

THE CONCEPT OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN BOOK I OF AUGUSTINE'S *CONFESSIONS*

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Introduction:

The Contemporary Relevance of an Augustinian Theory of Child Development

1 Book I of Augustine's *Confessions*⁽¹⁾ contains a remarkable account of child development. The maturation from infancy to later childhood is presented in its relation to the Trinitarian spiritual principle which animates human life, which is both the principle of its creation and the end which it seeks. Augustine's account is thus vibrant and exacting because it has hold of the objective principle of human subjectivity, because it knows the spiritual logic of the development of human reason and will.

2 It is this comprehensive standpoint which allows Augustine to speak vividly to those in our own time, which accounts for his attractiveness to those who profess either modernity or post-modernity, and which in its full development allows us to profess both.⁽²⁾ Augustine's portrait of child development does not fall into the trap of confining the contours of the human spirit to the patterns of his own specific social world. Were this the case he might be thought a guide to the cultural practices of North Africa under Roman dominion in the fourth century A.D. As such he might offer a sociology of child development but not a philosophy, and the significance of his account would be merely historical.

3 It is a genuine difficulty of our time to find in speculative thought a freedom which cannot be reduced to such social-psychological parameters. The contemporary reader of the *Confessions*, then, faces a difficult confrontation with a text which advances an infinite spiritual logic unfettered by contingent cultural structures which is by its own account the determinate principle by which we would understand the truth of all social engagement. Where the determinate expression of practical life extends no further than the production and acquisition of goods and the creativity of an unbounded aesthetic will, fueled by the moralism which either upholds or desecrates these expressions, one will find philosophical thought foreign and estranged from itself.

4 Paradoxically it is only if we adhere to our own world view as some finite absolute, beyond the purported oppression embedded in the western tradition that we have ground to reject Augustinian principles. But such thought merely replaces one absolute for another. Further the absolute thus constricted within the horizon of the finite is the political order.⁽³⁾ And, absent any common ethical good to make determinate its direction,

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the political order loses its distinction from economic life. Contemporary theory inadequately self-conscious of its conceptual replication of such an emaciated institutional ethic will reduce the individual to a consumer whose freedom is mere choice among competing products or will rail vainly against the inhumanity of such a consumptive ethic while remaining singularly unable to produce a viable alternative beyond the politics of protest.

5 Both sides of this contemporary dogmatism are confined within a radically finite absolute, unable in principle to advance a concrete institutional life which would adequately unite human equality and freedom. As such they are condemned to mimic the economic ebb and flow they variously embrace or deny.

6 We do not find in Augustine's thought an account of institutional life which can invigorate and comprehend contemporary divisions: there is in his thought a decidedly polemical attitude to political life. Our contemporary reflection, however, will find in Augustinian psychology a conception of the individual which holds together the universal and particular dimensions of reason and will. From the standpoint of human subjectivity and its objective divine principle Augustine provides a rigorous psychology of freedom; a freedom whose absolute end implicitly contains that which is beyond all social construct and which is its measure.

7 To learn from Augustine, then, we must admit into our various histories of western subjectivity that which does not fall into the divisions of ancient and modern or modern and post-modern. The contemporary interest in Augustine's thought contains just this promise. In this spirit the present argument treats of Book I according to the following structure⁽⁴⁾:

(1) **Chapters i-v** Intimations of Trinity

(2) **Chapters vi-vii** The Natural Relation to God and its Limit

(3) **Chapters viii-xx** Education and the Division of Reason and Nature
This section has two major divisions.

