a concern of modern psychology.

Morgan argues that Augustine's concern with the investigation of the human soul was primarily theological, rather than "of a philosophical or a psychological character" (142). Again, though justified because Augustine was profoundly influential on Christian thought, it is naïve to say that Augustine's intentions were *primarily* theological. This is because his approach to seeking God and understanding the self was internal, whereas, according to Christian tradition, the search for God is an external one. On the one hand, by seeking God and truth within, Augustine was straying from traditional Christian belief, leaving this external search aside. But Augustine, as a Christian, does recognize God's external reality, especially in Books XI-XIII, but his standpoint is not predominantly theological (because he is focusing on God *internally* as well) as Morgan argues.<sup>32</sup>

Morgan's assumptions concerning the nature of "modern" psychology, in addition to his understandings of memory and the subconscious, though accurate to an extent, are too simplistic. His basic understanding of "modern psychology" is too narrow. He makes two incorrect assumptions about "modern" psychology as a whole. He assumes that the purpose of psychology is only to understand maladaptive behavior (142); although abnormal psychology is a crucial component of psychological study, it is wholly

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<sup>32</sup> Cary has a similar argument in saying that Augustine focuses too much on the internal and does not address the external reality of God (reviewers of Cary and I note how he neglects to address significant passages in the *Confessions* that do acknowledge the external reality of God in Chapter IV). Mathewes (1999) also makes a similar, though more general claim: "Augustine's basic epistemological move is inward; he emphasizes the interiority of the subject in a way that seems to undermine the importance of the external world" (106-107).

incorrect, even in 1932, to call it the whole of psychology. Psychology is an all-encompassing study and investigation of the self, which includes abnormal behavior but is not limited to it. Secondly, he assumes that individual and social psychology are *not* two separate realms of study, but that individual psychology accounts for both (181). According to psychologists today, social psychology is considered its own branch of study. Though individual psychology is interwoven with social psychology, this field of study is separate and different from investigation of self. Investigation of self in the context of other selves constitutes a variety of different theories that cannot be found when only investigating the self.

In his more specific discussion of memory and the subconscious, Morgan's thoughts on memory are correct as far as they go, but today we have a more complex understanding of the inner workings of memory.<sup>33</sup> For example, speaking of memory: "Psychology inquires into the conditions necessary for retention of ideas. It also investigates such subjects as memory, image, hallucinations, and remembrance of feelings" (198). This is all correct, but seems redundant and only surface-level compared to the complexities of memory psychologists are studying and still discovering today. His discussion of the subconscious mind is similar. His initial statements concerning the subconscious are good to the extent that he takes them and they do relate to Augustine's inner self: "the conscious self of each of us is only a small part of the real self: that underneath the conscious personality there exists a much larger 'subliminal self', below the threshold of our immediate awareness" (215).

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<sup>33</sup> For example, determining the existence and distinction between explicit and implicit memory and the consolidation of short-term memories into long-term memories.

Morgan's book is significant and insightful into the historical psychological understanding of Augustine and is an essential source for documenting Augustine's presence in the history of modern psychology. Morgan maintains a theological perspective and argues that the psychological teachings of St. Augustine are centered around his thoughts on the nature and immortality of soul, which do not correspond to my psychological understanding of Augustine's inner self. But the outdated nature of Morgan's argument allows me to further specify my argument centered around Augustine's inner self and emphasize the modernity of this inner self. In addition, Morgan's thoughts on memory and the subconscious, though primitive for contemporary psychology, are accurate for as far as takes these thoughts and are relevant to Augustinian psychology. Because of the several false or naïve assumptions I cannot accept the full argument of the text as plausible, nor does it coincide with the more modern literature I am discussing and utilizing in this thesis.

Macnamara: *Through the Rearview Mirror: Historical Reflections on Psychology*

There is an obvious leap in years, decades rather, between Morgan's psychological text on Augustine and Macnamara's reflection on the history of psychology, which includes a chapter on Augustine.<sup>34</sup> Though Augustine has been mentioned in the history of psychology in the years between these two texts, there was little advancement in the understanding of Augustine's relation to psychology. Most of the discussion surrounding Augustine and psychology in these intervening years would be in contexts similar to

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<sup>34</sup> Chapter 8: "St. Augustine of Hippo: Christian Platonist"; 10 pages.

those of Brett and Morgan. My assumption for why Augustine faded out of the psychological world in the mid twentieth century is that psychology was advancing into more and more of a science. Psychologists found it too great a task (or even unnecessary) to relate Augustine to modern psychology and so they placed him in the pool of “Platonic psychologists” discussed earlier, which is not where he belongs. Macnamara, however, is one of the few modern psychologists who understand his importance. Macnamara gives a broad explanation of Augustine’s patterns of psychological thinking, including his own theories as well as grappling with the theories and questions of Plato and Aristotle.

Macnamara, writing in 1999, emphasizes Augustine as a profound figure and influence in the world of psychology. He begins with broad statements declaring Augustine’s contributions to psychological theories, and insists that the reader accept Augustine as a significant contributor to this field, even though a renowned theologian: “Even his most theological speculations...are suffused with his psychological theories. He is, then, the most influential writer on psychology until modern times” (64).

Macnamara recognizes Augustine’s theories, though he develops them from a theological basis, are in fact psychological; as with his theory of God as having not only an external, but internal reality.

Macnamara primarily discusses perception as the focus of Augustine’s psychological thinking. Though respecting Augustine as a Christian Platonist, he notes Augustine’s separation from Plato in his perception of corporeal beings. Macnamara gives an example of the perception of a dog. Plato believed that corporeal dogs were only attempted copies of the divine idea of a dog and not dogs at all. Augustine, on the other hand, understood dogs as dogs and that humans can understand the nature of dogs

through perception. Moreover, he understood that the divine idea of a dog is not the dog of our mortal reality.

Augustine's understanding of perception as a guide to truth is further emphasized. Macnamara presents his understanding of perception as an acceptance, making note that Augustine does not deny perception as a source of truth. He even stresses Augustine's formal background in knowledge of perception: "He was up to date for his time on the role of the nerves and brain in perception as understood by contemporary anatomists" (65). Acceptance of the role of perception in finding truth serves as psychological thinking; therefore, Macnamara sees Augustine's understanding of this as psychologically valuable.

