

Introduction

All the genuine deep delight in life is in showing people the mud pies you have made: and life is at its best when we confidently recommend our mud pies to each other's sympathetic consideration.

—J. M. THORNBURN¹

Nothing we ever do is in direct opposition to our family's example: somehow we always manage to replicate some form of the pattern we're trying to escape.

—ROXANNA ROBINSON²

MY PAPERBACK COPY OF AN English translation of Augustine's *Confessions* (Rex Warner's translation for Mentor-Omega Books), which I first read in 1964, is so tattered that I carry it around in a cut-to-fit box. As I open it now, a small shower of confetti from its dry and brittle pages litters the floor. For the last forty years I have reread St. Augustine's *Confessions* every few years, astonished that reading the same text with different experience and questions made a different text pop into my eyes. Each time I read it I noticed themes, preoccupations, and habits of mind—Augustine's, and mine—that I had not noticed before. Rereading is good for self-knowledge. A book, perhaps not just any book, but

1. Susanne Langer, quoting J. M. Thorburn, at the end of the preface to *Philosophy in a New Key*.

2. Robinson, "Truro Accord," 7.

Augustine and the Fundamentalist's Daughter

a book similar in richness to the *Confessions*, can become a palimpsest that maps its reader's interests and stages of understanding. The astonishing richness of Augustine's *Confessions* supports an apparently infinite number of readings.

The *Confessions* I read when I was thirty is not the same *Confessions* that I read now, at seventy. Moreover, the circumstances in which I read have a great deal to do with what I notice. Over the years I have read the *Confessions* in preparation for classes I was taking or teaching, or on vacation on a Greek island. Now, writing my own confessions, bringing my experiences to Augustine's text, makes his *Confessions* new again.

Like Scripture, Augustine's *Confessions* is good to think with. *Augustine and the Fundamentalist's Daughter* is not a commentary; rather, I take Augustine's *Confessions* as my model; I think with the *Confessions* as Augustine thought with Scripture. I seek to identify the intellectual and emotional events and ideas that have been as formative for me as his were for him. My memories, observations, and reflections are stimulated by, and interwoven with, those of Augustine, reflecting the many years I have conversed in my mind with his *Confessions*.

Augustine believed that the understanding and exposition of Scripture was a preacher's central task.³ Shortly after his appointment to the priesthood he requested a leave for the purpose of studying Scripture; he wrote: *I am still a weakling spiritually, and need the medicine of scripture. This I must study at all costs, though hitherto I have lacked the time.*⁴ Evidently, he put to good use the months granted him for the study of Scripture, for the definitive demonstration of his knowledge was his ability to *think with* scriptural language, to weave it throughout his own memories, reflections, and observations in the *Confessions*.⁵

Augustine forged a new and distinctly Christian language by alternating his own narrative, prayer, and scriptural phrases. For example,

Why then do I ask you [God] to enter into me? I could not exist, my God, were it not for your existence in me. Or would it be truer to say that I could not exist unless I existed in you, of whom are

3. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 249.

4. Augustine *Epistula* 21.

5. Italicized phrases in the text are quoted from Augustine's *Confessions*. Citations in parentheses are from the *Confessions*.

all things, by whom are all things, in whom are all things? *So it is, my Lord, so it is.* (1.2)

The new understanding of Scripture Augustine acquired coincided with his fascination with a new reading practice. In Book 6 he recounts his amazement at finding Bishop Ambrose of Milan reading silently when he and his mother visited him. In North Africa the (few) literate always read aloud in order to benefit the (many) illiterate. Augustine and Monica sat in silence and observed Ambrose for some time, during which Augustine speculated about his reasons for reading silently. Later, he developed his own practice of silent reading for the purpose of exercising and cultivating a subjective self, lingering on phrases and passages that excited him without the immediate urgency of communicating to others by preaching or teaching (9.4).

To tell a long story briefly, this reading practice later developed into medieval monks' *lectio divina*, combining the inwardness of silent reading with reading aloud, so that the precious words could be seen on the page, heard, and spiritually digested. Later still, the sixteenth-century Protestant reformations stimulated literacy by emphasizing the practice and habit of individual Bible-reading. Daily individual Bible-reading was the primary devotional practice of the fundamentalists of my childhood. The origin of this practice were those fourth-century moments in which Augustine watched Bishop Ambrose read and became intrigued by what silent reading could produce. Practicing it himself he discovered both a new intimacy with Scripture and a new configuration and articulation of the self.