(i) **viii-xv** Language and the Divided Will

(ii) **xvi-xx** Christianity and the Principle of Child Development

(1) Intimations of the Trinity

8 There is in the *Confessions* the difficulty that the logic which informs the whole work is not given explicit statement until the final four books. However, this logic is given in condensed and introductory form in Book I, **Chapters i-v** here considered in brief. The *Confessions* begins in prayerful reflection upon Scripture, in a direct address to the creator by the creature. It is a confession not only of the difference of the creature

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from the creator, of human mortality and sinfulness, but also of the unity between God and man, a confession of praise for the spiritual order in which man finds himself and in which the division between God and man belongs to and is comprehended by the divine providence. This logic of division and return structures the *Confessions* as a whole. Augustine states: "'You are great, Lord, and highly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom is immeasurable'. Man, a little piece of your creation, desires to praise you, a human 'bearing his mortality with him', carrying with him the witness of his sin and the witness that you 'resist the proud'"(I,i,1).

9 Our difference from God is defined in terms of our immersion in nature: as natural beings we die, as desirous of natural objects without reference to their place in the ethical order, we sin. But even in the immediacy of human nature (its mortality and sinfulness) there is implicit what is beyond the division between creator and creature. There is in man not only a falling away from the divine principle but at the same time a movement towards that principle: "You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you"(I,i).⁽⁵⁾ What from a finite standpoint is in the division of fall and return, from a divine standpoint is already reconciled and manifest in the Incarnation and in the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Through this objective order the subject is called to make explicit his own implicit unity with God in reflection on the image of the trinity present in human self-consciousness and freedom.⁽⁶⁾ In this calling, the Word spoken is both what stirs the individual and that toward which he is stirred. The inner desire to praise God, a desire which animates the human mind as image of the trinity, finds its objective historical completion in the Incarnation and the Church. This completion in its first form is faith, of which, Augustine, addressing God, states: "You breathed it into me by the humanity of your Son, by the ministry of your preacher"(I,i).

10 But how are we to come to a philosophical understanding of the content of this faith? Faith allows Augustine to call on God, to confess, but how is the content of this faith, the unity of God and man, possible.

11 This is the question at the heart of the first five chapters. In **Chapters ii and iii**, Augustine considers further the relation of creator to creature. From this standpoint God appears as the principle of all that exists and the creative power that brings all into existence. Augustine states: "Without you whatever exists would not exist." Further: "I would have no being unless you were in me. Or rather, I would have no being if I were not in you 'of whom are all things, through whom are all things, in whom are all things'"(I,ii). God as creator is the principle of the being of all that exists. Thus at the level of being, natural and spiritual, there is unity with God, in some sense we are in God. But what is the nature of this unity?

12 Conceived as creator, God is the immutable, inviolable and unchanging source of all reality. In **Chapter iii**, Augustine raises questions of those accounts which would conceive the *logos* as corporeal or as simply immanent, and in which the divine transcendence is lost in the immediacy of pantheism. His remarks here foreshadow his sustained treatment of this question throughout the *Confessions* and especially in Book

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VII. There he provides a vivid account of the limits of his own concept of God prior to his encounter with platonism. He states: "I conceived even you, life of my life, as a large being, permeating infinite space on every side, penetrating the entire mass of the world, and outside this extending in all directions for immense distances without end; so earth had you, heaven had you, everything had you, and in relation to you all was finite; but you not so"(VII,i).

13 For Augustine such a standpoint can render intelligible neither man's inner freedom (a freedom which involves sinfulness) nor the transcendence of nature by God and man. Again in Book VII he states: "I did not see that the mental power by which I formed these images does not occupy any space, though it could not form them unless it were some great thing"(VII,i). The first part of **Chapter iv** (Book I) asserts in condensed form the answer to 'pantheism' which Augustine finds in the platonic philosophy. The transcendence of God as the cause of nature must be upheld. The second part of the chapter goes beyond the division of transcendence and immanence. There is in this part the suggestion of Christ as redeemer: "You pay off debts though owing nothing to anyone, you cancel debts and incur no loss"(I,iv, 4). **Chapter v**, then, makes explicit that the unity between God and man revealed in Christ is not to be conceived in relation to corporeal substance but in terms of spiritual substance. The question is not of the relation of God to time and space but to human inwardness, here, specifically to the human will which itself transcends the corporeal, while nevertheless being embodied in it. It is not our natural distinction from God, our mortality, which is the focus but our spiritual division from God, our sinfulness. It is in human consciousness, not in the externality of the natural world that the true return to unity with God occurs.⁽⁷⁾ "Who will grant me that you come into my heart and intoxicate it, so that I forget my evils and embrace my one and only good, yourself"(I,v,5)?