The specifics of Macnamara's discussion of Augustine's knowledge of perception and thought development, problems in philosophical thinking, and approach to solving these problems are as follows. Macnamara says that Augustine has his own approaches to the problems of Plato, Aristotle, and his own problem. Macnamara presents Plato's problem: How can one attain knowledge of a form "when all we have access to is accidental properties?" And he presents Aristotle's problem: How can one grasp unchanging truths about the nature of changeable objects? (66). He then states Augustine's problem: "Since ideals are not fully realized in the objects or actions that one experiences, how can we explain the mind's access to them?" (68). "Augustine's problem" is in regards to rules of mathematics, moral values, etc. and how our minds obtain knowledge of these things without directly accessing them through perceptual processes. Macnamara says Augustine has the ability to solve each of these problems through his understanding of "divine illumination" in the mind, in that divine

illumination allows humans to understand “immutable truths” (68). Divine truth gives the soul a set of “concepts and rules,” some generated through perception and others “independent” of perception.

Macnamara clarifies that this divine illumination is not some beacon from God invading the mind, but the understanding of the nature of the human mind as a source of enlightenment and guide to knowledge of immutable truth. This is the psychological thought process that Macnamara finds significant in Augustine. He continues to say that Augustine believes the mind to be incorporeal (the body being corporeal) and thus the mind can understand itself the best. According to Macnamara, this theory is the basis of Augustine’s understanding of psychology (70).

Macnamara views perception as Augustine’s understanding that the mind is incorporeal, and self-awareness as the most valuable psychological thinking of Augustine. At the end of his chapter on Augustine, he comments that introspection and self-awareness are knowing how to “perceive, remember, imagine, understand, desire, judge, and decide through awareness of these operations within ourselves.” But he then argues that such a theory “is in opposition with the stance of contemporary psychology, so burdened by the exaggerated claims of introspectionists that it is uneasy about attending to the operations of one’s own mind” (70). This is to say that contemporary psychologists are wary of Augustinian introspection, because introspectionists rely solely on knowledge of internal processes to understand how the self and the world around us functions. Regardless, he acknowledges Augustine as a significant figure in the history and development of psychology, though he may stray from the argument that Augustine’s theories of the mind and self awareness are at the root of modern psychology.

Making a plausible argument for Augustine’s unique and innovative understanding of perception and self-awareness as his contribution and role in the history of psychology, Macnamara focuses more on Augustine’s understanding of perception and mentions self-awareness only briefly. He focuses primarily on a specific area of psychological investigation—perception—which differs from the modern psychology of the inner self that I will be discussing in this thesis.

Though Macnamara emphasizes Augustine’s knowledge of the mind as knowing itself best and self-awareness as the key to successful perception of the external world, he does not acknowledge or describe Augustine’s “psychology” or inner self, which is what I will be addressing in this thesis. I accept his argument of Augustine’s understanding of perception and achievement of perception of the external world and finding truth through “divine illumination of the human mind” (68), but I am not concerned with this argument in justifying my own points about Augustine’s contribution to the origin of modern psychology. However, Macnamara shows that Augustine does have a place in histories of psychology in the twenty-first century, though addresses this through the topic of perception, rather than my topic of introspection.

## Conclusion

These discussions of Brett, Morgan, and Macnamara’s works provide evidence of Augustine’s presence in the history of modern psychology. They also call attention to the period of time he was minimally mentioned (with the possible exception of the ACPA), the mid-twentieth century (approximately 1940-1980), while also documenting his return

at the start of the twenty-first century. His hiatus during the mid-twentieth century can be attributed to the psychological field's primary focus on more scientific and less theoretical practices. It is important to reveal this history of Augustine in a psychological context in order to justify the placement of my work in this context.

## CHAPTER IV

### Augustine's Innovation: Philip Cary's Thoughts on the Inner Self

The following is a review and discussion of Philip Cary's *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self*. His focus is on Augustine as "inventor" of (that is, the discoverer of, or the first to conceptualize) the inner self in the *Confessions*. Cary is arguing that before Augustine, there was no understanding of an interior psychological phenomenon within the *whole* self, only theories of *parts* of soul. The reviews are mixed on the presentation of Cary's argument.<sup>35</sup> He gives useful insights into some background of Augustine's work and the development of his understanding of the inner self. Cary's mere recognition of the pioneering caliber of Augustine's work contributes greatly to the notion that Augustine's innovative understanding of the inner self leads to the early modern psychological method of introspection, and then more broadly to contemporary cognitive psychology.

The reviewers have two objections to Cary's argument. The first is that Daly thinks Cary's theological views tend to interfere with his argument. According to Cary, Augustine's theory of inner self is describing a space within that is too contained and too private, not resonating with significant historical traditions of Christianity, specifically

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<sup>35</sup> I refer specifically to Daly's (2000), Dixon's (2000), and Lossl's (2000) reviews of Cary.

the traditional prayers to God. According to Augustine, God can also be found *within*. As an individual turns inward to find and understand an inner self, it is in that inner space that he or she finds God. According to historical Christian tradition, one must look outward to find God through the guidance of companions in the external world and, of course, Christ. According to historical Christian tradition, one must look outward to find God through the Word made Flesh. Because of this disagreement, Daly's concern is that Cary's personal reaction to Augustine is too theological.

The second objection, is that Cary overlooks significant passages in Augustine, specifically in reference to Christ. Daly and Lossi note Cary's omission of Augustine's statements in the *Confessions* concerning Christ as mediator between God and humans. Cary argues that Augustine's notion of inner self neglects to include the significance of Christ in finding God, though Cary does not include Augustine's understanding of Word made Flesh, which he focuses on heavily in Books XI-XIII. In addition to Cary's omission of Augustine's understanding of Word made Flesh, Dixon notes that Cary does not address Augustine's vision at Ostia in Book IX of the *Confessions*, which does not describe the inner self as completely closed off to the external world (Cary's argument).

Though I acknowledge some of his shortcomings, I commend Cary's attempt to argue for Augustine as "inventor" or primary discoverer of the inner self, especially in his recognition of Augustine's inner self as private and accessible through memory. Cary emphasizes the development of this concept of inner self as stemming from Christian Platonism, namely "inward turn and intellectual vision" (69), but he declares that the concept of inner self is Augustine's own discovery – no one before him introduced or

acknowledged this inner space. It is important to recognize Augustine as the innovator of a concept so advanced for antiquity and so accepted in modern society.

