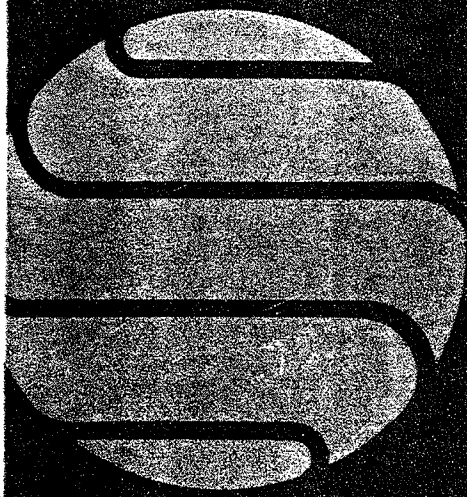


vol. 56
(1978)

pp. 206-227.



SOUNDINGS



An
Interdisciplinary
Journal

AUGUSTINE AND HIS ANALYSTS: The Possibility of a Psychohistory*

PAULA FREDRIKSEN

AUGUSTINE'S PERSONALITY and his theology cannot be adequately understood when dissociated. Several scholars, aware of this, have attempted to interpret the *Confessions* psychoanalytically. While this approach has much to recommend it, the studies themselves are disappointing. They pay insufficient attention to Augustine's historical environment; they focus narrowly on the *Confessions* without bringing the larger body of Augustine's work into their purview; and, consequently, their conclusions, controlled too much by theoretical constructs (primarily the Oedipal complex), end as exercises in psychoanalytical labelling. I wish to propose a counter-interpretation drawn from current clinical discussion of the narcissistic personality, controlled by historical method, and applied to a data base far more extensive than that afforded by the *Confessions* alone.

I

Most of the studies under review¹ point to the family stresses mentioned in the *Confessions*, particularly the uneasy marriage of Monica and Patricius, and go on to establish almost thematically the stresses Augustine felt in himself. "*Duae voluntates meae confligebant inter se* . . . The origins of this conflict are to be looked for in Augustine's family" (Dodds, 460), more specifically

Ms. Fredriksen is completing graduate studies in the Department of Religion at Princeton University. Her special interest is in Christianity in the hellenistic and late antique period. Her dissertation involves a translation of Augustine's two early works on The Epistle to the Romans and a discussion of the "shift" his theology undergoes in this period.

*I would like to thank my colleagues in the Department of Religion, particularly Paul Ramsey, from whose criticism I profited greatly in reworking an earlier version of this paper.

"in the intense parental conflict which was decisive for Augustine's entire development" (Kligerman, 470).

What are the characters of the contestants? Patricius, on the basis of the scanty information Augustine provides, is termed "aloof" by Dittes (133), "willful and hot-tempered" by Kligerman (470), "weak but probably friendly" by Pruyser (285), "affective" but "lusty" by Woollcott (274). Kligerman especially builds his case around the "fact" that Patricius represented glamorous pagan Rome to his young son, despite Augustine's description of him as a "freedman of slender means" of colonial North Africa (II.iii).² Dodds, somewhat more cautiously, sees Patricius as standing for the "Old Adam" and "natural man," the bourgeois in Augustine (446-49). All see Patricius as especially associated with sexuality.³

Monica on the other hand is usually viewed as "frigid but passively compliant . . . [with a] hostile attitude toward sexuality" (Kligerman, 470), "strongwilled, despite a superficial mildness" (Woollcott, 274), "overly good . . . [and] oppressive" (Pruyser, 285). The evidence in the *Confessions* confirms the general impression of Monica's strong personality, though her "hostility" towards sexuality in general is a questionable point. Dissatisfied in her marriage, she pours forth her frustrated love on her son—so Dodds (465), Dittes (133), and Kligerman (470)—precipitating an Oedipal crisis of larger-than-usual dimensions. Augustine's "normal identification" with the father is thus undermined (Kligerman, 478); Monica renders him "virtually a cowering mama's boy" (Dittes, 133).

Augustine's development is severely affected by this unquiet homelife. His super-ego development is faulty because of the inconsistent moral environment in the home (Pruyser, 288), his dependence on his mother (Dittes, 134), and the humiliations suffered in the classroom (Dodds, 462; Woollcott, 276). His problems erupt in adolescence when he strives to achieve a masculine identity. His close, early and lasting attachment to Monica leads him to homosexual activity (Dittes, 134; Kligerman, 476). Indeed, Augustine's depreciation of Patricius is precisely out of his need to depreciate his own passive sexual longings for his lusty father (Kligerman, 476). Monica's own incestuous desires likewise burst out of latency, "stimulated anew by her son's sexual maturity" (Woollcott, 277; cf. Kligerman, 474; based on II.iii). She commences the seductive activity

of weeping in front of her son; "it is not hard to detect an erotic quality in such behavior" (Kligerman, 474). To complicate the picture, Patricius then dies, leaving Augustine the victor in the Oedipal conflict.

Augustine arrives in Carthage and, rebelling against Monica, takes a lower-class concubine and converts to Manichaeism (Dites, 135; Dodds, 464). This fails to put sufficient distance between them, however, so Augustine flees to Rome. "His avowed reason for this move, that Roman students were better behaved than African, sounds quite lame. . . . I believe his actual motivation was to escape his mother" (Kligerman, 477). Monica, grief-stricken, haunts the dock from which Augustine has sailed. "Her carnal desire towards me [V.viii; Dodds's translation] was justly punished' he observes coolly" (Dodds, 468).