14 It is not simply in terms of God as the cause or *logos* of nature but as the salvation of man that the *Confessions* are ordered. Beyond the "pride of the platonists," Augustine knows his dependence on the divine revelation: "In your mercies Lord God, tell me what you are to me. 'Say to my soul, I am your salvation.'"(I,v,5). What is required is that the divine word reveal itself to man as his salvation, so that man can embrace God with his entire will. The possibility of this conversion rests on the unity of all division in God's Trinitarian nature. It is this Trinitarian concept which underlies Augustine's conception of child development.

2) Chapters vi-vii - Nature as the Immediate Unity of God and Man (Infancy)

15 Man's relation to nature is immediate so far as he is not aware of nature as created and ordered by divine law. Thus, infants are born into a divine order to which they relate only in terms of their natural needs. They are nurtured without any awareness of the ultimate source of the natural world and fit into this order naturally: "You granted me not to wish for more than you were giving, and to my nurses the desire to give me what you gave them" (I,vi,7). Their awareness of the order is expressed in their natural instincts:

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"For at that time I knew nothing more than how to suck and to be quieted by bodily delights, and to weep when I was physically uncomfortable" (I,vi,7).

16 However, this relation to the divine order is an inadequate union, because man does not freely and self-consciously know and will his relation to God. The absence of language has as its result an absence of memory as one cannot store oneself as an object to oneself in the "warehouse" unless image be stabilized into idea. Augustine states: "I do not know where I came from but the consolations of your mercies upheld me, as I have heard from the parents of my flesh, him from whom and her in whom you formed me in time. For I do not remember" (I,vi,7). But while the infant is immersed in an unconscious natural immediacy, this immediacy is itself mediated not only by its divine source but also in history by the institutional order of the family. Family life requires self-sacrifice and the discipline of one's natural urges.⁽⁸⁾ Whereas natural comfort has an implicit spiritual end, in the family humans are engaged in an explicitly spiritual activity.⁽⁹⁾

17 The mention of smiling has a similar transitional structure. There is at once a natural satisfaction and a sense of that in man which is beyond nature.⁽¹⁰⁾ In this emergence out of an original natural immediacy there is a more than natural discomfort. There occurs in the child a divided rationality an inability to communicate that which he wishes to communicate: "Little by little I began to be aware where I was and wanted to manifest my wishes to those who could fulfill them as I could not" (I,vi,8).

18 So far as this division is at the level of reason, it expresses the distinction of the human infant from nature. However, so far as the child is not conscious of his own rationality, it is distinguished from the divine reason and self-consciousness. So while the emerging rationality of the infant cannot be satisfied in its merely natural relations, this rationality is not itself adequate to the divine principle which underlies it. As such, the development of human rationality in its finite and subjective dimension is temporal and historical its life-stages come to be and pass away. This transition occurs because nature, like human reason, is not an end-in-itself and is divided in relation to its principle which is its origin and final cause. There is then in the infant a division between his being, living, and knowing, by contrast with God in whose Trinitarian substance and its self-relation all such division is comprehended.⁽¹¹⁾ This distinction between reason and nature as yet not fully explicit in the child's consciousness is nevertheless the basis of sin. As an infant, one does not know the divine order but nevertheless thrusts one's own will against this order. Augustine speaks of three infantile sins: (a) unmeasured crying: the infant cries even for things that would harm him; (b) tantrums: the infant attempts to force people to obey him; (c) jealousy: the infant is unable adequately to share what is given in the created order.⁽¹²⁾ The importance of this division between reason and nature does not come out in its full subjective significance until Book Eight where its reconciliation is the structure of Augustine's conversion.⁽¹³⁾