Cary describes “inner man” talk as a tradition of both Christianity and Platonism, suggesting Augustine “was familiar, in fact, with a language of inwardness that had been present in the Christian tradition ever since the New Testament”, while also understanding that the concept of inwardness was not only a Christian, but also a Platonist concept (47). Aside from Augustine’s understanding of this, Cary makes it clear that the Christian Platonist concept of inwardness, specifically the “inner man”, as he describes it, is referring to the *rational part of the soul* and not the *inner space* within that Augustine introduces and elaborates on in the *Confessions* (47). This is a crucial component of Cary’s thesis that Augustine is referring to a newly investigated inner space within the self rather than the “inner man” of Christian Platonism and the rational parts of soul or self. And this understanding is largely significant in identifying Augustinian introspection as a separate realm of thought from Christian Platonism.

Though Cary is wary of Augustine’s inward turn and what this concept of self-examination has done to people, who, through acceptance of this internal investigation and looking inside to find God, may fear that the external world has nothing to offer them, I commend his acknowledgment of Augustine’s influence on Western thought: “To see how and why Augustine invented the inner space of the self is to understand something about the possibilities of self-understanding available to human beings in the West” (Cary 141). Augustine yearned to find God within, as a *component* of self, but also confirming that God is separate from self (*why*) . In order to do so Augustine locates God

within but also above (and outside) the soul,<sup>36</sup> as its external Creator (*how*). Moreover, Cary gives a complete definition of the Augustinian inner self: “The concept of private inner space arises in consequence of this modification, for the place in which we find ourselves when we have entered within (and not yet looked up) is our very own space – an inner world of human memory and thought” (140).

Interestingly enough, Cary clearly understands Augustine’s innovation: “*our* inwardness originates from Augustine” (140). Cary does not, however, take a liking to Augustinian inwardness, as is apparent from his predominantly theological perspective and his failure to address Augustine’s loyalty to the Christian tradition, as Cary’s reviewers acknowledge. This suggests, however, that Cary is not seeking to justify his own opinions and he is therefore objective in his approach to this material. But this may also suggest subjectivity because of his opposition to Augustine. Regardless of the affect of his standpoint, Cary’s piece significantly helps my argument in articulating Augustine as the first to describe this inner self, a concept distinct from the Platonist notion of the separate rational parts of self. And I will take Cary’s argument a step further in establishing a place for Augustine in the current histories of psychology as he makes direct and indirect contributions to modern psychological practices of introspection and cognitive psychology respectively.

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<sup>36</sup> Cary uses soul, rather than self here. I will address the self/soul distinction in Augustine in my chapter on the *Confessions*.

## CHAPTER V

### ON THE *CONFESSIONS* AND AUGUSTINIAN INTROSPECTION

Augustine's *Confessions*, written in 397 C.E.,<sup>37</sup> is a single work comprised of thirteen books that document Augustine's life prior to the *Confessions*, his search for a conceptualization of God and self, and include an explanation of the Book of Genesis on Creation and an allegorical analysis of the Holy Trinity.

The *Confessions* can be broken into three sections: Books I-IX, Book X, and Books XI-XIII. Books I-IX are autobiographical, Augustine's history of himself from birth through early manhood to the death of his mother, Monnica (354-387 C.E.).<sup>38</sup> Book X is a thoroughgoing investigation and explanation of the self that is writing the *Confessions* as well as Augustine's conceptualization of himself as a result of what he can recall from memory. Books XI-XIII focus on Christological issues regarding self, the parts of self, and God through the medium of an allegorical explanation of the Holy Trinity. I will give an overview of Books I-IX as well as Books XI-XIII and expand on significant passages that are particularly relevant to Book X. I will focus on Book X,

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<sup>37</sup> O'Donnell, vol. I, xxxii. All direct quotations from James J. O'Donnell are from his three-volume text and commentary on the *Confessions* and will be cited by Roman numeral (volume number) followed by the page number of the particular volume.

<sup>38</sup> Both O'Donnell and Wills use the nontraditional spelling of "Monnica", in keeping with the original Latin text: *meminerent ad altare tuum Monnicae* (IX.xiii.37). O'Donnell notes that "this is the only place in any of A's works where we are told her name" (vol. III, 148).

however, as in this book Augustine identifies the inner self, the theoretical basis of this thesis. I will include the general contents of Book X, Augustine's use of language, his conceptualization of the inner self, and the role of memory.

Books I-IX are an autobiographical composition on Augustine's life from infancy up until the death of Monnica. He captures both his ignorance as he matures from childhood into adolescence and his yearning for God, even though he finds himself searching in the wrong places. He searched for God externally and through the conceptualization of visible, material substance. Though believing in and understanding God as an incorporeal being that does not take human shape, he still seeks to understand God in a material way. For example, in Book VI, Augustine acknowledges God's incorporeal nature: *non es utique forma ista corporea*, "you...have no corporeal shape" (Aug. *Conf.* VI. iii. 4; p. 113 Wills). And in Book VII, he states his want to understand God in a material way : "I was compelled to express you, not indeed in the shape of a human person, but at least as something material located in space, either diffused throughout the world or extended infinitely outside it" (Aug. *Conf.* VII. i. 1.; p. 135, Wills).

As the *Confessions* progress into Book X, Augustine moves from an external to an internal understanding of God, through his understanding of the inner self and memory; this intertwining of understanding of God and understanding of self I will later treat in depth. The first set of books prepares Augustine for this contemplation of memory and the inner self in his search for God. In recalling his life experiences prior to the writing of the *Confessions*, he establishes the self that he knows, and this will allow him to conceptualize how he is the sum total of his memories. In establishing the self that

he knows, he also acknowledges what he does not know or remember about himself – a query which leads to an understanding of his inner self.

