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ST. AUGUSTINE AND THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON PHILOSOPHY

W. WYLIE SPENCER

MODERN philosophy is marked by a characteristic inwardness or subjectivism which sets it off in noteworthy contrast from the philosophy of the ancient, and especially the Greek, world. The point of view of the modern philosopher is that of the human mind and its problems rather than that of the objects and events toward which attention is drawn. The Greek was "object-minded," while the modern is by habit, whatever he may become by cultivation, "subject-minded." One has only to consider the difference between Plato and Kant, who are to a great extent if not completely representative of their respective eras of thought, to note the contrast in most striking form. The modern philosopher is tremendously concerned with the ego, the self, consciousness, the will, while the ancient philosopher made, on the whole, little use of these conceptions. The change in attitude is very fundamental and significant, though difficult to present adequately because of its vague outlines and protean manifestations. It is so often recognized that it has become a commonplace of historical analysis. We propose in this paper to attack the problem of the cause of this alteration by considering the case of one philosopher who stands midway between ancient and modern philosophy.

It is most probable that this inward turning of philosophy, which was accomplished during the period of transition called the Middle Ages, was brought about by the predominant influence of that age, namely religion, or specifically the Christian religion. If this is true, the alteration in attitude should reveal itself as taking place in the great transition figures of the Middle Ages. Perhaps more than anyone else, St. August-

tine is the philosopher who stands at the turning point between ancient and modern thought. He lives his life through, thinks his thoughts, and writes his philosophy in the midst of the most turbulent epoch of change to be found anywhere in the ages between the Greek illumination and the modern re-birth of philosophy. St. Augustine exerted a formative influence upon the philosophy of the Middle Ages, including what is called Scholastic philosophy. It is true that the period in which he lives is often excluded from the Middle Ages as viewed by historians, but from the point of view of philosophy this exclusion is arbitrary.¹ The civil disturbances of the years following the fall of Rome, however great their effect was upon the continuity of philosophical thinking, were not sufficient to alter the character of what philosophical thinking there was, which remained essentially the same through all the centuries from the birth of Christ to the opening of modern philosophy. During all this period philosophy was, in some sense of the word, religious, and for the most part Christian. Hence we are justified in taking the first twelve to fourteen centuries of the Christian era as one period of development, and in the consideration of this period St. Augustine is essential. We shall take his life and philosophy under investigation here in order that we may trace the connection between the religion and the philosophy of that period, in the hope that this will help us to understand the influences which brought about the greater inwardness of modern as compared with ancient philosophy.

St. Augustine has long been a cynosure of interest when questions concerning the interaction of religion and philoso-

¹ Windelband places St. Augustine at the beginning of the medieval period and calls him one of the founders of modern thought. With regard to Augustine's significance in the development of philosophy, Windelband says (*History of Philosophy*, p. 276): "Under the influence of the ethical and religious interest, metaphysical interest had become gradually and almost imperceptibly shifted from the sphere of the outer to that of the inner life. Psychical conceptions had taken the place of physical as fundamental factors in the conception of the world. It was reserved for Augustine to bring into full and conscious use this, which had already become an accomplished fact in Origen and Plotinus."

phy are raised. We have a large body of research and interpretation concerning his vicissitudes of spirit and the psychology underlying them. This is largely due to the fact that St. Augustine left so rich a record of his personal life, both in his *Confessions* and elsewhere in his writings, but it is also due to the intrinsic interest of his life and writings as revelations of the medieval mind, and to the importance of his ideas in the philosophical development of the Middle Ages and in the doctrinal evolution of the Christian church. There is, therefore, good reason to believe that the material available concerning St. Augustine will be sufficient to answer in some detail the question that has been raised.

At the outset of such an inquiry there are two difficulties which must be met. They are much alike. One is the question of the genuineness of St. Augustine's religion, and the other concerns the genuineness of his philosophy. With regard to the latter question a sufficient answer lies ready to hand. An examination will tell. There is no need to consider the state of mind of a philosopher to find out whether or not he was sincere. A philosopher is known by the philosophy he produces. And as for St. Augustine, the evidence is clear enough. His philosophy is indeed made up of diverse ingredients, contributions having been levied from many sources, but the original element is clear and definite, making the whole unique in the philosophical record, as the philosophy of a Descartes or a Leibnitz is, each in its own way, unique. To this it may be added that the account given by St. Augustine of his search for truth and understanding confirms the judgment that original work was done in the construction of his final philosophy, but, after all, the content of his philosophical system is the surest test of originality.