(3) Chapters viii-xx - Education and the Division of Reason and Nature (Childhood)

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19 In his emergence from a natural immersion and rational immaturity, it is necessary that the child move to an explicit distinction between his natural and rational desire.⁽¹⁴⁾ Such a division permits the child to make both his appetites and his ideas objects of his reflection and to will them freely. On Augustine's account, civic education has as its first role to discipline the individual in his natural immediacy and implicit rationality into an explicit opposition of reason and nature, an opposition which cannot be reconciled except the child be 'educated' to an awareness of the spiritual *telos* of his own inward self-consciousness. What is primary here is that through education in reading and writing, the child is moved beyond the natural society of the family into the universality of the civil realm. The first stage of this development involves the child in a division between his particular pleasures and the universality of social rules. These are the sins of 'early childhood' in which one's natural will is directly thrust against what appears an externally imposed reason. Sin here consists of adherence to the natural pleasure one finds in games in opposition to the rational education one receives. As the child matures, however, he is able more fully to appropriate a content adequate to his own universal spiritual principle but likewise the division within his will is deepened.

(i) viii-xv - Language and the Divided Will⁽¹⁵⁾

20 Augustine's account of the education he received in his boyhood develops his conception of how it is that the child is liberated from his initial natural unity to a social unity beyond that present in his own natural family. This development makes it more explicit that there is in human spirituality a moment of opposition to nature which makes possible rational social unity, to be a member of society is to be educated into its customs and laws and is thus in principle beyond the givenness of nature. This development is made possible by the development of language implicit in the human mind. On Augustine's account, although the infant cannot speak, the power of speech is innate and becomes explicit as the child matures. The use of language introduces the child into a set of more universal relations beyond the immediacy of his own feelings. He can now reflect on his feelings and distinguish them from one another through the use of words. Also, he can treat feelings not simply as particular emotional states in which his consciousness is immersed but under the category of feeling. And he can make feeling an object for his consciousness, feelings can now be thought about and given direction by reason. Further, the child is freed, in part, from the inability to make the world correspond to his desires and the frustration this entails. Because he is still a boy, he is subject to his parents' authority and the satisfaction of his wants depends on whether or not they are approved by his parents. But, whereas in his infancy, his family could only become acquainted with what he expressed through the inadequate symbols he used, he can now make his meaning explicit to them, and his family can make their meanings explicit to him. Moreover, the child can communicate with people other than those in his family who had become acquainted with his infantile signs. He can talk to all those who speak his language and can become educated in the wisdom of his society. Thus he says: "[I] entered more deeply into the stormy society of human life"(I,viii,13).

21 On its own, however, grammatical skill and rhetorical eloquence, like all technique and art, are unable to reconcile the inner division of the child. Facility with

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language is in itself ethically indeterminate and abstract. Language does not of its own accord comprehend the purpose for which it is used -- it may be used for plays or for prayers. As a result, emotions cannot be adequately ordered by language. Hence one is immersed in the pleasures of the finite world and sin is the result. What emerges in the absence of concrete ethical institutions is the following ethical division. On the one side, what remains is a "legalistic" discipline with no higher purpose than its own order, itself a kind of enjoyment,⁽¹⁶⁾ which creates the conditions for sins it must then punish: "the amusement of adults is called 'business.' But when boys play such games they are punished by adults..."(I,ix,17). Augustine is constantly beaten because the beatings are to little effect and he continues to sin; likewise his masters are unable to control their anger and envy. But the contradictions involved in Roman education and society drive the youthful Augustine to look beyond these contradictions to their reconciliation in God. He contends that although the Roman order was sinful, it served a spiritual purpose, that is, the disciplining of the natural will. He notes that often, for his own good, God did not grant his prayers.⁽¹⁷⁾ On the other side, one is left with a merely aesthetic ethic. Caught in the abstract enchantment of imagination, one becomes immersed in a world of illusion, with the result that one is unconscious of the true condition of one's own soul. He states: "What is more pitiable than a wretch without pity for himself who weeps over the death of Dido dying for love of Aeneas, but not weeping over himself dying for his lack of love for you, my God, light of my heart, bread of the inner mouth of my soul, the power which begets life in mind and in the innermost recesses of my thinking"(I,xiii,20). But on what principle can the limitation of such education be judged?