Monica follows him to Italy, and subsequently Augustine's concubine, with whom by this time he had lived some fifteen years, is sent packing. The eroticism of the maternal relationship closes in on Augustine, making any solution to the Oedipal problem other than celibacy untenable (Woolcott, 277). He converts to Catholic Christianity, thus giving up his male sexual identity and individual autonomy; he converts from "father" (autonomous) to "son" (passive dependent; Dites, 137; cf. Kligerman, 480). "As a solution to the Oedipal complex, it [conversion] meant adopting the passive feminine role toward the father" (here meaning the God of Monica; Kligerman, 476). He then shares an ecstatic religious experience with Monica at Ostia (IX.xvi), variously perceived as "orgiastic" (Woolcott, 275), "erotic" (Dites, 133) and "passionately orgasmic" (Kligerman, 483), and then Monica dies.

Thus we leave Augustine on his way to becoming a doctor of the Church. Trapped in his utter dependency and passivity because of the maternal relationship, he projects this dependency onto his understanding God (Dites, 132f.). His egotism covertly emerges in his vision of his special status as an emanation from God (Dites, 140). In fact, the shape of his Neoplatonic philosophy is "momistic" (Dites, 138), and his heresiology and sexual theology are similarly contoured. Because Monica deemed sexual activity objectionable, so does he. He ferociously defends the Church against heretics because his dependency on his mother results in an uncritical acceptance of her own apparent approval of the Church's authority (Clark, 147). By

identifying with the Mother Church, he also ambivalently identifies with the aggressor and so defends it (her) against those who, threatening the precarious balance barely achieved in his own life, assert autonomy—the Donatists, the Manichees, and the Pelagians (Dites, 140). So strong are his identifications with Monica that when writing *de civitate Dei* years after his conversion he vindictively regards the sack of Rome "with almost totemic glee" (Kligerman, 484), for Rome is the city of Patricius, but Augustine defends Monica's city the Church, the city of God.

II

All these analyses combine some important and sensitive observations with much overinterpretation and mishandling of the texts. There is, first of all, simply not enough information given in the *Confessions* to fuel a theory of Augustine's personality based largely on what Patricius must have meant to him. . . . Augustine's father, Patricius, is lost to us. Augustine, a man of many significant silences, will pass him over coldly.⁴ Kligerman's contention that Patricius not only represented paganism to his son, but that he also "insisted that his son be pagan like himself" (470), is not supported by the text. Augustine was made a catechumen at birth (I.xi); falling ill as a child, he begs to be baptized. This is all without mention of any opposition from Patricius, who later becomes a Christian himself (IX.ix).

The relationship with Monica is highly charged. As Baklan claims, the Oedipal elements are patent. All the authors pick up this theme, but few finally do anything useful with it. Rather, it provides the framework through which they reinterpret the *Confessions*. For example, Dodds's rendering of V.viii, "her carnal desire", is breathtakingly overtranslated. *Et illius carnale desiderium* is better construed "earthly affection" or "worldly affection" precisely to avoid the false impression Dodds's translation creates: after all, the writer is Augustine, not Freud. Also, *carnale* does not have the specifically sexual reference that our word 'carnal' does now. Rather its meaning (as the eminent classicist Dodds must have known) is closer to the Pauline *kata sarka*.⁵ Why does Dodds so translate this phrase? And why the unnecessary (and to my mind unfair) stage directions ("he observes coolly")? Dodds is forcing his material into a theoretical framework, in which Augustine the self-centered neurotic pas-

ses unbelievably modern judgments on the nature of his mother's libido.

The issue of Augustine's marriage is likewise curiously handled. Both Kliggerman (475, 480) and Woolcott (277) insist that neither Augustine nor Monica was sincere in seeking to arrange a suitable match in Milan, despite Augustine's own report (VI.xiii) that "great effort was made to get me married. . . . My mother played a great part in the matter, for she wanted to have me married." Dittes credits Monica at least twice with "sabotaging" Augustine's plans to marry (133; in II.iii and VI.xiii). However, at the time alluded to in Book II, Augustine has no plans to marry. He is sixteen, and his mother counsels him against marriage, fearing at that stage that it would impede his career. His parents' ambitions for their gifted son is a prominent theme in the early books of the *Confessions*—a theme which Dittes' reconstruction fails to take seriously. Calling Monica's counsel here "sabotage" is surely overstatement. In Dittes' second reference (VI.xiii) Monica is "pushing on with the matter of my marriage." Unless Dittes sees the age of Augustine's fiancée as proof of Monica's duplicity, his contention is incompressible. But Monica must be seen as sexually possessive in order to fit the psychoanalytic scheme of things, and she is so cast by Kliggerman, Woolcott and Dittes.

The homosexuality issue has been refuted by annoyed historians before. I refer the reader to G. Bonner⁶ and H. I. Marrou.⁷ It does seem incautious to me to make a strong claim for Augustine's homosexuality on the basis of a few highly ambiguous lines in III.i, especially since such a claim ignores Augustine's repeated assertion that he was held a slave to lust for woman's embraces. "I was bound by this need of the flesh . . . stuck so fast in the grip of that particular lust as to affirm . . . that I could not possibly lead a single life" (VI.xii).

Disappointment over Augustine's—and Monica's—treatment of his concubine comes from a lack of understanding of Roman society, as Marrou points out.⁸ Dittes seems to have a hard time deciding who sent her away (cf. 134 and 136). Kliggerman notes (475) that Augustine "never bothers to name" her. But neither does Augustine name the dear friend whose death so wounded him in IX.iv-vi, nor does he name Patricius and Monica until Book IX, just as they are passing from view in the *Confessions*. Dittes cites Augustine's reference (VI.xii) to satisfying an insati-

able "habit" as "demeaning" the relationship with his concubine, apparently unaware of the function of *consuetudo, habitus*, in the larger picture of Augustine's masterly analysis of the divided will of fallen man. Woolcott (278), Dodds (469), and Dittes (133) all paint a picture of Augustine cold-heartedly dismissing the mother of his only child without regrets or remorse. Augustine sees the matter (VI.xv) somewhat differently: "She with whom I had lived for so long was torn from my side as a hindrance to my forthcoming marriage. My heart, which had held her very dear, was broken and wounded and bleeding. . . ."