So much for the genuineness of Augustine's philosophy. Turning then to the question of the genuineness of his religion, an answer in much the same pragmatic form may be suggested. Yet the problem must be considered afresh and in its own

setting. Aspersions have often been cast on St. Augustine's piety, and it must be admitted that criticisms of his sincerity have often been very plausible. Here was a teacher of rhetoric, desirous of acclaim, and especially desirous of a field in which his talents as a leader and speaker might be called into play and win conspicuous success. Moreover, St. Augustine acknowledged an ambition toward political power. He appears, therefore, like a man who stands in need of a practical outlet for his native abilities, a field of action in which he might play the parts for which he was naturally well equipped, rather than as a man in search of that conviction of heart and that communion of soul with the eternal and divine which true religion is. Now Augustine's conversion and his consequent elevation to an influential position in the church gave him just this needed "career" in which his capacities of intellect and of literary and rhetorical art were given scope and in which he was able to realize through the church the influence upon institutions and peoples for which he hungered. The "tough-minded" critic of St. Augustine is tempted by these facts to regard his conversion in the light of a practical adjustment to circumstances, which resulted in peace of mind and coherent active life through the fortunate adaptation of an able man to a fitting environment rather than through a spiritual faith in the unseen and eternal.

Such is the sceptical conclusion resulting from examination of the merely external facts of Augustine's life. It may be answered that the conclusion is justified in what it affirms but unwarranted in what it denies. Augustine did make what the psychologist calls a successful adjustment to environment in his conversion to the church, but this fact does not exclude the belief that this adjustment was effected through a genuine religious conversion. A problem of spiritual change cannot be settled in this offhand external fashion. It is as though one were to regard a scientific discovery which brings reputation and opportunity to its discoverer as a mere adjustment to cir-

cumstances and no true example of scientific research, without inquiring as to the methods employed and the thought processes carried through by the investigator. So with St. Augustine. The question of his religion must be decided, if at all, upon a more complete examination of the facts, including such facts as are available concerning the conscious processes through which Augustine passed during the conversion period.²

But when this more complete examination of the facts is made the doubt once more is raised. Nourrisson,³ for example, interprets Augustine's conversion in terms of two nonreligious motives for which he finds evidence in the experiences set down by Augustine in the *Confessions* and elsewhere. In the first place Augustine was a man who was unable to carry on his life and thought except in intimate connection with an *authority* or institution. One might say that there was an inordinately commanding "herd instinct" in St. Augustine, stronger than intellect, so that rather than lose his *rapport* with his "herd" he was ready to suppress the promptings of his mind or even his conscience. Thus we see him clinging in turn to the society of the Manicheans and to the New Academy, never leaving the society to which he has become attached, however his mind and heart may wander from it, before he has made sure of a securer attachment elsewhere, until he finally comes to rest in the society of Christians, which because of its wider

¹ The obvious criticism here is that the reports of St. Augustine's inner experience are all written by himself, not only at a time when the memory of important events was at least ten years old, but also in writings having a confessedly ulterior motive, for example, the avowed intention of witnessing to the glory of God and of winning other men to Christianity by the relation of his own experiences. It is true that the record suffers from these circumstances. The choice seems to lie between throwing out the record and leaving questions like the present one wholly mysterious, and Augustine's character under suspicion, or admitting the record while criticizing its reports in the light of their avowed purpose. The latter choice seems the better historical procedure. The fact that so much material supporting adverse criticisms of Augustine's genuineness is discovered in his writings should go far to recommend them as a reliable source, if critically used.

² *La philosophie de saint Augustin*. Paris, 1866.

extension and more vigorous growth, serves him better than any other and so endures through the rest of his life.