All of the first nine books are fascinating, but I would like to address two specific passages from Book IX that are particularly relevant to Book X: the vision at Ostia and the death of Monnica. Augustine’s vision at Ostia with his mother Monnica occurs upon his reading of Scripture, specifically that of Paul, after his baptism, the act that marks his serious affiliation and self-establishment within the Church. His vision, or better his realization, is that of a mystical experience with God,<sup>39</sup> different from the Milan vision (Aug. *Conf.* VII. iii.4-v.7),<sup>40</sup> and the search into the deepest part of the self to find God and truth: *erigentes nos ardentiore affectu in idipsum, perambulavimus gradatim cuncta corporalia et ipsum caelum, unde sol et luna et stellae lucent super terram* (Aug. *Conf.* IX. x. 24). Wills translates this as: “Reaching out more eagerly to the Self-in-Self, we proceeded step by step through all material things, even the heavens, from which sun, moon and stars brighten the earth” (p. 200 Wills). Most of Wills’ translation stays true to the Latin text, but he misses Augustine’s beautiful imagery in *erigentes nos ardentiore affectu in idipsum*,<sup>41</sup> literal translation: “[we], raising ourselves up into God himself by means of a more burning desire...” Wills chooses “more eagerly” rather than “by a more

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<sup>39</sup> O’Donnell notes that in the vision at Ostia Augustine learns *how* to achieve this mystical union and ascend toward God and in Book X he actually undergoes the ascent process through his writing (vol. III, p. 151).

<sup>40</sup> His Milan vision, similar in ways to his Ostian vision, is influenced more by neo-Platonist literature than by Augustine’s affiliation with the Church and his avid reading of Scripture. These neo-Platonist works were a significant influence on Augustine, but he was “hungry for something different, perhaps richer, perhaps more permanent, perhaps merely something more congruent with the realities of everyday life. That is achieved in Bk. 9 at Ostia” (O’Donnell, vol. I, xxxiii).

<sup>41</sup> O’Donnell notes that Augustine uses *idipsum* as a mystical name for God (vol. III, p. 99).

burning desire”, which loses the emphasis on the pulling force from within Augustine and Monnica and their internal drive towards God. Though Wills captures the inner desire, he misses the imagery of love by not translating *ardentiore*, “more burning”. His translation of *idipsum* as “Self-in-Self”, however, is significant because it hints at Augustine’s recognition of God within the inner self in Book X.

Augustine describes this inner search further: *et adhuc ascendebamus interius cogitando et loquendo et mirando opera tua. et venimus in mentes nostras et transcendimus eas*, “ascending higher, within ourselves, to speech and questioning and admiring such works, we encounter our own minds and go beyond them” (*Aug. Conf. IX. x. 24*; p. 201 Wills).<sup>42</sup> Augustine refers to this inner search for God as an ascent and transcendence of the mind, but it is important to note that this “ascent” is different from the Platonic notion of the ascent of soul from the body, but pertains to an investigation beyond the surface of the mind to a higher place where God resides. This higher place is understood as internal, not the Platonic external: when Augustine and Monnica transcend the material world and the heavens, they arrive within their own minds (*Conf. IX. x. 24*). Augustine’s vision at Ostia is significant because it marks Augustine’s first movement beyond the material and beyond the external, to the internal search for God, which appropriately dovetails into the theme of Book X.

Monnica’s death shortly after their vision at Ostia is significant to Book X for two reasons. First because her death forces and empowers Augustine to continue to

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<sup>42</sup> *Cogitando*, *loquendo*, and *mirando* are all ablatives of means. Though Wills translates them as “to speech and questioning and admiring” the literal translation is “through (or by means of) speech and questioning and admiring”. It should also be noted that Wills translates *opera tua* as “such works”, when the literal is “your works” (“your” understood as God’s).

understand the inner search for God. Monnica urged her son to return to the Christian faith and they experience this internal desire and/or realization together at Ostia. Stock, in his discussion of Augustine's *de Ordine*, acknowledges Monnica's practice of "ascent" to God: "Her example teaches us that an unschooled soul can rise above the body and reach great heights within itself" and further notes that she demonstrates this best in their vision at Ostia, following a desire to reach God internally (148). This suggests that Monnica served as an influence and inspiration for Augustine's internal search for God; therefore I merely suggest that he may have or feel an obligation to further conceptualize this place within. Augustine's loyalty to his mother, however, is not the sole or primary reason for his innovative insights, but may have been a contributing factor to the early process of the internal search. Second, regarding Augustine's immense grief as a result of his mother's death and his trust in the Christian faith, O'Donnell suggests the following: "accepting Christianity does not eradicate grief, but perhaps transforms it from hopeless to hopeful. As a young man searching for truth, A. might have regarded so subtle a shift as inadequate: if that were all Christianity offered, he might as well reject it" (vol. III, p. 138). Augustine may be unsatisfied with some elements of the Christian faith, but in his grief and in his devotion to his mother, he is compelled to continue his search for God and truth internally and therefore dedicates Book X to doing so.

Before any discussion of Book X, I must emphasize Augustine's understanding of soul and self as separate entities. It is sometimes unclear in his own language or in translations of his work that they are separate. Soul (*anima*), self (*animus*; the literal translation is actually not "self" but mind, consciousness, intellect), and mind (*mens*) may at times seem interchangeable, and Augustine is not always consistent. This

inconsistency may be due to a lack of word for self. Augustine therefore must resort to using *animus*, pronouns such as *ipse*, and use of the phrase *interior homo*, which seems to come closest to a term for “inner self”. But Augustine does draw a distinction between self and soul and that distinction must be drawn here. There is no specific point in the text where he makes the clear distinction, but as he develops his understanding of the inner self, and understands self as memory, he is able to separate soul from self. He understands self, therefore, as the substance of memory, whereas soul is understood as the immortal and preexistent component of a being.<sup>43</sup>

In Book X of the *Confessions*, Augustine attempts to move from past to present self and reconcile his search for God and truth internally. He does so by conceptualizing the inner self, which he believes resides in memory. He concludes that the passing of time can hide this self from himself, and therefore he can only be the sum total of his memories and anything he can recover about himself from memory by means of the divine light. In order to recover this inner self and find God and truth, he realizes that he must self-examine in order for God to shine a light on the hidden recesses of his mind and so bring him insight into God and truth.

When Augustine conceptualizes God as part of the inner self in memory on an intellectual level, he ends Book X, turning his full attention and fascination to finding the Word of God in reading Scripture: *ecce, domine, iacto in te curam meam, ut vivam, et considerabo mirabilia de lege tua*: “Behold, oh Lord, I cast my trouble onto you, so that I may live, and I will consider the wonders that come from your law” (Aug. *Conf.* X.