Augustine does not marry her, says Dittes (137), because of a failure of nerve; he could not assume the active male role. Kliggerman holds that she was shipped back to Africa "under the pretext that her presence would prejudice a lawful marriage" (480). Dodds, who again should have known better, attributes their separation to Monica's bourgeois ethics: "She had her position to consider" (469). These views do not acknowledge the complications entailed by full marriage in this period. A cross-class alliance was "socially unthinkable, actually null and legally impossible. Imperial law forbade *honestiores* (middle class people) to marry women of low birth."⁹ These views also fail to take seriously Augustine's own ambition. "As a provincial professor 'on the make,' Augustine had no wish for anything but a 'second class' marriage with a concubine."¹⁰ Even though this sort of arrangement was so common that the Church was prepared to recognize it, the parents of Augustine's fiancée, again for social reasons, could let their displeasure be known.¹¹

Pruyser dismisses the pear tree incident in II.iv-x as "trivial" (285); Dodds's fine analysis of this incident *vis-à-vis* Augustine's theology makes clear how important it is (463). And how can a man surrounded his whole life with friends, with a "genius for friendship,"¹² be seen as relating to people "only at an emotional distance" (Dittes, 135)? As for the overwhelmingly orgasmic or erotic or orgasmic note sounded at Ostia, I simply do not hear it. All these characterizations of Augustine and his experiences come from the authors' desire to accommodate Augustine to their interpretative models, and are not grounded in the texts.

A striking example of this "technique" appears implicitly in Pruyser's article and explicitly in Dittes's. Both *reverse* the sequence of Augustine's conversion and Monica's death. Pruyser suggests that, after reviewing Monica's positive and

negative qualities in his eulogy for her,¹³ Augustine "resolved his ambivalence to her by soon renouncing a normal sexual life" (287). Presumably Pruyser is referring to Augustine's vow of celibacy (VII.xii) which, on Augustine's authority, occurred before Monica's death (IX.xi). Pruyser does not mention that he reverses this sequence.

Dittes proposes it. "The conversion may have been part of a guilt-filled grief reaction to his mother's death. . . . Is it possible that he has consciously or unconsciously reversed the sequence?" (138 n4). No it is not. Most obviously, it is unlikely that Augustine would have circulated a book, the crescendo of which is the conversion, with an intentionally rearranged sequence of events. Both his brother and Alypius, who were with him during the events described in VIII and IX and alive when the *Confessions* were published, would surely have read these passages. Also, such a move would go against the grain of the book. With Bonner, I feel that Augustine has compelling motivations for giving accurate biographical information in the *Confessions*.¹⁴

Kligerman's article is marked both by distortion for the sake of method and by the "labelling syndrome." The key to Augustine's conflicts, Kligerman maintains, lies in his "preoccupation" with the Dido myth he read as a child. "It is my thesis that this story contains the nuclear conflict of Augustine's infantile neurosis and played a most decisive role in his subsequent career" (472). How so? Patricius represents sexuality, paganism, and Rome; Monica, Africa and Carthage, Christianity, and femininity. Augustine identifies himself with Aeneas, and Monica with Dido, especially when he slips away by stealth to Rome. "The bitter tears he shed in childhood for poor slain Dido were tears of rage, frustration and guilt he felt toward his mother" (479). Indeed, Monica is *the* single most significant factor in Augustine's conversion, more so than Neoplatonism, philosophy, and Ambrose, *because* she fails to commit suicide like Dido: she follows Augustine to Italy (480). Augustine ends by identifying with the mother, adapting a passive feminine attitude to the father displaced to God, and thus in some sense fulfills his homosexual longing for Patricius (483).

This scenario overwhelms one both with its thoroughness and its sheer unsophistication. True, Augustine mentions weeping for Dido when reading Book IV of the *Aeneid*. So have I, so have countless generations of Latin students. This is hardly firm

evidence of a "preoccupation" with the legend, which was read by every schoolchild in the Western empire. In the same passage (I.xiii) Augustine recounts the "sheer delight" with which he read of such empty unrealities as the Wooden Horse, Troy aflame, and Creusa's ghost. His point is to recall this misordering of loves, evident even in childhood, which marks him as a child of Adam and hence heir to Original Sin. As for the "hidden sexual nature" of Augustine's reaction to the legend which Kligerman sees in his use of "fornication" in I.xiii (472), fornication in Augustine again relates to the misordering of loves, the will enslaved to *cupiditas*. He uses the same word again in reference to the pears (II.vi): "Thus the soul is guilty of fornication whenever she turns from You [God] and seeks from any other source what she will nowhere find pure and without taint unless she returns to You."

Kligerman would presumably counter these criticisms by claiming that the striking coincidence of Augustine's flight from Carthage to Rome confirms the centrality of the myth for Augustine's self-understanding. I remain unconvinced. Rome was one of the cultural centers of the world at this time. Augustine's claim that he went there attracted by rumors of better-behaved students may indeed seem lame. But he also mentions that he was at this time "all hot for honors, money, marriage" (VI.vi). Rome was as natural a choice for the ambitious young rhetorician as New York or Washington might be for his counterparts today. The fact that Augustine, like Aeneas, went from Carthage to Rome is most probably only a passing coincidence, and in any case hardly amounts to a "compulsive repetition of his boyhood fantasy," or a flight from "the seductive blandishments . . . of his widowed African queen [Monica]" (478). And to posit that the driving force behind Augustine's conversion was Monica's failure to complete the role prescribed her by Vergil leaves one, to reappropriate a phrase of John Klauber's, with "a certain sense of unreality."¹⁵ To call this reductionism is to belabor the point.