(ii) xvi-xx Christianity and the Principle of Child Development

22 **Chapters xvi to xx** take up this question and examine the relation of ethical education to its underlying spiritual principle. From a merely finite perspective it is impossible adequately to conceptualize the principle which animates the spiritual development and ethical education of children -- inevitably the underlying principle will fall into internal oppositions. This is reflected in Augustine's portrayal of the Roman gods in **Chapters xvi and xvii**. In Roman religion the divine principle is divided, the multiplicity of Roman gods contrasting with the unity of the Christian God. Thus the harmony among the gods is contingent because subject to the whims of the particular gods. Further, this division in the divine will expresses itself in immorality: "Have I not read in you of Jupiter, at once both thunderer and adulterer"(I, xvi,25)? Although Jupiter is portrayed as a divine judge in that he "punishes the wicked", he is not sufficient to reconcile the rational will and the habits of the natural will because, in himself, he is not such an eternal unification. For Augustine, because it is not based in a sufficiently concrete spiritual principle, one adequate to the objective basis of human subjectivity, the Roman concept of God is merely the product of human imagination and is itself a form of drama or mythology. He states: "It would be truer to say that Homer indeed invented these fictions, but he attributed divine sanction to vicious acts, which had the result that immorality was no longer counted immorality and anyone who so acted would seem to follow the example not of abandoned men but of the gods in heaven"(I,xvi,25). Such divinities cannot in principle adequately correct human sin. The Roman concept of God reflects its human origin and, as the product of a divided will, is itself reduced to finitude.

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23 **Chapters xviii and xix** contrast the instability of the secular *ethos* with the ethical stability which emerges when one has as one's end a concrete spiritual principle in whose objectivity the division of reason and nature in the human will is reconciled. The divisions of Roman secular life result not only in individual instability, the product of the divided will, but also in the instability of Roman society. The formalism of an education which does not consider the rational spirituality that animates the human mind prevents the concrete unification of the divided will.⁽¹⁸⁾ Uninformed by a determinate ethical content, social laws and customs cannot make the will respond to its own universality, these laws will not comprehend and correct the division within man but rather will only serve to deepen it. The sins of 'later childhood' exhibit a deepening of sin as the child enters into the wider world. In **chapter xvii** we see the origins of these sins in the enthusiasm in which Augustine gives himself over to works of the imagination. But in the absence of a determinate ethical principle as the measure of imagination, what emerges is illusion, ultimately lying, stealing and cheating. Augustine states:

[I]n those endeavours I was the lowest of the low, shocking even the worldly set by the innumerable lies with which I deceived the slave who took me to school and my teachers and parents because of my love of games, my passion for frivolous spectacles, and my restless urge to imitate comic scenes. I also used to steal from my parents cellar and to pocket food from their table either to satisfy the demands of gluttony or to have something to give boys who, of course, loved playing games as much as I and who would sell me their playthings in return. Even in this game I was often overcome by the vain desire to win and was often guilty of cheating (I,xix,30).

Situated in society the child must mediate his pursuit of his particular pleasures through a relation to the social order. However, because that order wishes to correct his immersion in particular pleasures he must lie in order to achieve his ends. Here the child does not merely thrust his particular desires against rational rules but turns his reason against itself. The universality of reason has its objective expression in the reciprocity between individuals, a simple form of which is trust. When the child lies he both relies upon this trust and thwarts it. Likewise in stealing, the child claims possession of some object while denying the social ground of such possession, that is, the concept of property. Further, to play a game requires adherence to rules: to achieve victory through cheating both asserts and denies the rules at one and the same time, desiring victory to be recognized and usurping the rules under which such recognition is meaningful. This inwardness which rebels against objective principle has in itself a freedom which, caught in its own absolute wilfulness, cannot be reconciled with any social standard. Thus deepened, the sin of later childhood is hypocrisy in which the child refuses to consider his actions as having any universal dimension.⁽¹⁹⁾ Augustine states: "Any breach of rules I would not tolerate and, if I detected it, would fiercely denounce it, though it was exactly what I was doing to others"(I,xix,30). Augustine has thus acquired a degree of worldliness.