Augustine and the Fundamentalist's Daughter seeks to demonstrate that rereading the same text—the right text—across a lifetime can give form and articulation to ideas and experiences that would otherwise seem to be *spilled and scattered* without meaning or significance (11.29). When one brings the question of *oneself* to reading, rereading, rethinking, reinterpreting the same text at different ages, in different circumstances, and with different heated interests, new understandings occur—especially, gradually, the understanding that the missing self was always right there, right here.

New understandings directly affected Augustine's feelings. Describing his youthful excitement in reading Cicero's *Hortensius*, he says that the book *altered my way of feeling*, filling him with *passionate zeal*

to love and seek and obtain and embrace and hold fast wisdom itself (3.4). And he *felt* ideas physically. Throughout the *Confessions* he describes the physical and emotional feelings that accompanied intellectual and emotional events and situations. Perhaps the most famous of these narrations was his description of the intellectual and emotional crisis surrounding his conversion in the garden at Ostia: *My forehead, cheeks, eyes, color of face, and inflection of voice expressed my mind better than the words I used. . . . [I] made many movements of my body . . . I tore my hair, beat my forehead, locked my fingers together, clasped my knee . . . flung myself down on the ground somehow under a fig tree and gave free rein to my tears* (8.8, 12).

Unaffected by Descartes' much later philosophical separation of body and soul, Augustine assumed what philosopher Maxine Sheets-Johnstone calls the "first person body":

the body that we know directly in the context or process of being alive. . . . The body that emerges alive and kicking is . . . the center and origin of our being in the world. It is, in fact, our first world and reality. The first person body is not a body that we outgrow or even can outgrow; it is only one we can choose to deny or deprecate. It is a body . . . whose biological reality is neither separable from, nor a third-person dimension of its lived and living presence.⁶

The first-person body is alive and intelligent; study of human beings that focuses *only* on biology, or *only* on rationality cannot describe it. Augustine characterized it this way: *[Y]ou gave me when an infant life and a body which, as we see, you have equipped with senses, fitted with limbs, adorned with its due proportion and, for its general good and safety, have implanted in it all the impulses of a living creature* (1.7). He understood that his adult body was extrapolated from, and continuous with, his infant body. The first-person body is, throughout life, the lived body, complete with feeling and intelligence.

Augustine invited his readers to "hear" his ideas of God, the world, and himself, in the context of his experiences.⁷ Most philosophers and theologians have presented ideas as if they fell intact from the clouds,

6. Sheets-Johnstone, *Corporeal Turn*, 20.

7. Ray Monk's biographies of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Bertrand Russell present the subject's ideas in the context of their lives, events, and experiences; see Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein* and *Bertrand Russell*.

with no reference to the circumstances or the intellectual and social environment in which they had effective explanatory power and resonance while other ideas did not. Moreover, we often read the most extraordinary ideas of an age as if they were common ideas. Yet few authors simply reiterate the well established, taken-for-granted assumptions of their particular time and place. Augustine was critical of his society, its customs and its habits.

My affection for the *Confessions* has been accompanied by various irritations in the different times and situations in which I read it. In early readings, I was irritated by what I saw as Augustine's oversensitivity, self-flagellation, and anxiety about sex. Later I found his gender expectations unforgivable, and I thought his assumption that his own experience was universal was egregiously benighted. His rhetorical strategy of narrating his experience as a conversation with God annoyed me. I found his failure to flesh out any character but his own exasperating. My own confessions criticize Augustine's *Confessions*, sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly. I do not, for example, use Augustine's annoying rhetorical ruse of *mentioning* sexual experience in order to capture his reader's attention, only to switch immediately to philosophical or theological reflections. I do, however, seek to emulate the rigor and depth with which Augustine thought about his life.

I learned to lay aside second-hand judgments inherited from many modern interpreters, who read him as neurasthenic, dualistic, and monomaniacal. Allowing oneself even briefly to see the world as Augustine saw it can be a life-changing experience. The passionate, even violent, imagery with which he described his search for God challenges all sluggishness. Yet for Augustine, finding the resolution of his anguished search was more like relaxing than like increased struggle: *Cessavi de me paululum—I relaxed a little from myself* (7.14). I recognize that Augustine's rhythm of avid search and grateful acceptance has become the systole and diastole of my own life.