We have seen how many authors have fastened on the tensions in the marriage of Monica and Patricius and used these tensions as a key for interpreting Augustine's subsequent personal and intellectual development. Their use of psychoanalytic concepts is so broad and oversimplified that Augustine's personality is obscured rather than illumined by their essays. Their use of

evidence and their unfamiliarity with the period diminishes the value of their work as *psychohistory*. Essentially, the psychoanalytic hypotheses are used to label rather than to illuminate Augustine. An effort carried no further than this psychological tagging is ultimately "no more helpful than a resort to the *Zeitgeist*."¹⁶

Despite these problems, however, these authors perceive certain factors which I believe are relevant to a psychoanalytic understanding of Augustine. If Monica followed the adult Augustine around the Mediterranean, she probably did maintain close proximity to him in childhood, as Dittes suggests (133). He was deeply traumatized by his schoolday experience: at age 62 he writes in *de civ. Dei* XXI.14 "... who would not shrink back in horror and choose death, if he were given the choice between death and childhood again?" Monica is intimately associated with God and the Church in his mind (e.g., III.xi). He is aware of the unusual strength of Monica's affection for him (e.g., I.xi; V.viii). It troubles him occasionally. "What is the difference? Whether it is in a wife or in a mother, it is still Eve (the temptress) that we must beware of in any woman."¹⁷

But this evidence is mishandled, in part because, Dodds excepted, the scholars reviewed are not historians. They work through the *Confessions*, but because they do not check their interpretations against other historical data, their conclusions seem arbitrary and, occasionally, useless. I suggest that exactly a reverse method would produce more secure results. Establish Augustine in his period first, and then proceed to apply psychoanalytic interpretative models.

III

Given all the choices, religious and intellectual, available to Augustine in the fourth century, why did he make the ones he did? What factors, environmental and personal, affected his choice? And in what ways did Augustine recombine and augment certain traditions to produce something new, distinctly "Augustinian"?

These considerations are addressed, more successfully than in the articles reviewed, in a work which I consider to be a "closer" psychobiography, Peter Brown's *Augustine of Hippo*. Brown proceeds in precisely the opposite way from Dodds, Kligerman,

*et al.*¹⁸ Skillfully drawing from the formidable bulk of secondary Augustinianiana and the massive amount of primary material, Brown works like Seurat: bits of Augustine and Vergil, Courcelle and Joyce, brilliantly juxtaposed, create as with *laches* a portrait of a man and his age that is both luminous and solid. So natural is the picture that results, so unobtrusive Brown's scholarship, that it is with some surprise that the reader, stepping back, realizes how much of the work is shaped by a sensitive appreciation of Freudian personality theory.¹⁹

However, Brown's extreme subtlety, his playing his methodological cards so very close to his chest, occasionally makes the work frustrating, and leaves the reader wondering how he is supposed to regard the information Brown is presenting. For example, Brown points to the prominence of guilt in Augustine's Manichaean phase—bodily guilt, guilt about his concubine, "the pervasive sense of guilt that came so often to cloud his relationships with his mother," "the frightening experience of illness in Rome, that had coincided with a crescendo of guilt in his relationship with Monica" (46–52). But Brown never analyzes or explains how guilt functions in these relationships, or how it is allayed by Manichaeism. Brown states that Augustine in old age comes to accept the harsher aspects both in himself and in the Father God of the Old Testament, without ever spelling out why he makes this connection (53). Suggestive and unanswered questions haunt Brown's study. What is he suggesting by juxtaposing the formidable Monica to the Catholic Church (212), or Augustine's educational experience and the "lay fanaticism of his mother" (238f.) to his anti-Donatist policies (XXI *passim*)? Why is Augustine incapable of confronting his own anger and aggression, and how does this relate to the Donatist controversy (207)? How does Augustine's personal experience lead him so to pound away at Julian (309f.)?

Brown in his penetrating and suggestive way is "labelling" too, since he does not provide the reader with a clear view of the methodological assumptions which order his study. I am not faulting him for this lack; he nowhere claims to be writing psychohistory. Rather, it is precisely Brown's success in sensitively sketching Augustine's inner and outer world that leaves the reader wishing he had articulated the bases of his implied interpretations. So wide is the scope of *Augustine of Hippo*, however, that had Brown analytically unpacked all the personal-

ity phenomena he hints at, the book would have been many times its present length.

In the remaining pages of this paper I propose, using Brown's study as a backdrop, to concentrate on one major theme in Augustine's theology: the problem of evil. Looking both at this theme and at the material presented in the *Confessions*, I will suggest an interpretative model from current psychoanalytic ego-psychology by which the personal dynamics present in Augustine's life and works might be more clearly perceived.

IV

From Paul's letter to the Romans to Barth's commentary on the same, the problem of evil has exercised Christian theologians. It is the continuous concern of Augustine as well, from the Cassiciacum writings to the *opus imperfectum* against Julian. In his endeavor to find an answer, Augustine develops a complex system based on the workings of grace, the effects of the Fall on the will, the nature of man, and the justice of God. He ends by essentially jettisoning the *sine qua non* of Greek moral philosophy, the freedom of the will, and leading Western Christianity down the theological cul-de-sac of a rigorous predestinarianism. From Book III of *de libero arbitrio* through the *Confessions* to the "unintelligent slogging match"²⁰ with Julian, Augustine bases much of his view of evil on his analysis of sex. The carnal custom, grown "as strong, almost, as nature" (*de lib. arb.* III.18,52), is telling proof for Augustine of the vitiating of man's will. Sexual concupiscence is not sin itself, but it is the punishment of sin, the witness of sin, the occasion of sin, and the means by which Original Sin is passed on like an hereditary disease.²¹ Man inherits the disorder of lust from the sin of the primal parents, a disorder necessarily operative in each procreative act (*in Ioh. Ev.* 3.12: 4.10).