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<sup>43</sup> Professor Stock says Augustine is working out the notion of self in the *Confessions* (I see this as a possible reason for Augustine’s inconsistency with the terms soul, self, and mind). Stock also noted that soul is timeless, whereas self is circumstantial and that Augustine is trying to “work out the salvaging of the soul through the self”.

xxxxiii. 70, my translation). His desire to throw his worries into God's hands and to analyze Scripture establishes the shift from Book X to Books XI-XIII. O'Donnell notes the shift at the end of Book X to present tense: *et laudant dominum qui requirunt eum*, my translation: "and they praise the Lord, those who seek Him" (Aug. *Conf. X. xxxiii. 70*). "Now at the real present moment of the *Confessions*, on the cusp between Bks. 10 and 11, the praise is real and present and continuing" (O'Donnell, vol. III, p. 249). He further notes the "present-ness" at the start of Book XI; Augustine shifts from analysis of memory to a present analysis of Scripture. And though this seems to be a significant change in focus, "A. does not turn his back on the intellectual ascent of the mind to God; he now pursues it in a different way" (O'Donnell, vol. III, p. 250).

Augustine's purpose in Books XI-XIII is to reconcile the interiority (Christ and God as internal) he has just conceptualized in Book X to the Christian tradition of God as external. He is trying to make a radical notion fit with more traditional theological notions. He does so by looking closely at the Genesis on Creation and analyzing the Holy Trinity as an allegory for the different roles of God, which are "contrasted at every stage in these books within the condition of the human creature, in whom the image and likeness of the triune God is reflected" (O'Donnell, vol. III, p. 251). This allows him to reconcile Christ and God as an internal part of humanity,<sup>44</sup> not as external beings that humans, more specifically Christians, constantly reach for. Book XI focuses on the Father component of the Holy Trinity with Father understood as Origin and Wisdom and as the basis of humanity's origin. Book XII focuses on the Son component of the Holy Trinity, with Son understood as Form. Before Form, humanity was without shape, color,

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<sup>44</sup> "Humanity" is O'Donnell's word choice in reference to Augustine's analysis of the role of God within an individual.

or beauty. Book XIII focuses on the Spirit component of the Holy Trinity with Spirit understood as Love—humanity’s love for God.

A crucial component of Books XI-XIII, most heavily weighted in Book XI, is Augustine’s conceptualization of the nature of time. O’Daly notes that Augustine does not come to a strict definition of time, but rather carries out a thorough investigation and contemplation of time: “it is rather the total contrast between God’s transcendence of time and man’s anguished experience of dispersion and fragmentation in time that he wishes to emphasize” (152-153). He proposes the theory that the present may not actually exist because it passes away so quickly, thus enabling this “fragmentation” to occur: *si ergo praesens, ut tempus sit, ideo fit, quia in praeteritum transit, quomodo et hoc esse dicimus, cui causa, ut sit, illa est, quia non erit, ut scilicet non vere dicamus tempus esse, nisi quia tendit non esse?*, “But if the present is only a time because it is passing away, how can we say that it exists, since the reason for its existing as time is that it will soon not be, which means we can only say it exists because it is on its way to non-existence?” (Aug. *Conf.* XI. xiv. 17; p. 267 Wills). O’Daly comments further on Augustine’s theory of past and future: “Past and future are present in memory and expectation respectively. One may have access to past or future events: they are objects of intellectual perception and therefore exist in some way” (156). Augustine’s notion of time, therefore, relates to the notion of the present self as barely existent, a fragmentation of the self, before it becomes the past self. But Augustine’s understanding that the past is present in memory, which includes the self fleeing from present to past, explains Augustine’s investigation of the inner self as an attempt to recover the past self. Augustine’s theory of time according to O’Daly is “without doubt one of the subtlest attempts to analyse the

phenomenon in antiquity” (152) and is inseparable from Augustine’s thoughts on memory.

To return to Book X. Augustine attempts to shift his focus to his present self in Book X after reflecting on his past for nine books: *nam illum fructum vidi et commemoravi. sed quis adhuc sim, ecce in ipso tempore confessionum mearum, et multi hoc nosse cupiunt qui me noverunt et non me noverunt*, “I have recognized and recorded what use was testimony to my past. Yet many have asked about my condition at this moment of my testifying—both those who know me and those who do not know me personally” (Aug. *Conf.* X. iii. 4, p. 212-213 Wills). *Ipsa tempore* is therefore referring to his present state. In Books I-IX he recalls each of his past experiences, those that he remembers. The focus of Book X is to continue his internal search for God and in doing so to investigate the unknown inner self : *quia etsi nemo scit hominum quae sunt hominis, nisi spiritus hominis qui in ipso est, tamen est aliquid hominis quod nec ipse scit spiritus hominis qui in ipso est. tu autem, domine, scis eius omnia, quia fecisti eum*, “Though ‘no one can know what is within but a man’s own spirit, which is also within,’ there are some inner depths not even the man’s own spirit can know, while you, who made those depths, know them through and through” (Aug. *Conf.* X. v. 7; p. 214 Wills). This inner part of his self is what he struggles to understand and convey in his internal search for God.

Deviating from the traditional Christian view that God is found externally and the Word is represented through the “fleshy” Christ Cary speaks of, Augustine looks for God internally and understands Him to be found in this inner space within the self.<sup>45</sup> And God

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<sup>45</sup> It is important to acknowledge here the fundamental Augustinian position (also a Platonic position) that you cannot search for something without having some knowledge that it already exists: “*verum tamen si forte aliquid ab oculis perit, non a*

can only be discovered once Augustine has knowledge of his inner self through self-examination. And he can only reach this understanding of the inner self, however, with the presence of God within him. The search for God is therefore a circular process: God within aids in finding the self within that allows knowledge of God.

Though Augustine refers specifically to himself when discussing this process, he makes it known that he is sharing his understanding with an audience in mind, namely his fellow Christians: *confitear...in auribus credentium filiorum hominum* “that I may give testimony to the ears of the sons of men who believe” (Aug. *Conf.* X. iv. 6, my translation).