Books 1–9 narrate Augustine's struggle toward Christian faith. Books 10–13 explore the philosophical and theological ideas that furnished the resolution of his struggle. Although Augustine closed what modern readers recognize as his autobiographical narrative in Book 9, the last four books are also autobiographical; they place the details of his individual life in the context of time and space. Augustine wrote his *Confessions* when he was about forty years old and recently established

as a bishop in Hippo, North Africa. Similarly, *Augustine and the Fundamentalist's Daughter* concludes when I was about forty and beginning to teach at Harvard Divinity School. The last four books of my account reflect on some major shifts in my thinking and feeling, as do Augustine's last books.



Fundamentalism, as I experienced it as a child, was more than a set of beliefs, more than the insistence that every word of Scripture came from the mouth of God (in the King James Version). Fundamentalism was also a worldview, an acute alertness to wrongdoing, and a particular construction and understanding of “self.” The fundamentalist self begins with an especially poignant sense of *lack*, the “quite valid suspicion that ‘I am not real.’”⁸ The fundamentalist recognizes more vividly than most people that the sense of self is groundless, a mental construction.⁹

No one described the experience of the missing self better than Augustine. Multiple vivid images and metaphors describe his desperation and evisceration: malnutrition, insomnia, itching wounds and scratched scabs, and the feeling of being *wasted and scattered*, distracted and dispersed. *For I have been spilled and scattered among times whose order I do not know; my thoughts, the innermost bowels of my soul, are torn apart with the crowding tumults of variety. And so it will be, he added, until all together I can flow into you, purified and molten by the fire of your love. And I shall stand and become set in you, in my mold, in your truth* (11.29). Augustine grounded the self in a personal God who, by watching him, and watching out for him, guaranteed his reality.



Through Augustine I became acquainted with Plotinus, a Platonic philosopher whose ideas are woven throughout the *Confessions*.¹⁰ Augustine learned from—and borrowed from—Plotinus throughout his life.¹¹ So do I. Most importantly, Plotinus helps me to get over myself,

8. Loy, *Lack and Transcendence*, xi.

9. *Ibid.*, 101; quoted by Sheets-Johnstone, *Roots of Morality*, 381.

10. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Early Theory of Man*, *passim*.

11. Miles, *Plotinus on Body and Beauty*.

relieving Augustine's intense focus on the anxious self. Plotinus became the great scholarly love of my life.

Examples of Plotinus's usefulness in relaxing the anxious self appear throughout this book; here is one example. Plotinus taught that the gifts and pains of the universe circulate without design or address and, inevitably, each person receives some of both. Far from saying "Why me?" when pain occurs, one should, when one hears of another's pain, say "Why *not* me?" Plotinus's universe, ruled by chance and choice, seems to me more real than Augustine's universe, carefully organized and meticulously governed by an omnipotent and omniscient God. In Plotinus's world, chance is ubiquitous, but *choosing* how one will respond is always a human prerogative, even, as Camus said, on the way to the gallows. Plotinus advises that, rather than special pleading for preferential treatment, one "await with confidence and accept with gratitude" the gifts and pains that come one's way.¹²



For much of my life I have been occupied with a strenuous and urgent effort to come to terms with the fundamentalist psyche I inherited. This book describes the complex process of identifying fundamentalist characteristics in myself and deciding whether I want to retain them, adjust them, or discard them. Altering my beliefs was easy compared to changing my assumptions about myself, other people, and the world. Habits of mind and behavior were most difficult to identify and modify. It has been startling to recognize that, in some significant ways, I am still a fundamentalist. For example, I choose to retain a certain suspicion of American society—its social arrangements, media, and consumer orientation—that is highly reminiscent of my parents' religious *and* immigrant perspective. Since I am a scholar, I have learned to call this habitual suspicion a "critical approach." But most importantly, I sought to change my beliefs and values without losing my father's passion.

It is difficult for a fundamentalist to accept complexity and ambiguity. The fundamentalist sorts everything in categories of right or wrong, good or bad; "us" is right, "them" is wrong. These categories are laborsaving devices; it's much easier to label and file than to notice and

12. Dinesen, "Babette's Feast."

puzzle over the irreducible complexity of human beings and human life. Fundamentalists also have the confidence that their judgments are supported by divine fiat, that they enjoy the God's-eye view. They tend to have the answers before the questions have been articulated.