Concupiscence in its wider sense disrupts the correct ordering of man's loves. Man's corrupted nature, once oriented toward God, is now deflected toward the self. Man's mutiny in the Garden is now justly punished by the mutiny of his members in sexual activity:

... when it comes to man's great function of the procreation of children, the members which were expressly created for this purpose will not obey the direction of the will, but lust must be waited on

to set these members in motion. . . . Must not this bring a blush of shame over the freedom of the human will, that by its contempt of God, its own commander, it has lost all proper command for itself over its own members?

de nupt. et concup. 1.417^{v1} 4^r 1

Sexual concupiscence obstructs man's highest function, intellectual endeavor. Marriage prevents this concupiscence from falling into the ruin of profligacy (*de nupt. et concup.* I.18,16), but it too is marred by sexual desires. "Marriage itself is held 'in honor among all' . . . yet, whenever it comes to the actual process of generation, the very embrace which is honorable and permitted cannot be effected without the ardor of concupiscence" (*ibid.*, I.27,24).

Procreation as the only benefit of sexuality was implicit in Platonism and a commonplace of most moralists in antiquity.²² No theologian thought positively of sexuality. Pelagius was as offended as Jerome and Augustine by Jovinian's opinions. But Augustine moves beyond this widely shared position by identifying the sexual urge as the mark of Adam *par excellence*. It is the just punishment of an angry God pursuing "his awesome blood-feud against the family of Adam."²⁴ And only God's secret election to grace prevails against this corporate damnation, the secret election of a few. To some God is just, to others he is merciful, and the decision is absolutely his alone (e.g., *Ep.* 194.2). This is why small babies, unbaptized, are justly condemned to hell (*c. Iul.* III.5,11); this is why the Almighty permits evil in the world. "He has sent upon them the anger of his indignation, indignation and rage and tribulation. . . ." ²⁵

Augustine's opinion was not the only one on such matters, nor did it prevail without a struggle. Julian, his last great opponent and a Pelagian "perfectionist," was married. The son of a bishop and himself a priest, he married the daughter of another priest in a ceremony blessed by Paulinus of Nola, who was a married bishop and friend to Augustine. When Julian ventures to suggest that the sexual instinct is a neutral energy to be used for good or ill, Augustine strikes back almost viciously:

Really, really: is that your experience? So you would not have married couples restrain that evil—I refer, of course, to your favorite good? So you would have them jump into bed whenever they like, whenever they feel tickled by desire. Far be it from them to postpone this rich until bedtime: let's have your legitimate union of

bodies' whenever your 'natural good' is excited. If this is the sort of married life you led, don't drag up your experience in debate. . . . 26

c. Iul. III.14,28

Julian fights to preserve what he considers the equity of God. Augustine refuses to listen. God's ways are inscrutable; his justice is not ours (*op. imperf. III.27; Sermo 341,9*). The "all men" whom God wishes to save embraces only "all the elect." In "the most pathetic passage"²⁷ on this subject (*de corrept. et gratia XV,47*), Augustine interprets I Timothy 2.4 to mean that *ministers* wish all to be saved. J. M. Rist remarks:

The only conclusion from this extraordinary passage is that the Christian preacher is made by God to be more merciful than God himself. Presumably Augustine found the readiness to accept the condemnation of others which he felt drawn to attribute to God too unpleasant to accept for himself.²⁸

When pressed further, Augustine takes refuge in the Pauline hymn to divine inscrutability in Romans 11. How can human reason hope to comprehend the ways of God? Rist hesitates to accept Augustine's attempt to finesse this issue:

Normally Augustine is ready to apply human reason to the most opaque areas of theological inquiry with hardly a second thought. The man who will speculate endlessly on the theology of the Trinity is hardly to be allowed to rely on the weakness of our minds to comprehend the relation of human justice to divine justice. . . .²⁹

Why does Augustine view sexuality and predestination in this way? Many historians point to psychological and personal factors. Marrou suggests that pagan civilization had "so fouled the very notion of sex" that Augustine and his friends would find it "psychologically easier to renounce it entirely than to impregnate the daily practice of married life with the Christian spirit."³⁰ But why would Augustine be so affected by this culture which, shared by his fellow bishops, affected them not nearly so strongly? Marrow and Bonner³¹ both see in Augustine's (over) reaction to Pelegianism the intensity of his personal experience and, suggests Bonner, the "long-term effect of a deep psychological shock" at seeing his reputation as a theologian challenged.³² In Augustine's distinction between *uti* and *frui* in his moral teaching, claims Marrou, he "exaggerates at least as much as in his theory of predestination. It is no doubt possible to explain the psychological root of these oddities: it is the convert who speaks, and remembers that he has sinned."³³

Can we examine this "psychological root" more closely?

V

Suppose we advance the hypothesis that Augustine manifests the conflicts of the narcissistic personality. This personality type is marked by, first, a need of approval, solicited from the object-choice, for self regard. The ego is not capable of generating its own self-esteem, but rather must constantly take the temperature of its environment³⁴ to assure itself of approval and acceptance. It is also marked by hostility, disguised as depression, which is directed at itself and which diminishes the self regard further. This hostility is directed covertly at the object-choice if that object-choice is perceived as withholding approval. Finally, the narcissistic personality is unable to achieve true object-love, but "loves" the narcissistic object-choice for the sake of the approval available from it.