In the second place, according to Nourrisson, Augustine's conversion may be regarded as the final triumph of the Christian teachings which obtained a hold upon him during his early years, which remained with him during all his wanderings from sect to sect, continually influencing his thought by serving as a test of the truth and value of later influences, and which were so strengthened by the contact with able Christians in Milan that they came to dominate his mind. In this connection the persistent influence and appeal of Monica was of great importance, especially in view of Augustine's capacity for and reliance upon human attachments. Monica was a commanding personality, and though the youthful Augustine might rebel from the maternal authority, his nature was such that, his independence once established, filial devotion reasserted its influence and grew stronger with the years.

Each of Nourrisson's interpretations of Augustine's conversion, as well as the interpretation previously mentioned, has a certain truth. It may seem as though these attempts to explain away the religious character of the conversion by eliciting secret, unavowed, unconscious motives is simply part of a cult of psychological scepticism, as in part they are. But the writings of St. Augustine rather suggest these attempts to find in his life not the clear and fair history of a soul converted from darkness to light but the record of complex alteration of character accomplished by causes not all on the surface and certainly not all recognized by Augustine himself. This is particularly true because the *Confessions* and other writings have a didactic motive which inevitably inspires the endeavor to free the account of what Augustine reads into it and to trace his development as it really occurred, in so far as this may be possible.

However, when the truth in such interpretations and doubts is admitted and taken into account, there remains sufficient

positive evidence to justify the conclusion that Augustine did pass through an honest, though complicated, struggle of soul and won through mental and moral effort to a position of serenity and power. The course of his experience is the typical course of the religious struggle which when won wins a religious faith. Other influences may have played their part but the portrait of religious wavering is too accurately drawn to admit of any doubt of its genuineness when his words are read. As William James has remarked, St. Augustine's account of his division of soul has never been surpassed:

Thus the thoughts by which I meditated upon thee were like the efforts of one who would awake, but being overpowered with sleepiness is soon asleep again. Often does a man when heavy sleepiness is on his limbs defer to shake it off, and though not approving it, encourage it; even so I was sure it was better to surrender to thy love than to yield to my own lusts, yet, though the former course convinced me, the latter pleased and held me bound. There was naught in me to answer thy call, "Awake, thou sleeper," but only drawling, drowsy words, "Presently; yes, presently; wait a little while." But the "presently" had no "present," and the "little while" grew long. . . . For I was afraid thou would'st hear me too soon, and heal me at once of my disease of lust, which I wished to satiate rather than to see extinguished. With what lashes of words did I not scourge my own soul. Yet it shrank back; it refused, though it had no excuse to offer. . . . I said within myself: "Come, let it be done now," and as I said it, I was on the point of the resolve. I all but did it, yet I did not do it. And I made another effort, and almost succeeded, yet I did not reach it, and did not grasp it, hesitating to die to death, and live to life; and the evil to which I was so wonted held me more than the better life I had not tried [quoted by James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 172-73].

Only one who had actually been through the fire of a fervent inner struggle in which good and evil impulses vied for mastery could give so convincing a portrait of religious conversion, and this is the best evidence of the genuineness of St. Augustine's religion. Having now given some justification, as was necessary, for the assumption that in dealing with St. Augustine we are dealing both with genuine religion and genuine philosophy,

we may pass to a summary of specific points of connection between the two, the purpose being to see in what definite ways religion influences philosophy.

1. *Religion as stimulus to philosophical thought.*—St. Augustine has given in the *Confessions* an explicit account of the sequence of events immediately connected with his conversion. From this we learn that the first effect of his conversion was the writing of a number of works conceived in a philosophical spirit and dealing with philosophical subjects. Indeed his turn to Christianity seems to have released in him a veritable dynamo of literary and philosophical effort. He at once retired to a quiet place with a few friends and there composed several of his most important works, including *Contra Academicos*, *De Beata Vita*, *Soliloquia*, writings in which the most fundamental and characteristic principles of his philosophy are clearly enunciated. This fact is important as evidence against the familiar view that religion is the natural foe of philosophy and for the more deeply reflective view that religion is, as Hocking says, the “mother of the Arts,” including philosophy. We find in Augustine a religious conversion having as first fruit the production of notable philosophical works, and the rest of the Middle Ages is full of confirmations of the view that religion actually stimulates the philosophical imagination. This is not to deny that there may be extra-religious sources for philosophical thought, as there certainly are in any obvious sense of the word religious. Nor is it to deny that there may be times when the religious motive finds itself in opposition to the philosophical motive, so that the result, if the religious motive is the more fundamental and, so, stronger, is the subordination of free philosophical inquiry to dogmatic religious interests. Such indeed seems to have been the case with St. Augustine as with the Middle Ages generally. We shall return to this question later.