Literalism is another foundation of the fundamentalist psyche. Fundamentalists require themselves actually to *do* what they say they will do. The fundamentalists of my childhood did not talk to “make conversation,” and did not understand people who did. We heard everything said to us as if it were a promise. When a nineteen-year-old soldier told me when I was four years old that he was going to wait for me until I grew up and marry me, I took it absolutely literally. Well, children *are* literal, but one can't go through life that way without accumulating disappointments.

A humorous example of fundamentalist literalism: My sister's six-year-old son came home from school one day distressed because the teacher had shown the class a picture of a dissected human heart, and “Jesus was not in it,” he said. Having taught her children that Jesus lives in their hearts, my sister had to think quickly. “That's because the heart you saw did not belong to a Christian,” she said.

Fundamentalists personalize the universe as Augustine did. They understand everything that happens to them as ordered by a “personal savior” God. Nothing is coincidental or accidental. Augustine interpreted a painful toothache as God *torturing* him to remind him of his sins (9.4). Scripture is God's direct communication to fundamentalists in the particular circumstances of their lives, which, of course, God knows. Generations of Christians have comforted themselves with the belief that God allows nothing to happen to them that is too much for them to bear.¹³ This is a performative belief; trusting that it is true, they then go on to bear whatever needs to be borne. They interpret the pains and distresses that come to them either as God's punishment, or as tests of their faith.

Augustine exemplifies the fundamentalist's obsessive fretting over his relationship with God. He was fascinated by restlessness and rest (1.1), by anxiety and relaxation (7.14), because he had so little of the latter. His passionate nature easily tipped into compulsive self-doubt and

13. Tony Morrison, *Jazz*, 99: “He ain't give you nothing you can't bear, Rose? But had He? Maybe this one time He had. Had misjudged and misunderstood her particular backbone. This one time. Her particular spine.”

relentless pursuit, whether of *honors, marriage, money* (6.6), or of God. Relaxation was, for Augustine, always temporary, a momentary relief that prepared him for the next onslaught of anxiety. Augustine comments on the relief brought by his conversion from professional and sexual pursuits: *Now my face was perfectly calm (tranquillo iam vultu; 8.12)*. But his intense subjective engagement did not change; the later books of the *Confessions* still worry over minutiae that seem to him to threaten his relationship with God; and he still exhibits intemperate anxiety over such abstract matters as how to explain time (11.22).¹⁴

The fundamentalist *knows*, exemplifying Plato's "double ignorance." *A bad state to be in*, Augustine said, *not even to know what it is that I do not know!* (11.25–26). The opposite of the fundamentalist psyche is what Augustine called humility, or resolving *not to know what I do not know*. Ironically, the mature Augustine both shows the fundamentalist confidence that he knows a great many things that he could not possibly *know*, and prescribes for this condition: *The way is firstly humility, secondly humility, and thirdly humility*,¹⁵ because we *know* so little.¹⁶ In the words of the Scripture verse Augustine quoted more often than any other verse throughout his career: *We see now through a glass darkly . . .*¹⁷



14. *My soul is on fire to solve this very complicated enigma . . . let my longing penetrate into these things . . . Grant me what I love; for I do love it and it was you who granted me to love. . . . By Christ, I beg you, in his name, the holy of holies, let no one disturb me* (11.22). It is striking that this impassioned outburst occurs in Augustine's description of his struggle to understand time, a topic that, by his own admission, he did not need to understand: *What, then, is time? I know what it is if no one asks me what it is, but if I want to explain it to someone who has asked me, I find that I do not know* (11.14).

15. Augustine *Epistula* 118.

16. Freud put it this way: "The unconscious is the true psychic reality; in its inner nature it is just as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is just as imperfectly communicated by the reports of our sense organs." *Interpretation of Dreams*, VII:383.

17. 1 Cor 13:12; Davidson wrote: "If we want to know what we know, we must give up what we suppose about our individuality, our self, [and] our subject position." *Emergence of Sexuality*, 91.

Augustine and the Fundamentalist's Daughter

Augustine's *Confessions* is dappled with longing, as sunlight through woods. Every few sentences it bursts forth in an impassioned cry to God. Open the book anywhere and you will find sentences like this: *I was on fire then, my God, I was on fire to leave earthly things behind and fly back to you* (3.4). And: *O beauty of all things beautiful. O truth, truth, how I panted for you even then deep down in the marrow of my soul* (3.6). Similarly, the fundamentalists I knew as a child had a strong sense that "this world is not my home," a deep longing for the heaven they believed awaited them. As my father lay dying he longed to go "home." Longing was not, however, specific to particular situations, but a way of life.