The narcissistic personality is also characterized by the extreme formation of an ego-ideal³⁵ forged from ideal concepts of the self and from idealized features of the love object, the parent imago.³⁶ A part of the superego, it is nonetheless at least partially available to consciousness.³⁷ The content of both ego-ideal and superego largely depends upon values introjected from the parent. The overly-strict superego of the narcissist, thus conformed to parental prohibitions, is in part responsible for "the repetitive, violent oscillations of self-esteem"³⁸ that he regularly suffers. The self esteem essential to the well-being of the ego is frustrated because the narcissist never breaks out of the circle of approval need and narcissistic ego-ideal to the true object-ibido (love) from which self-esteem proceeds.³⁹

The psychological birth of the infant proceeds in the symbiotic matrix of the mother-child relationship. The period crucial to the personality's ability to form object-relations occurs in the first two-and-one-half years of this relationship, which Margaret S. Mahler has designated the "separation/individuation phase."⁴⁰ Object-relationship develops out of the primary (infantile) narcissism and "alters parallel with the achievement of separation and individuation. . . . ego functioning and secondary narcissism grow in the matrix of the narcissistic and, later, object relationship to the mother."⁴¹ Like any "intrapsychic process, this one reverberates throughout the life-cycle. It is never finished; it remains always active; new phases of the

life-cycle see new derivatives of the earliest processes still at work."⁴² Needless to say, separation/individuation is a two-way street: the parent must let go as the child becomes able to move away.

I would like here to recall Dites' speculation that if Monica followed Augustine around the Mediterranean so insistently (in Brown's designation, "relentlessly"⁴³), she probably also hovered over him in the nursery (133). She draws Augustine away from his father and toward herself and her God. "She used all her endeavor, O Lord, that I should hold you as my father rather than him" (I.xi). "She loved to have me with her, as is the way with most mothers, but far more than most mothers" (V.viii). When Augustine, age 29, leaves Africa for Rome, she "followed me right to the seacoast and clung to me passionately" (V.viii). Indeed, she so shadows Augustine that years after her death he swears that, "could the souls of the dead come back to visit us in our sleep" then "my pious mother would not fail to visit me every night, that mother who followed me over land and sea that she might live with me" (*de cura ger. pro mort.* XIII.16). When she dies, he feels *his* life was "torn asunder, for it had been one life, made of hers and mine together" (IX.xij)—yet, puzzled, he finds he cannot weep.

The separation/individuation process is fraught with tension here: Monica will not let go. The tension in their household is not caused, as the articles reviewed would have it, by her need to "convert Augustine away" from the paganism of his father. Augustine from the beginning is raised a Christian (I.xi). And it is Monica who, for eminently practical reasons, demurs in the matter of his baptism (I.xi). Augustine attributes a high motivation to his mother's enthusiasm for his studies, and a correspondingly low one to Patricius. "She thought that the usual course of studies would be no hindrance to my coming to You, but actually a help" (II.iii). Since Augustine is still in the Catholic faith at this point, one questions whether this concern can be the true reason for Monica's enthusiasm. It seems more probable that her motivation is the same as Patricius' who, says Augustine in the same passage, "had only vain ambition for me." She wants her son to be a success. Her pushiness in part stems from the problematic separation/individuation process: she treats Augustine like an extension of herself, pushing him in the direction she wants him to go.

When Augustine turns to another woman, his concubine, Monica is hardly frenzied by barely-repressed incestual desire, nor is she frantic and grabbing. Augustine lives with his concubine for some fifteen years without apparent overt opposition from Monica. Perhaps Monica realized that such an arrangement would forestall true marriage, which would at the time have been professionally detrimental to him. But when *she* feels the time is right, that a marriage would boost Augustine's career, then the concubine is sent away "as a hindrance to my forthcoming marriage" (VI.xv), and Monica throws herself into the task of finding Augustine a suitable spouse (VI.xiii). Once all is safely arranged, she apparently does not object to his taking an "interim" concubine (VI.xv).

But when Augustine attempts to find gratification in areas removed from Monica's sphere of interest, then she, intrusive, fights his breaking away. A fervent Catholic, she is naturally furious when Augustine joins an opposing sect. But a dream, not specifically that he will convert, but that "where she was, there I was also" (III.xi),⁴⁴ comforts her. And she noisily manifests her disapproval of Augustine's non-Catholicism throughout the years before his conversion.

The inability to achieve true object-love and a crushing need for the approval of others are two of the problems resulting from this sort of troubled separation/individuation process: Augustine in III.i gives a classic description of these syndromes:

To Carthage I came, where a cauldron of unholy loves leapt and boiled about me. I was not yet in love, but I was in love with love, and from the very depth of my need hated myself for not more keenly feeling the need. I sought some object to love (*quid amarem*) since I was thus in love with loving. . . . My longing was then to love and be loved, but most when I obtained the enjoyment of the body of the person loving me.

Augustine comes to see sex as pure narcissistic gratification, self-serving *cupiditas*. His sexuality is "a torture to the will," a divinely ordained torment. This *cupiditas*, the mark of Original Sin, is the sign of and reason for God's condemnation of him and all the sons of Adam. By identifying his sexual urges with Original Sin, Augustine in a sense puts them at one remove from himself ("Thus it was not I that caused it but the sin that dwells within me. . ." VIII.x). He can point to his sin and condemn it before God, "accusing myself with intensified bitterness"

(VIII.xi), "frantic in mind and in a frenzy of indignation at myself" (VIII.viii). Are these accusations in a sense a) attempts to gain approval (he is siding with God), and b) a veiled reproach (after all, the scourge of concupiscence is from God)? By renouncing sexual activity, he feels he can finally be baptized into the Church. This decision wins the approval both of God ("A light . . . of serenity infused my heart") and Monica ("she was filled with triumphant exultation" VIII.xii).⁴⁵

Why this association of sexual renunciation with conversion to Catholicism? Any explanation based on Augustine's negative reaction to Patricius's "lustiness" and his assumption of Monica's generally negative attitude toward sexuality is no explanation at all. The text will not sustain such an interpretation, nor does such an interpretation take account of the fact that Monica actually pushes Augustine to marry.