2. *Faith as a forerunner of understanding.*—We find that the religious conversion meant two things for St. Augustine. It

meant from the moral and religious point of view a recovery of "poise." This new moral poise, this newly won focus of will, is the clue to the release of energies which St. Augustine's life exhibits following his conversion. But further, Augustine won what might be called philosophical poise. He won a new sense of assurance concerning the dependability of knowledge. In short, he won certainty. Hitherto he had been perplexed by sceptical doubts, to such an extent that he was tempted to cast in his lot with the Academics. Hereafter, he is unswerving in his assertion of certainty as something attainable by human judgment, and is able to support his affirmation by the most cogent of proofs. Just how this was achieved is perhaps of less importance than *that* it was achieved, namely, that a religious conversion could mean for a man of intellect a philosophical revelation as well as a moral rejuvenation.

But the connection is not hard to find. Here, at least, the validity of the principle, "Credo ut intelligam," lies in the fact that faith by clearing the mind of confusion enables it to see what was before it all along. The sceptic concentrates on the weak points in human knowledge. The man of faith looks and sees that there are points of strength also.

3. *Inwardness of philosophy converted into a philosophical principle.*—The first achievement of Augustine as philosopher was the discovery of the answer to the skeptics. The most characteristic form of the answer is an instance of what Hocking has called the "reflexive turn," whereby Augustine anticipates by some eleven centuries the famous "Cogito ergo sum" of Descartes. As St. Augustine puts it, "Quod fallor sum." "Tu, qui vis te nosse, scis esse te? Scio. Unde scis? Nescio. Simplicem te sentis an multiplicem? Nescio. Movire te scis? Nescio. Cogitare te scis? Scio" (*Soliloquia* ii. 1). The discovery was as pregnant for Augustine's philosophy as it was later for Descartes, though in a different way. He finds in this initial truth, apparently so meager, an almost infinite wealth of facts. Doubt proves more than that the doubter lives: the

various capacities of mind, memory, understanding, recognition of ignorance, judgment, will, all are involved in the doubt, and so are as certain as the doubt.

Utrum aeris sit vis vivendi—an ignis—dubitaverunt homines; vivere se tamen et meminisse et intelligere et velle et cogitare et scire et judicare quis dubitet? quandoquidem etiam si dubitat, vivat, si dubitat, unde dubitet meminit, si dubitat, dubitare se intelligit, si dubitat, certus esse vult, si dubitat, cogitat, si dubitat, scit se nescire, si dubitat, judicat non se tenere consentire oportere [*De Trinitate* x. 14].

Furthermore, this discovery forms the corner stone of St. Augustine's proof for the existence of God. Its importance therefore in Augustine's philosophical thought is great. But the connection between this "reflexive turn" and religion would seem obvious enough. Religion turns man's thoughts within. Where but from his religious experience does Augustine derive his trust in this method of "introversion"? "Noli foras ire, in te redi, in interiore homine habitat veritas" (*De Vera Religione* 72). Having been turned inward by religion, self-assurance is the natural outcome, and the philosopher is equipped with an assured starting point for his rational thought.⁵

4. *Religion and interest in epistemology.*—The important position which the problem of certainty takes in Augustine's thought shows the bent of his mind.⁶ As far as speculative philosophy is concerned his chief interest lies in epistemology, though his interest is ultimately based on moral and religious motives. This can be seen from the manifold ways in which the concept of truth appears in his writings. Truth is almost an equivalent term for God. It includes all true being and nothing higher than it can be conceived. It is the highest good,

⁵ It has been suggested that the principle of the answer to the skeptics here attributed to Augustine may have been more or less current before his time, and that Augustine simply appropriated it. This is uncertain but may be true. But the point made above is not so much that Augustine originated the answer to the skeptics as that he saw the answer clearly and made effective philosophical use of it.