The following analysis of Book X of the *Confessions* and Augustine’s conceptualization of inner self through his understanding of memory seeks to establish its difference from Platonic “soul talk” as well as its significance and relation to the development of modern psychology. Harmless identifies Book X as a “book-length

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*memoria, veluti corpus quodlibet visibile, tenetur intus imago eius et quaeritur, donec reddatur aspectui. quod cum inventum fuerit, ex imagine quae intus est recognoscitur. nec invenisse nos dicimus quod perierat, si non agnoscimus, nec agnoscere possumus, si non meminimus; sed hoc perierat quidem oculis, memoria tenebatur,* “If we happen to lose sight of a thing, but not the memory of it, its representation is preserved within, and it is searched for till restored to sight. Then it is recognized by matching it with its internal representation. We could not say we had found what was lost if we did not recognize it, and we could not recognize it without the memory of it, since it was lost to sight but not to memory” (Aug. *Conf.* X. xviii. 27; p. 228 Wills). In Augustine’s realization that God exists internally, he does so by realizing that God exists within memory. In saying that He exists within memory does not suggest that memory is the only place He exists, but that you can recall truths about God from memory. And therefore, when searching for God, you know that it is God when you find Him because He is embedded in your memory. Augustine is therefore by no means dismissing the external reality of God, but recognizing that God’s existence internally, within memory, allows one to identify and understand all truths about God. Theologians (for example Philip Cary) may oppose Augustine’s view here (God and Christ as mediator existing internally) because it is different from the historical Christian understanding of the presence of God through the resurrected Christ (Word made Flesh).

meditation on memory and the mysterious depths of human consciousness” (31).<sup>46</sup>

English translation cannot always convey the nuances of Augustine’s text, so I will discuss specific passages in reference to the Latin text.

Book X begins with Augustine addressing God, and with his reasons for confession to God.<sup>47</sup> He wills him to enter his soul so that it can be untainted, enabling it to understand and practice truth, for *quoniam qui facit eam venit ad lucem* ““whoever enacts truth comes to the light”” (Aug. *Conf.* X. i. 1; p. 211 Wills). I understand this as an early realization for Augustine about his inner self: this light is the light God shines upon the inner depths of the self as one undergoes self-examination as a means of finding God and truth. This recognition of God’s light begins the process of this realization. Brown notes Augustine’s recognition of the magnitude of this inner space on which God shines light: “For Augustine...the sheer size of the inner world was a source of anxiety quite as much as strength. The conscious mind was ringed with shadows” (174).

In order for Augustine to delve into this internal search for God, he must identify the role of God’s presence in his search. God, according to Augustine, is the *virtus animae meae*: “the virtue (or strength) of my soul” (Aug. *Conf.* X.i.1, my translation). Wills translates *virtus* here as “invigorator”. *Virtus* is essentially that which makes something what it truly is (corresponding to the Greek *arête*). The use *virtus* here, therefore, emphasizes God as the key component and essence of soul.<sup>48</sup> One can only

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<sup>46</sup> The first chapter in Harmless is dedicated to the *Confessions*. In this chapter he highlights and comments on passages he finds significant, three of which are from Book X.

<sup>47</sup> Wills translates *confessio* as “testimony” as opposed to a literal confession of guilt or wrong doings, as in the Catholic tradition.

<sup>48</sup> *Virtus* is not defined as “manliness” in this context, a meaning it can have in other contexts in reference to warfare and epic heroes.

understand the inner nature of the soul with God internally present: *tu refulges et places amaris et desideraris, ut...et nec tibi nec mihi placeam nisi de te*: “you are shining, you are delightful, you are loved and you are desired, and therefore I am not pleasing to you nor to me except through you” (Aug. *Conf.* X. ii. 2, my translation). Augustine’s purpose, therefore, is to investigate his inner self in order to obtain knowledge of God and self. And his expression above of his need for God demonstrates that he cannot pursue this investigation of God and self without His internal presence.<sup>49</sup>

In contemplating the inner self, though he has not reached full conceptualization of the novel notion of this interior space, he makes progress in his understanding in asking what it is about God that he loves.<sup>50</sup> He attempts to answer this question by saying that he does not love the physical attributes of God, but the spiritual attributes. This is demonstrated in his use of forms of *quidam* (“some sort of”) as a modifier: *amo quandam lucem et quandam vocem et quendam odorem et quendam cibum et quendam amplexum*: “I love a kind of light and a kind of voice and a kind of smell and a kind of food and a kind of embrace” (Aug. *Conf.* X. vi. 8, my translation). *Quendam* and *quandam* make clear that Augustine does not love light, smell, voice as concrete physical senses, but as spiritual senses. He says that each of these things (“kinds of” senses) are *interioris*

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<sup>49</sup> Augustine does not begin with this understanding of this need for God’s presence in order to know the inner self, but realizes this more and more as he investigates the self, beginning with “Who am I?” and progressing further until he comes to the realization that God’s existence in memory is necessary in order to gain self-knowledge.

<sup>50</sup> In investigating his inner self, Augustine searches for God. He expresses his love for God, while inquiring: *quid autem amo, cum te amo?* “But what do I love, when I love you?” (Aug. *Conf.* X. vi. 8). This demonstrates Augustine’s simplicity and direct expression of thought. Wills, on the other hand, uses a more superfluous phrase to express this simple question: “But what, in loving you, do I find lovable?” (p. 215 Wills). Wills’ translation is a bit vague; there is more clarity in Augustine’s own words.

*hominis mei* “of my inner self” (Aug. *Conf.* X. vi. 8, my translation).<sup>51</sup> These internal senses are parts of memory: *ita cetera quae per sensus ceteros ingesta atque congesta sunt recordor prout libet, et auram liliorum discerno a violis nihil olfaciens, et mel defrito, lene aspero, nihil tum gustando neque contrectando sed reminiscendo antepono*: “The variety of things, by my various senses selected and collected, are at my memory’s disposal. I can, while smelling nothing, identify the wafture from a lily, contrast it with that from a violet. While tasting or touching nothing, I prefer in memory honey to wine, smooth things to rough” (Aug. *Conf.* X. viii. 13; p. 219 Wills). Augustine’s understanding that such non-physical senses both reside in his *interior homo* and are components of memory, bring him closer to the realization that this *interior homo*, therefore, is within memory.