24 What is required is a determinate ethical principle such as is present in the Trinitarian conception of God which can command the indeterminacy of the free will. In

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terms of this principle all human finitude is known to belong within the activity of the spiritual substance which underlies its true development.⁽²⁰⁾ And this is a crucial point: the spiritual *telos* of child development is comprehensive even of sin: sin is not to be seen in mere opposition to God but as itself furthering His purposes. In the *City of God*, Augustine states: "God, as he is the supremely good creator of good natures, so is He of evil wills the most just Ruler; so that, while they make an evil use of good natures, He makes a good use of even evil wills. Accordingly, He caused the devil (good by God's creation, wicked by his own will) to be cast down from his high position and to become the mockery of His angels that is, He caused his temptations to benefit those whom he wishes to injure by them.... [W]hile God in His goodness created him good, He yet had already foreseen and arranged how he would make use of him when he became wicked"(XI,17). And further: "For God would never have created any, I do not say angel, but even man, whose future wickedness he foreknew, unless he had equally known to what uses in behalf of the good He could turn him, thus embellishing the course of the ages, as it were an exquisite poem set off with antitheses"(XI,18).⁽²¹⁾

25 **Chapter xx** ends Book I with a recapitulation of its logic expressing in general terms the transition from immersion in nature to a rational reflection on one's relation to nature and to its rational source. Our unity with the divine in both natural and rational terms is the product of the divine activity, a creative gift. The material gifts for which Augustine praises God are: existence, life, feeling, an instinct for self-preservation, and an inner organic harmony. The rational gifts for which Augustine praises God are pleasure in the truth and discomfort at being wrong, command of words which in the end would allow him to communicate the truths of Scripture, and enjoyment of the company of friends. Each stage of the reception of the divine gifts, each stage of child development, in other words, must pass through a phase of immediacy which reflects the maturity of the child. While children have a relation to truth, it first occurs at the level of pleasure: they are more concerned with how the truth makes them feel than with truth itself. Further, although the command of words allows the child to communicate to others, unless disciplined in relation to an objective spiritual end, language can serve only finite purposes, which in abstraction from such a principle inevitably become absurd, violent or pornographic.⁽²²⁾ Friendship indicates the possibility of a social order based on love and beyond the rhetoric of legal relations. It is important to see, however, that friendship can serve such a purpose only if related beyond itself to its own spiritual basis. The love of one's friends, like the love for one's spouse, must be subordinated to the love of God. It is a mark of the immediacy of such abstract unifications that they cannot reconcile the divided will and cannot correct sinfulness. Augustine states: "My sin consisted in this, that I sought pleasure, sublimity, and truth not in God but in his creatures, in myself and other created beings"(I,xx,31).⁽²³⁾ From this immediacy the child's growing rationality incurs a diremption through which he can reflect on the opposed moments of the self and can then know their reconciliation in a spiritual whole which is the source and end of all that exists, lives and knows. He concludes Book I: "I thank you for your gifts. Keep them for me, for in this way you will keep me. The talents you have given will increase and be perfected, and I will be with you since it was your gift to me that I exist"(I,xx,31).