In his treatise on fasting, Augustine described the precise purpose of longing: *Longing makes the heart deep (desiderium sinus cordis)*. Longing, balanced with gratitude, stretches the heart's capacity. For the converted Augustine, longing was not directed to some future time or place. It was, rather, a discipline in which past and future collapse into the present moment, the moment in which God *is*. Physical hunger brings body to the soul's project, enabling the whole person to *feel* longing.

I must clarify my agenda in this book: First, not all fundamentalists are alike. I know people who hold fundamentalist religious beliefs, but who are more loving than judgmental, more accepting of others whose beliefs differ from their own than my father, and who evidence more joy than was characteristic of my home. Second, my agenda is not to demonstrate that Augustine was a fundamentalist in any contemporary sense of the term. While Augustine's *Confessions* demonstrate a number of fundamentalist traits, Augustine and my father did not have identical, or even similar, psyches. Differences matter, and I will point them out as they appear. One of the most important differences is Augustine's attitude toward scriptural interpretation. As discussed in subsequent chapters, he found great relief in Ambrose's advice that Scripture is not to be taken literally; rather, the spiritual meaning must be sought. Moreover, Augustine professed to tolerate, even to appreciate, multiple interpretations of Scripture, as long as they did not violate Christian doctrine.

Can you not see how foolish it is out of all that abundance of perfectly true meanings which can be extracted from those words rashly to assert that one particular meaning was the one that Moses had chiefly in mind, and thereby in one's pernicious quarrelsomeness to offend charity herself? (12.25)

My father did not tolerate multiple interpretations of Scripture! For him, there was a right way—his—and a wrong way—yours.



Biographies in late antiquity presented their subjects through narration of their ideal traits, that is, as heroes. Episodes were an “interaction of fact and fantasy,” selected in order to highlight what the biographer considered the inner meaning of the subject's life.¹⁸ Augustine's *Confessions* must have startled an audience accustomed to this genre, for rather than presenting himself as heroic, Augustine allowed himself to be remarkable for nothing but his wrongheaded passion. He introduced the young Augustine briefly and without pretension: *I lived and I felt* (1.20).

Augustine's *Confessions* is an intellectual autobiography in the fullest sense of the term, describing the development of his ideas and values alongside, and in sync with, his experiences and feelings. Augustine wrote about books and teachers, but the vividness and accuracy of autobiography depends on showing how, in the exceedingly complex mixture of family, friends, and experiences, the author's ideas were built, bit by bit. For we do not “have” ideas; we make them and, in turn, the ideas we make, make us. Autobiography is truthful, not by meticulous exposure of all the details of one's life, but by insight. Augustine's *Confessions* is a model of achieving a balance between description of experience and reflection on it.

Autobiography is also necessarily the biography of one's body and one's culture. Our physical pains and joys, and our interpretations of and responses to them, are formative. And we belong to, and are shaped by, the great social, political, and economic conditions of our time. The idiosyncratic combination of family and events that we think of as

18. Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity*, 134.

informing our unique individuality are not as decisive as our social, historical, and cultural location.

Augustine was not comfortable writing autobiographically. Neither am I. He formally addressed God, who was, he assumed, perennially ready to forgive and forget his flaws and faults. But he was also vividly aware of a more immediate and critical audience. It is probably safe to say that he did not picture readers who lived fifteen hundred years after his own time, but he did realize that his contemporaries would be interested in reading his memoirs. *To whom am I relating this? Not to you, my God. But I am telling these things in your presence to my own kind, to that portion of mankind, however small it may be, which may chance to read these writings of mine* (2.3).

He was terrified of the possibility that his contemporaries would laugh at him, repeatedly specifying his desired reader to be one who *will not laugh*. Endeavoring to overcome this fear, he blustered: *Let proud-hearted men laugh at me, and those who have not yet, for their own health, been struck down and crushed by you, my God* (4.1). His parents' laughter at the punishments inflicted on him by his childhood schoolmasters still haunted the middle-aged Augustine (1.9). Rather than laughter, the reader-response he sought was smiling indulgence: *I know that your spiritual ones will be smiling at me, though kindly and lovingly, if they read the story of these confusions of mind* (5.10).