After his outward expression that he loves God in loving these internal senses, Augustine questions further his loving of these internal senses: *et quid est hoc?*, “And what is this?” (Aug. *Conf.* X. vi. 9, my translation) and he continues his search for God in order to answer this question. This is the point in the *Confessions* when Augustine consciously internalizes the search, actively looking within himself: *et direxi mihi, ‘tu quis es’, et respondi, ‘homo’*, “and I directed [this question] toward myself and I asked myself, ‘Who are you?’, and I responded, ‘A man’” (Aug. *Conf.* X. vi. 9). Augustine is recognizing himself as mortal, who therefore has limitations. Approaching the question

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<sup>51</sup> Wills diminishes Augustine’s literal image here in taking *interior hominis mei* as “all of them deep within me” (p. 215 Wills). He lessens the significance of the bold reference to interior homo, therefore lessening the significance of this crucial point in the *Confessions*, when this concept is the basis of Augustine’s understanding of self and God.

of “what is this inner self” by first addressing his mortality, demonstrates his need to admit his limitations in order to begin self-examination and the *internal* search for God.

Now that Augustine has addressed his limitations, he can continue the internal search. He begins his advanced discussion on the role of memory. Books I-IX are a recollection of his past memories that reveal who he was prior to his writing of the *Confessions*. He is now struggling to find the inner self (where these internal senses of his memory reside) which, he is about to realize, resides in memory as well: *et venio in campos et lata praetoria memoriae*: “and I come into the fields and vast palaces of my memory” (Aug. *Conf.* X. viii. 12, my translation). Through deep examination of his fields of memory, Augustine believes he can recover a memory and obtain truth about his inner self and God: “His goal is to survey memory’s contents in his search for the presence within his memory of God” (Stock 2010, 215).

Augustine comes close to identifying the role of memory in this line: *ibi mihi et ipse occurro*<sup>52</sup> *meque recolo*: “there I myself come up against myself and I revisit myself” (Aug. *Conf.* X. viii. 14, my translation).<sup>53</sup> And he comes to his complete conclusion in this statement : *ego sum qui memini, ego animus*, my translation: I am the one who remembers, I [am] my mind” (Aug. *Conf.* X. xvi. 25), though Chadwick gives

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<sup>52</sup> O’Donnell’s commentary on *Conf.* X. viii. 14, specifically *ibi mihi et ipse occurro*: “The metaphor is spatial, but should not distract from what A. is trying to say: that memory, which is in some sense the self, is the place in which the self experiences itself. The sense of alienation implicit in ‘meeting’ oneself in memory is not minimized” (vol. III, p. 178).

<sup>53</sup> Wills translates this phrase as: “where I bump up against myself, when I call back what I did” (p. 219 Wills). His use of “bump up against” fits the literal meaning of *occurro*, but he does not capture the meaning of *recolo* (“when I call back what I did”) effectively because Augustine is trying to convey that the known self only consists of memory.

an even better translation: “It is I who remember, I who am mind” (p. 193 Chadwick).<sup>54</sup> He is concluding, therefore, that self is memory—he is the sum total of his memory. He is further answering the question “Who am I?” here, by concluding “I am the one who remembers” or “has memories.” O’Daly comments on this realization: “Augustine maintains that our remembered experiences go to make up the fabric of our personal identity as historical individuals” and continues by saying that Augustine’s understanding of memory assumes that one only knows who he is through self-knowledge: “our identity is the identity of which we ourselves are conscious” (148). Augustine’s goal in self-examining and searching through memory, therefore, is to shine light on this inner self, hidden within the recesses of memory, gradually bringing it to consciousness.

In my interview with Professor Pucci, he provided some specific thoughts on Augustine’s notion of the inner self and internal investigation. Pucci says that Augustine’s inner self begins as a narrow space and as his autobiographical accounts and conceptualizations of self unravel, God gradually fills the space, so his soul<sup>55</sup> becomes broader. Pucci identifies Augustine’s articulation of soul in Book I<sup>56</sup> as his best and the first evidence of an interior space existing within the self that God can inhabit: *angusta es domus animae meae quo venias ad eam: dilatetur abs te*, “my soul is ‘too cramped for

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<sup>54</sup> Stern-Gillet (2007) identifies that in this same passage, Augustine struggles to reach this conclusion and it does not come easily: *Ego certe, domine, laboro hic et laboro in me ipso*, “Here I labor at hard material, Lord, and I am that material” (Aug. Conf. X. xvi. 25). She further claims: “The difficulties recorded in these lines are undoubtedly those of investigative introspection” (24).

<sup>55</sup> Let it be noted that Professor Pucci understands inner self and soul to be interchangeable terms. I use “soul” here in order to stay true to Professor Pucci’s thoughts, though I still understand soul and self to be two separate entities.

<sup>56</sup> Pucci understands Augustine’s conceptualization of the inner self as a comprehensive process that had to begin at the start of the text in order for his full conceptualization to work in Book X.

you to enter it – widen it out” (Aug. *Conf.* I. v. 6, p. 5 Wills). This broader space then reveals shadows and hidden places that could not be seen when the soul was narrow.<sup>57</sup>

In his realization of memory as self, Augustine further pursues the idea of God’s existence in memory. He wonders if God inhabits a tangible space within the mind, since he finds himself seeking where God lies in memory, suggesting that there is an actual place.<sup>58</sup> I am compelled to look closer into Augustine’s consideration of there being a reserved space for God within mind and memory. This becomes more and more characteristic of Augustine’s theory of self and God and I have made the following distinction: Augustine considers God as a *component* of the inner self (understanding God as internal) rather than just a *creator* of the inner self (understanding God as external).

I recognize Augustine’s understanding of God’s existence in memory, but also his more theological standpoint that God exists outside of memory as well. It is necessary to acknowledge this theological view in order to separate it from the psychological value of Augustinian introspection. Book X focuses on God as internal within memory. Books XI-XIII, however, focus on God as Creator and his existence external from the self:

*audiam et intellegam quomodo in principio fecisti caelum et terram*: “May I listen so as to grasp how ‘in the origin you made heaven and earth’” (Aug. *Conf.* XI. iii.5; p. 260

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<sup>57</sup> Early in Book X Augustine expresses his hopes for the shadows of his inner self to be revealed, because light shines on what he knows about himself (through memory), and for what he does not know (inner self), there is darkness: *confitear ergo quid de me sciam, confitear et quid de me nescio, tamdiu nescio, donec fiant tenebrae meae sicut meridies in vultu tuo*, “Both what I know about myself and what I do not know will therefore be my testimony to you, since what I know I have seen by your light, and what I do not know is from my own darknesses, not yet scattered by your noonday gaze” (Aug. *Conf.* X. v. 7, p. 214 Wills).