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NOTES

1. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, Tr. Henry Chadwick, (Oxford University Press, 1998). All references are to book, chapter, paragraph. I am grateful to Professor F. Doull for her numerous helpful comments on earlier drafts of this essay.
2. This I take to be the upshot of James Doull's . "Augustinian Trinitarianism and Existential Theology", *Dionysius* 3. See also Wayne J. Hankey, "Between and Beyond Augustine and Descartes: More than a Source of the Self, " *Augustinian Studies* 32:1 (2001): 65-88 and "Re-Christianizing Augustine Postmodern Style: Readings by Jacques Derrida, Robert Dodaro, Jean-Luc Marion, Rowan Williams, Lewis Ayres and John Milbank," *Animus* 2 (1997). For Descartes' relation to Augustine see Floy Doull, " 'Si enim fallor, sum': the Logic of Certainty in St. Augustine and Descartes", *Proceedings of Ninth International Congress of Patristic Studies*, Oxford, 1983.
3. There is from Hobbes to Hegel the thought that the state is a finite god.
4. The autobiographical division is as follows: (1) Chapters vi-vii: Infancy; (2) Chapters viii-xii: Early Childhood and; (3) Chapters xiii-xx: Later Childhood. See Colin Starnes' remarkable *Augustine's Conversion*, (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1986).
5. See Wayne J. Hankey, "Mind" in *Augustine Through the Ages*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald, 563-7. Also, James Doull, "What is Augustinian 'Sapientia'?", *Dionysius* 12 (1986) 61-67.
6. That the mind is the image of the trinity is intimated in the desire to know God which obviously underlies chapters 1-5, somewhat less obviously in the mention of forgetting in chapter 5 which is of course relative to memory, and in the references throughout chapters 1-5 to love and sin which are acts of will. The logic of this sketch from the side of the human and the divine is more explicitly developed in Books XI and XII.
7. In chapter xviii, Augustine makes this point explicitly: "To be far from your face is to be in the darkness of passion. One does not go far from you or return to you by walking or by any movement through space"(I,xviii).
8. For an instructive account of the limits of the Roman family see Floy Doull's "A Contemporary Assessment of St. Augustine's *On the Good of Widowhood*" in this volume of *Animus*.
9. Starnes in his account neglects the distinction of spiritual and material gifts implied in this section (the first instance of this division in the *Confessions*) because at this point he stresses the harmony of the natural order.

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10. As Starnes states: "The point will be lost to us unless we recognize that it was a commonplace of ancient popular wisdom that man is the only animal which laughs" (p.3) Starnes quotes Martianus Capella's *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury* (IV,398): "For just as it is a property of man to be capable of laughter, so it is a property of beings other than man not to be able to laugh."

11. Caught in a division of living and knowing, the individual's knowledge of his own infancy is thus historical and is gained only by watching other babies (Adeodatus, for example) and discussing his own infancy with others (I,vi),8.

12. I,vii,11.

13. Augustine knows in Book VIII the will itself divided between reason and nature, finding its reconciliation in the saving grace of Christ.

14. The division is itself spiritual because the product of a self-conscious subject.

15. It is a common dogma of the contemporary world that language is the *prison house of thought*, that the supposed universality of reason masks the actual differences of situated languages and language users. Cf. F.L. Jackson, "The Post-Philosophical Attack on Plato", *Animus* 5 (2000). Commensurate with this *linguistic turn* is the sense of culture as an expression of language and as the ethical source of the identity and self-esteem of the individual. What universality can be obtained is that of a common language game or the interpersonal embeddedness of custom. Augustine's account of Roman education brings to the fore the *ethical* instability of such a linguistic measure.

16. The culture which disciplines its students is hypocritical because it replaces the games which drew Augustine from his studies not with truth but with more games.

17. See Starnes, p.11 for a lucid discussion of the legitimacy of the correction of the natural will and of the Roman's understanding of this legitimacy and p. 28,n49 for references to Virgil's statement of this understanding. Also, see James Doull. "Augustinian Trinitarianism and Existential Theology", p. 127: "The separation of his natural individuality from this discipline is an essential stage in his subsequent Christian conversion." Also p.127n. 15.