⁶ "As philosopher he (Augustine) makes all his ideas centre in the principle of absolute and immediate certainty (*Selbstgewissheit*) of consciousness." Windelband, *History of Philosophy*, p. 276.

the goal of all striving, in virtue of which all lesser goods are good. Boyer⁷ has well described the universal use which Augustine makes of the idea of truth:

A chaque page de saint Augustin, on lit le mot de vérité. C'est tantôt la vérité qu'il desire et qu'il cherche, tantôt la vérité qu'il contemple ou qu'il montre, ou bien, c'est la vérité qu'il prie, la vérité qu'il consulte et qu'il éclaire, la vérité qui lui parle par les mille voix des creatures, la vérité dont il espère, pour l'autre vie, la vue beatifiante.

It is of course clear that Augustine means various things by "truth," and in particular that he means more than the abstract certainty of epistemology. But this reflection only reinforces the comment just made. It is characteristic of the epistemologist to extend the meaning of truth to an unusual degree. It becomes equivalent to the real.

The epistemological cast of Augustine's mind is shown in his proof for the existence of God. All judgments, including even the judgment of doubt, imply possession of a standard of truth, or as Augustine puts it, all judgments, even judgments held as merely possible, as with the Academics, imply certainty. It is impossible to regard a judgment as faulty without having an ideal of knowledge which we see not to be exemplified in the case before us. In the principles of judging the logical laws and norms of the good and the beautiful, man possesses the truth, immutable yet present to our minds. It is in the light of these eternal truths that all truth is known. And this grasp upon the eternal, this "aspect of the soul by which it perceives the truth in itself alone and not through the bodily senses,"⁸ is likewise the human being's grasp of the divine, for God is this eternal immutable Truth. To be sure the Truth which is God is not merely the abstract truth implied in human judgments. It is Truth in the concrete, as it were, the changeless forms and norms of all reality, concerning which we receive hints from our knowledge of the empirical world. But it is in

⁷ Charles Boyer, *L'idée de vérité dans la philosophie de saint Augustin* (Paris, 1920), p. 1.

⁸ *De Trinitate* xii. 2, 2.

this immediate knowledge in the soul of the immutable standard of truth that the human being has his only certain hold upon the nature of God and hence knows him to exist.

Since self-examination is the only certain means to knowledge of God, Augustine consistently recommends this course rather than the examination of nature. He has no hope of arriving at certainty in such researches. There is indeed the possibility of empirical knowledge which is positive as far as it goes. But Augustine assigns the same limits to this type of knowledge as the positivists later do, without their contentment with the merely empirical. If the Absolute is useless for deductive purposes, empirical fact is equally useless in the last analysis for religious purposes. Augustine's search for truth is inspired by religious motives. He is seeking God, and the empirical way is discarded as not leading to the ultimate causes, the fundamental unchanging Truth. "Deus et animam scire cupio. Nihilne plus? Nihil omnino" (*Soliloquia* i. 7). There is a decided lack of interest in the natural order per se. Knowledge which cannot be brought to bear upon the soul, teaching it to love God, is unprofitable. "He is blessed who knows Thee even though he is ignorant of these things (nature); indeed he who knows both them and Thee is not more blessed on account of them, but he is blessed on account of Thee alone."⁹ "Noli foras ire!" According to Ueberweg,¹⁰ "This view of Augustine respecting the relative value or worthlessness of the various sciences exercised a decisive influence on the entire intellectual character of the Christian Church of the Middle Ages." Perhaps it is not too much to say this, though Augustine exemplifies the tendency of his age instead of being himself the major cause of the tendency. It is the moral and religious preoccupation of Augustine which causes his failure of interest in the natural order, and the Middle Ages show a like failure throughout because they are likewise preoccupied with moral and religious problems. Religions tend to discour-

⁹ *Confessions* v. 7.

¹⁰ *History of Philosophy*, I, 237.

age the attempt to gain knowledge of nature, not because such knowledge conflicts with religious truth, but mostly because such knowledge seems irrelevant to the religious quest. And further, the mystical sense of God's surpassing greatness, so essential to religion, discourages the attempt to know God, who is the real, in any perfect way. To understand God would be to lower him to the level of our understanding. He must remain mysterious, incomprehensible, if he is to retain the awesome, inspiring quality which is essential to religion. "God is thought better than spoken, and better known than thought."