Part of the explanation is cultural. Augustine lived in an age marked by a sense of alienation from the body,⁴⁶ a sense of division which Manichaeism exploited. Plotinus, Augustine's great philosophical mentor, was ashamed of having a body at all (Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* I). Verecundus, Augustine's friend in Milan, refuses baptism, not because he does not believe, but because he is married, even though his wife is a Christian (IX.iii).

Still, this is a culture in which Paulinus and Julian can be married clergy. Augustine appropriates as his own one attitude in the culture; and he does so, I think, because it speaks to his personal experience. He cannot truly love; his assessment of the nature of sexual love is shaped by his experience of only enjoying a narcissistic gratification from the person loving him. Augustine, introspective and sensitive, is aware of this 'selfishness' in himself, the *amor sui* of *cupiditas*. He incorporates his awareness of self into his theological interpretation of the nature of sin and of the human will.

Ironically, God seems likewise incapable of achieving object-love:

God loves us. In what way does he love us? As an object of use, or as an object of enjoyment [*ut nobis utatur an ut fruatur*?]. If he enjoys us, then he must be in need of good from us, and no sane man will say that. . . . He does not enjoy us then, but makes use of us. For if he neither enjoys us nor uses us, I am at a loss to discover in what way he can love us.

de doct. Chr. I.31.34⁴⁷

To love, says Augustine, is either to use (*uti*) or to enjoy (*frui*).⁴⁸ Augustine would seem to be attributing to God an attitude very much like Augustine's own toward woman, who can only be used (for procreation) or enjoyed (for sinful pleasure). God also functions as the ultimate approval mechanism; without his approval (grace), man stands condemned. The task of an interpretation of Augustine's theology based on this narcissism theory would be to demonstrate how, for Augustine, *amor dei* never rises to the point of love of God for His own sake, but finally remains love of God for the sake of the soul's beatification—the sign of God's approval. There is no way man can strive to win this approval, because he is so utterly befouled by unworthiness and sin (the hypertrophied superego and the extreme ego-ideal are at work here). And when God withholds grace, he does so justly, "because he is angry" (*de civ. Dei* XXI.24,78; c. *Iul.* V.3,8).⁴⁹

VI

I offer my interpretation of Augustine partly as an alternative to the Oedipal interpretations reviewed above. Those rest almost entirely on the evidence of the *Confessions* alone, and perforce ignore a good deal of that. Many of the arguments of the articles reviewed are simply not borne out by the data, where they do not account for contradictory evidence, they lack coherence of explanation. The structure of the unconscious may be in principle nonfalsifiable, but the same cannot be claimed for those historical interpretations which take as their starting point the existence of this structure. If an analysis, such as those reviewed, does not take the historical evidence fully into consideration, it can be discounted as insufficient or incorrect. The simple check of matching evidence to interpretation—the task of any historical work—thus prevents arbitrary interpretation.

Historians have generally hesitated to assume the burden of acquainting themselves with a knowledge of personality theory. But Brown issues a clarion call to pick up the psychologist's burden:

Historians of inflation in the crisis of the third century would regard it as imprudent—not to say uncultivated—to approach the baffling fluctuations of the denarius without a sensitivity to monetary phenomena that is, at least, kept in tune by modern economic theory. Yet historians of the rise of Egyptian monasticism, faced

with the equally baffling and headlong shifts in men's relations to their own bodies, still feel licensed, for some reason, to be innocent of modern knowledge.⁵⁰

This paper, written chiefly in the spirit of exhortation, is addressed particularly to students of Augustine. Patristics is a deeply traditional field of study, and hardly in the vanguard of the psychohistorical movement. Yet even the most traditional scholars, especially when they run head-on into an aspect of Augustine's thought that is uncompromisingly idiosyncratic, do not hesitate to hold his personality, and personal experience, in some sense accountable. This move is so obviously well-justified that I find myself impatiently asking why someone does not go the next step and apply a systematic theory of personality to this observation. My complaint, like that of the old Yankee about the weather, is that everybody talks about it [that is, Augustine's personality], and nobody does nothing about it.

Personality plays a discernibly large role in Augustine's intellectual and theological development. Personality theory can provide us with a means of further discerning the impact of this factor on Augustine's thought. And perhaps a significant justification for undertaking this task is that our subject points us on our way. In the *Confessions*, Augustine began our work for us.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF AUGUSTINE'S WORKS CITED ABOVE

386	Cassiacum writings: c. acad. (contra academicos)	Against the Academics
	de beata vita de ord. (de ordine)	On Happy Life On Order
	Soliloquiae	Soliloquies
388-96	de lib. arb. (de libero arbitrio)	On the Freedom of the Will
396	de doct. Chr. (de doctrina Christiana)	On Christian Instruction
397-400	Confessiones	The Confessions
413-26	de civ. Dei (de civitate Dei)	The City of God
408?-21	in Ioh. Ev. (in Iohannis Evangelium)	Sermons on the Gospel of John
421-24	de cur. ger. pro mort. (de cura gerenda pro mortuis)	The Care to be taken for the Dead
421	c. Iul. (contra Iulianum)	Against Julian
427	de correct. et gratia (de correctione et gratia)	On Admonition and Grace
429-30	c. Iul. op. imp.(contra Iulianum opus imperfectum)	Unfinished work against Julian

There are useful chronological tables of Augustine's works in *Obras de San Agustín* v. 1 (Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos), 384-87, which gives an index of the Latin texts; in Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley 1967), 74, 184, 282, 378 (with parallel chronology of events in Augustine's life and time); and in Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (London 1970).