18. Augustine states: "See the exact care with which the sons of men observe the conventions of letters and syllables received from those who so talked before them. Yet they neglect the eternal contracts of lasting salvation received from you"(I, xviii,29).

19. This becomes the basis of what is philosophically interesting in Augustine's account of the "theft of the pears" in BookII.

20. Augustine points to the parable of the prodigal son and its inherent principle of reconciliation. By contrast with the anger which Aeneas' journey causes Juno, the journey of the prodigal son, though sinful, falls within the divine providence. For a fuller

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discussion of the ethical importance of the trinity in Augustine's conversion see my "Resourcing Charles Taylor's Augustine" *Augustinian Studies*, 32:2 (2001) 207-217.

We have seen through the present argument that there is both an individual and an institutional component of child development. It is worth noting the distinction, for example, between Augustine's *institutio* and Hegel's *Bildung*. Whereas Augustinian education occurs as mediated by the *civitas dei*, at best a paradigm for the political order, Hegelian education has as its objective telos *Sittlichkeit* as articulated through the modern state and as thus comprehensive of the totality of finite interest is in a deeper relation to absolute spirit. For a discussion of the significance and limits of Augustine's *civitas dei* cf. James Doull, "The Christian Origin of Contemporary Institutions Part Two: The History of Christian Institutions", *Dionysius* 8 (1984) 53-103. For an interesting response to Doull's argument see Robert Crouse, "The Augustinian Philosophy and Christian Institutions", forthcoming in *Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull*, eds. D. Peddle and N. Robertson, (University of Toronto Press).

21. Augustine, *City of God*, Trs. Dods, Glenluce and Smith (New York: Random House Inc. 1950).

22. What immediately moves individuals is desire. Unless mediated by an ideal which comprehends and spiritualizes it, desire takes on an endlessness that is destructive of a rational and free ordering of the passions. In the absence of a free spiritual measure one is lost in the indeterminacy of pleasure. Here occurs a despiritualized inwardness in which reason turned against itself and its own order, finds satisfaction only in a crude self-reflection which knows itself at once as beyond nature and reason (willing to subvert any and all standards) and as totally immersed in a naturalistic content it cannot escape.

23. Cf. also Augustine's discussion of the "unfriendly friendship" of thieves (II,iii-viii).

Confessions study guide contains a biography of Saint Augustine, literature essays, a complete e-text, quiz questions, major themes, characters, and a full summary and analysis. When Augustine was a child, he was instructed in the Christian faith by his mother Monica. At that time, baptism was often delayed, sometimes even until the deathbed, because of the sacrament's ability to wash away sins. This led people to commit all their sins (such as Augustine's plea in Book VIII - "Give me chastity and continence, but not yet") before baptism, and then have them "washed away" before death. Because of this practice (and also, it appears, because Monica wanted Augustine to choose the faith himself), Augustine was not baptized as an infant or as a child. Augustine; books I-IX (selections) with introduction, notes, and vocabulary by James Marshall Campbell and Martin R. P. McGuire. Augustine, Saint, Bishop of Hippo. Augustine was between fifteen and sixteen at the time, and in the enforced idleness of this interval at home evil habits grew up, which were finally renounced only at his conversion seventeen years later. With the aid of a rich fellow townsman, Romanianus, Patricius at the end of this year had funds sufficient for his purpose and Augustine went to Carthage, the greatest town in all North Africa and one of the glories of the fourth-century Empire in luxury and learning. The Confessions are not Augustine's autobiography. They are, instead, a deliberate effort, in the permissive atmosphere of God's felt presence, to recall those crucial episodes and events in which he can now see and celebrate the mysterious actions of God's prevenient and provident grace. Thus he follows the windings of his memory as it represents the upheavals of his youth and the stages of his disorderly quest for wisdom. In Book VIII, Augustine piles up a series of remembered incidents that inflamed his desire to imitate those who already seemed to have gained what he had so long been seeking. First of all, there had been Ambrose, who embodied for Augustine the dignity of Christian learning and the majesty of the authority of the Christian Scriptures.