My hesitations regarding autobiographical writing are not quite the same as Augustine's. I fear self-deception. I fear failures of self-knowledge and the inevitable omissions and distortions emerging from a single perspective. Events and conversations are inevitably shared with others, each of whom saw, felt, and remembered differently. Reports that rely only on one perspective have an irreducible and unavoidable fictional component; they do not tell the whole story.

I also recognize that I do not possess a "naked eye," but have instead a conditioned eye, exquisitely attuned to noticing some things while blatantly ignoring others. I cannot simply "tell it as it was," but only as I saw and experienced it. In this, as Bob Dylan's song goes, I am "not so unique." Theologian David Brown has described limitation of perspective as an essential human characteristic. He suggests that it is, therefore, a limitation that even Jesus, in being fully human, must have shared. To be human is to see "through a glass, darkly."

Autobiographical reflections may be prompted by various motivations. Perhaps the author wants to convince his reader of his integrity, honesty, and commitment to worthy causes. For example, Leni Riefenstahl, filmmaker for the Nazis, wrote her *Memoirs* primarily from an overriding concern with self-justification. Augustine of Hippo wrote his *Confessions* in order to gather his life about him, to remember, in the words of Deuteronomy, “all the ways by which the Lord your God has led you through this wildness.” *I confess that I attempt to be one of those who write because they have made some progress, and who, by means of writing, make further progress.*¹⁹ I write, quite simply, to know what I think.

Theological language came more naturally to Augustine than it does to me. For Augustine, theological language was a fresh language of discovery. In my youth, religious language was always present, on hand to interpret every nuance of experience, precluding thinking for myself, and preventing freshness of experience and thought. So I resist the temptation to know as much about God and God’s activity in the world as Augustine claimed to know.

Someone has remarked that the *only* character in the *Confessions*, the only actor, the only protagonist, is God. I, on the other hand, do not see an all-knowing, all-caring God leading, shaping, and directing my life. But I do see a certain grace and beauty active in the painful and joyful moments that constitute my life. Perhaps that gracefulness and omnipresent beauty *is* what Augustine called God. For Augustine and Plotinus, it was absolutely essential to learn to *see* both the visible world and the life that animates it *as beauty*. Plotinus said that “the one who attains the vision of the incomprehensible beauty is happy . . . and the one who fails to attain it has failed utterly.”²⁰



Augustine was judgmental of his youthful self. He remarked elsewhere that if a person is to be able to “love the neighbor as oneself,” she must first love herself, but he strongly condemned his youthful self. Unlike Augustine, I am as grateful for my frustrations, losses, and bad choices

19. Augustine *Epistula* 143.2.

20. *Ennead* 1.6.7.

as I am for the privilege I have received. Augustine called his accomplishments and successes *mere smoke and wind* (1.17), but is one grateful for smoke and wind? I prefer to see the coincidences, luck, and hard work involved in a rewarding career as gifts, to which the appropriate response is gratitude. Mistakes and fortunate choices together create the vividly textured pattern of a life; the beauty is in the whole, not in selected fragments. It's the richness of the mixture that produces feelings of gratitude.



“Suffer me not to be separate”: T. S. Eliot’s cry at the end of “Ash Wednesday” articulates my longing. Not to be isolated in a small corner of the life of the universe, but to fling the empty self into the great beauty. My part is infinitesimally small, yet part of the whole, and sometimes I experience that reality in physical, emotional, and intellectual ecstasy. I cannot personalize the great life, beauty, and love in which we all participate, as Augustine did, but my consanguinity with the whole is not an abstraction. It is as concrete a reality as I know. Despite anecdotal evidence to the contrary, I believe that the central reality of the universe is life, beauty, and love. At my best I live in gratitude.

In his thirteen books, Augustine *spelled out* his engagement in the world. He said that no matter what we do, no matter how ultimately self-destructive our behavior may be, we all seek to be happy.²¹ He used the image of God gently but firmly turning his head (*fovisti caput*) as the hidden yet, in hindsight, manifest trajectory of his life.²² He explored the dissonance between his conscious intention of seeking happiness and his youthful pursuit of riches, honors, and sex. But the concept of happiness is complex for Augustine, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters, and finally, he described his engagement in the world as oriented, not to happiness, but to *being loving*: *My weight is my love; by it I am carried wherever I am carried* (13.9).

21. Philip Roth remarked that happiness consists of the following: “one achieves, one is productive, and there’s pleasure and ease in all of it.” *Exit Ghost*, 250.

22. O’Connell, *Early Theory*, 65–86, *passim*.