Standard collections of English translations are: *Fathers of the Church* (Catholic University Press); *Library of Christian Classics* (Westminster Press); and *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 1 (Eerdmans). The best translation of the *Confessions* is by F. J. Sheed (London and New York 1944).

NOTES

1. These are: E.R. Dodds, "Augustine's *Confessions*: a study of spiritual maladjustment," *Hibbert Journal* 26 (1928) 459-73; C. Kliggerman, "A psychoanalytic study of the *Confessions* of St. Augustine," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* V (1957) 469-84; P. Woolcott, Jr., "Some considerations of creativity and religious experience in St. Augustine of Hippo," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* V.2 (1966) 273-83; D. Bakan, "Some thoughts on reading Augustine's *Confessions*," *JSSR* V.1 (1965) 149-52; W.H. Clark, "Depth and rationality in Augustine's *Confessions*," *JSSR* V.1 (1965) 144-48; J. Dites, "Continuities between the life and thought of Augustine," *JSSR* V.1 (1965) 130-40; and P.W. Pruyser, "Psychological examination: Augustine," *JSSR* V.2 (1966) 284-89. For the convenience of the reader I will give the references in parentheses in the text.
2. This and similar references in the text are to the *Confessions*.
3. An association Augustine may be making himself in II.iii.
4. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley 1967), 30.
5. Lewis and Short have for *carnalis*, -e: "fleshy, carnal (opp. to spiritualis; eccl. Latin)."
6. *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (London 1963), 55.
7. *St. Augustine and his Influence through the Ages* (New York 1957), 24.
8. *ibid.*
9. *ibid.*
10. Brown, 62.
11. *ibid.*, 63: "The unnamed concubine will be sent back to Africa, an obscure victim of the high Catholic principles and great snobbery of the Milanese." See also 88-89.
12. David Knowles's apt phrase in his review of Brown's book in *English Historical Review* LXXXIV (1969), 339.
13. In doing this Augustine follows standard rhetorical practice.
14. *op. cit.*, 44.
15. "On the dual use of historical and scientific method in psychoanalysis," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 49 (1968), 80-88, 80.
16. Richard Bushman, "On the uses of psychology: conflict and conciliation in Ben Franklin," *History and Theory* 5 (1966), 225-40, 226.
17. *Ep.* 243, 10, cited in Brown, 63.
18. Both of whom Brown criticizes with a generosity one finds too rarely in academic arenas, *ibid.*, 31 n4 [Kliggerman is misspelled "Klegeman" in the

19. A point Marrou picks up in his review of Brown in *Revue des Etudes Latines* 45 (1967), 173-81, 175.
20. Brown, 387.
21. See Bonner, "Ibido and concupiscence in St. Augustine," *Studia Patristica* VI (1962), 303-314, especially 310f., for copious references.
22. R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (New York 1972), 9.
23. G. Bonner, *Augustine and Modern Research on Pelagianism* (Villanova 1972), 13.
24. Brown, 393.
25. *ibid.*: 395 n5 cites the places where this verse from Ps. 77 is used in the works against Julian.
26. Brown's energetic translation, *ibid.*, 391.
27. J. M. Rist, "Augustine on free will and predestination," *Journal of Theological Studies* XX (1969), 420-47, 438.
28. *ibid.*
29. *ibid.*, 440.
30. (1957), 24.
31. Bonner (1972), 58; cf. Marrou (1957), 51.
32. Bonner, *ibid.*
33. Marrou, *ibid.*, 79.
34. I owe this phrase to Norman Itzkowitz, Dept. of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University. My discussion of narcissism draws on the work of Pauline Kernburg, "The course of the analysis of a narcissistic personality with hysterical and compulsive features," *JAPA* 19 (1971), 451-71; Edith Jacobson, *The Self and the Object World* (New York 1964); Margaret Mahler *et al.*, *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant* (New York 1975); Hans Kohut, "Forms and transformations of narcissism," *JAPA* 14 (1966), 243-72; and Freud's two classic essays, "On Narcissism" and "Mourning and Melancholia," Standard Edition XIV.
35. Kernburg, 451.
36. Jacobson, 96; Kohut, 249.
37. Kohut, 250.
38. Kernburg, 453.
39. Freud, "On Narcissism," 100.
40. *op. cit.*, 3.
41. *ibid.*
42. *ibid.*
43. Brown, 406.
44. cf. Monica's reaction to Augustine's quiting Manichaeism in VI.i. It is interesting that Augustine here selects an allusion from the New Testament which emphasizes the reunion of mother and son.
45. Augustine adds "I . . . stood [now] upon that same rule of faith in which you had shown me to her so many years before"—a reference to her dream in III.ii, cf. ~~27 above~~ **P, 221 above**.
46. For a fine discussion of this phenomenon from a Freudian perspective see Dodds's book *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (New York 1965).
47. This is what Marrou refers to as "exaggeration," n33 above.
48. "Use" does not have the primarily instrumental meaning here that it does in colloquial English. Rather, it conveys a sense of "necessary dependence" as in, for example, *de utilitate credendi* ("On the Usefulness of Believing"), which argues that an element of belief is a necessary ingredient in any act of

- knowledge. I thank Peter Brown for bringing this distinction to my attention.
49. cited in Brown, 395.
 50. *Religion and Society in the Age of Augustine* (New York 1972), 75f., reviewing Dodds's book *Pagan and Christian*, cited n46 above.