5. *Religion as inspiration to psychological studies: it suggests theories of unity of mind and supremacy of will.*—The influence, just mentioned, of religion upon Augustine's philosophy was doubtless unfortunate for philosophy. We next turn to a field in which the religious influence resulted in a decided gain. St. Augustine's psychology is impressive. While keenly analytic and critical, it is also empirically rich. Windelband has called him a "virtuoso in self-examination"¹¹ and the result is a body of knowledge about the human mind that is both elaborate in detail and original in interpretation. His method is inevitably introspective since the point of departure of all his philosophy is the certainty of self-consciousness. The connection with the inward turn of religion is therefore apparent, and it is our suggestion that it was just the self-searching induced by moral and religious struggle which brought into full exercise Augustine's natural powers of psychological analysis, and so made possible his positive contribution to this field of knowledge. With the details of his psychology we are not here concerned, though we must note that his portrait of the mind had the greatest influence upon succeeding philosophy. But two points have special importance.

¹¹ "Augustine is a virtuoso in self-examination and self-analysis; he has a mastery in the portrayal of psychical states which is as admirable as his ability to analyse these in reflection and lay bare the deepest elements of feeling and impulse. Just for this reason it is from this source almost exclusively that he draws the views with which his metaphysics seeks to comprehend the universe." Windelband, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

First, while Augustine's psychology follows definitely in the tradition begun by Plato and Aristotle and is much enriched by their views as well as by those of Plotinus and others, he transcends the earlier writers particularly in his more adequate account of the functional unity of the mind. We have seen an instance of this in his analysis of doubt as involving all of the separately distinguished functions of psychology. This is a characteristic which Augustine never neglected. Analysis yields, indeed, an infinitely rich series of distinctions when applied to mind and its activities, but this must never blind us to the fact that the mind is in reality one and indivisible. The importance of this fact in Augustine's eyes is shown by his representation of the several faculties of mind as being related in the same way as the three members of the Trinity. He uses, indeed, the fact of the mind's unity in plurality as a means of suggesting how the members of the Trinity are both one and distinct. The aspects of the mind chosen to represent this unity in diversity vary. In one place (*De Lib.* ii. 7) it is being, life, and knowledge; in another (*Confess.* xiii. 11) being, knowledge, and love; in a third (*De Trin.* xi. 16) memory, thought, and will. It is true that none of the psychologists before Augustine had failed to recognize this functional unity of mind, not even Plato with his apparently so rigid tripartite division of the soul. But Augustine succeeds in conveying the idea of unity while the others were understood so as to perpetuate the notion of real separation in the nature of the mind.¹² This then is a triumph of Augustine's power of self-analysis, sharpened as it was by the habit of moral and religious introspection. It is, perhaps, an effect of the religious sense of unity which gains best expression in the mystic desire to annihilate all divisions and disintegrating differences from his experience. Augustine was not a mystic, but the characteristics

¹² "The soul is for him (Augustine)—and by this he rises far above Aristotle and also above the Neo-Platonists—the living whole of *personality* whose life is a unity, and which, by its self-consciousness, is certain of its own reality as the surest truth." Windelband, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

of mysticism penetrate all religious experience in greater or less degree. It is the sense of the oneness of the soul which prevents the religious man from accommodating himself to events by the series of makeshifts which content the nonreligious man.