<sup>58</sup> *Sed ubi manes in memoria mea, domine, ubi illic manes?*, “But where in memory can you be lodged, Lord, where lodge you there?” (Aug. *Conf.* X. xxv. 36, p. 233 Wills).

Wills). The Biblical reference establishes the shift in focus to the theological notion of God as creator of the external world. God created everything that exists physically and spiritually in human beings: *tu fabro corpus, tu animum membris imperitantem fecisti*, “You are the creator of the artist’s body, of the soul that works its limbs” (Aug. *Conf.* XI. v. 7; p. 261 Wills). Augustine needs to address his theological standpoint and his understanding of God as Creator while also maintaining God’s existence as external from the self as according to Christian tradition. This understanding is separate from his psychological understanding of God’s existence in memory, though His external existence relates to this because though God can exist in memory, he is not “one” with the individual nor does that individual become God because of his external existence. It is important to address this connection and acknowledge Augustine’s theological consideration in order to stress the separateness of this acknowledgment of God’s external reality and his radical notion of the inner self.

I will conclude by connecting Augustine’s conceptualization of the inner self and memory to my understanding of modern psychology, namely introspection and cognitive psychology, in the following conclusion.

## CONCLUSION

Augustine's brilliant conceptualization of the inner self corresponds to the basis of modern psychology—Wundt's theory of introspection. Augustine's advanced understanding that one can self-examine and search within memory to recover information about self and God relates to the early psychological practice of introspection: a thorough internal analysis of thoughts and emotions. Even before establishing this inward turn with the vision at Ostia and carrying it through to Book X, Augustine is constantly aware of his own thoughts, emotions, and actions, whether reflecting on his past or coming to the realization that such self-examination can be achieved within the present self.

The component of memory and Augustine's understanding of self as memory provides the basis for his internal analysis. If self is memory, in order to recover consciously unknown information about the inner self, he or she must search within memory. But recognizing the existence of this inner self and thoroughly examining this inner self in order to gain a conscious understanding and remembrance of it is most directly related to Wundt's introspection.

Psychology, similar to any science, is always advancing. Introspection is considered the basis of modern psychology and is undoubtedly significant to the early

developments of the field, but is not used today as more advanced practices have taken its place. Cognitive psychology is a more elaborate, scientific study of people's internal thoughts and mental processes, focusing not only on self-reports, but also on the thorough experimental study of the thought processes (which included memories) of others. Cognitive psychology, to a certain extent, can be considered an advanced and more presently relevant practice of introspection. Taking the direct relationship between Augustinian introspection and Wundt's introspection, it can be concluded that Augustinian introspection acts as a precursor to the current practice of cognitive psychology. This connection emphasizes Augustine's essential presence in the study of the history and early developments of contemporary psychology.

The separation of Augustine's theory of inner self from the so-called "Platonic psychology" further stresses the innate difference between Platonic theories of self and soul and modern psychology, while establishing Augustine's place within the history of modern psychology. First and foremost, "Platonic psychology" is not in fact psychology, and is concerned with the preexisting and immortal soul, examining the *parts* of the soul or self, whereas Augustine focuses on how to recover the *entire* self given problems of memory. And this is the focus of modern psychology; there are no parts of soul in the study of psychology, but only the whole self, which is thoroughly examined on a variety of levels to determine its specific nature and functioning. Though Platonic and neo-Platonic theory and the like undoubtedly influenced Augustine, it is important to recognize his theory of inner self as separate, more advanced, and uniquely his *own*.

As noted throughout this thesis, there is some apparent ambivalence and/or inconsistency as Augustine unravels this complex internal phenomenon. For example, he

is at times inconsistent with his use of soul and self (*anima, animus, mens*) as there is no actual Latin word for self. In addition, in the midst of his internal search he is still questioning himself and God as he struggles to recover his unknown self. This suggests that Augustine did not necessarily predict this outcome of identifying an inner self and understanding how to examine it in his writing of the *Confessions*. He is clearly still wrestling with the idea of self as memory and God as inhabiting memory. This can generate difficulty for the reader in trying to decipher what Augustine is actually trying to convey, when he may still be questioning and surprising himself as he writes.

Interestingly enough, Professor Pucci labels Augustine's writing style as premeditative, relating the *Confessions* to Freudian free association in that Augustine talks and works himself through his thoughts on self, soul, God, and his life experience. This further suggests the innovative nature of Augustine's conceptualization of inner self, in that he is identifying and trying to understand this internal phenomena as he writes.

Many Augustinian scholars have addressed the psychological nature of the *Confessions*, though only in the general sense and not in the specific context of my argument. It is important to acknowledge, however, their recognition of Augustine's contribution to the field. As he explained to me, Professor Stock definitely advocates for Augustine's position as a contributor to the basis of modern psychology, and argues that he should have a presence in introductory psychology books because he emerges at the end of this tradition of Platonic "psychology" and is the first to talk about self and this inner self as a completely separate entity from soul. In the introduction of his translation of the *Confessions*, Wills makes the blatant statement: "Since human beings are made in God's image, God can be understood by the only through self-observation, a deep

probing of one's own makeup that has made some people call Augustine the father of modern psychology" (xii). In O'Donnell's introduction, he notes that psychological investigations of the *Confessions* are lacking and that there should be more recognition of its relation to the field (vol. I, xxx-xxxii).

It is also important to recognize that though Augustine's internal investigation is driven by his search for God, it is the actual identification and examination of the inner self that is relevant to modern psychology. Regardless of an individual's religious affiliation (or non-affiliation), Augustine's psychological inquiry is impressive.

The direct relationship of Augustine's inner self to the basis of modern psychology—introspection, and further the indirect relationship of this Augustinian introspection to the more advanced contemporary study of cognitive psychology, confirms that Augustine contributes to the fundamental basis of modern psychology. The *Confessions* belongs in introductory psychology textbooks. As a student of psychology, I would argue that the *Confessions* introduces historical perspectives on psychology necessary for understanding the fundamental basis of psychology from which one can build up from in pursuing further study in the field. In addition to portraying such early developments of modern and still relevant psychological theories, the *Confessions* also emphasize the relevance of Classical study to contemporary psychology and more broadly its relevance to modern society. The Classics are not merely a glimpse into languages, traditions, and additional realities of the past, but provide invaluable insight into our intellectual progression, the seemingly unchanging norms of humanity, and the evolution of human thinking.

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