Second, this representation of the integrity of the mind is really accomplished by emphasizing the importance of the will. In part, this means simply giving to the will an importance denied to it in the intellectual psychologies of previous philosophers, and, on the whole, Augustine keeps an even balance in his thought between the aspect of will and that of reason. It is rather the will-to-truth that is the central idea in Augustine's psychology than the irrational will. And yet it is true that the will takes the more fundamental place. God in creating the universe did not create it for a reason, according to Augustine, but rather if you ask the reason for the creation, the final answer is that God willed it. Once willing, God wills rationally, that is he thinks, and his thought is the Truth, that is the World. Just so in the case of the human being, the will "fathers the thought." Taken as a class, man is free to will the good or the evil, though it is only by willing the good that he can actually satisfy his will. Augustine's doctrine of the freedom of the will is one of his most significant contributions to philosophy though it is also one which is full of perplexities, both in interpreting his own meaning and in dealing with its implications. The origin of this doctrine is not difficult to determine. Windelband suggests that the motive which led Augustine to assign the central place in his psychology to the will was "the man's own experience; himself a nature ardent and strong in will, as he examined and scrutinized his own personality he came upon the will as its inmost core. On this account the will is for him the essential element in all: *omnes nihil aliud quam voluntates sum.*"¹³ One might equally well say that it was Augustine's waverings of will, his experience of hesitation between alternatives, which drew his attention to the importance of the will

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 281.

in the makeup of the mind. Yet it was a positive assertion of will which turned the tide at the critical juncture in Augustine's life rather than a coldly reasoned decision. At any rate, St. Augustine's own strenuous moral and religious experience is the source of his emphasis on the will and his doctrine of freedom.

8. *Religion and moral inwardness.*—Augustine's ethical thought was thoroughly dominated by the religious motive, with the result that the emphasis is laid on the inward aspect of morality. What Augustine insists upon is less the doing of certain deeds but the purification of the will. The essential thing is to achieve a detachment from the interests of sense and an ability to distinguish and love truth. The goal of morality is therefore contemplation, beginning with the perception of the truth as present in the self and leading to a loving devotion to the Truth which is God. Thus in ethics the tendency of religion to turn thought inward shows itself by a shifting of the emphasis from outward act to the state of mind or will of the agent.

9. *Religion and the attempts to combine freedom and determinism.*—The philosophy of St. Augustine is perplexing to the student because it appears to be dominated by dual motives which lead him to take positions whose contradictions he struggles to resolve without success. The chief instance of this is his doctrine of freedom of will. Windelband¹⁴ has stated the case as follows:

It will always remain an astonishing fact that the same man who founded his philosophy on the absolute and independent certainty of the individual conscious mind, who threw the plummet of the most acute examination into the depths of inner experience and discovered in the will the vital ground of spiritual personality, found himself forced by the interests of a theological controversy to a theory of the doctrine of salvation which regards the acts of the individual will as unalterably determined consequences, either of a general corruption or of divine grace.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

The difficulty may be stated as due to two motives in St. Augustine, the philosophical and the theological. This is doubtless just, but the relationship between the two motives calls for explanation. It is true that, gradually during the period of St. Augustine's mature thought, the philosopher gives place to the theologian. This is clear enough from the character of the writings which occupied him during the later years. And it is apparent without question in the change in Augustine's attitude toward human freedom between his first writings and the Pelagian controversy which took place after he had become bishop of Hippo. As Nourrisson¹⁵ has put it succinctly, "Il reste que saint Augustin, chrétien, que saint Augustin, même prêtre, n'a pas entendu les rapports de la grâce divine et de la liberté humaine de la même manière que saint Augustin évêque." But how explain the change?

It would be simple-minded to expect to explain the change in such a way as to justify it philosophically. But it would be equally misleading to fail to see the philosophical connection which exists. For the alteration is due to an influence which is essential to religion and which must always appear sooner or later whenever religion seeks rational expression. However individualistic and self-reliant at the outset, at some point religion will seek a resting place in authority. It will seek embodiment in an institutional life which acquires permanence through a rigidity of organization which threatens the very religious life which gave rise to it. And so it was in part with St. Augustine. Though he seems to have been drawn into a position of official leadership much against his will, the refuge in Christian doctrine certainly fulfilled a real need of his nature. Nothing is clearer in his early history than the desire for a body of doctrine to which he could give his assent, and, once granted an entrance by discovering the philosophical acceptability of the fundamental presuppositions of Christian meta-

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, II, 356.

physics, he advanced much less critically to an acceptance of the whole body of Christian doctrine.

All this is doubtless true and yet it hardly explains adequately the change on the question of free will. The Pelagian doctrine, so much nearer to Augustine's own earlier position, was perhaps as easy to reconcile with Scripture than the position which he comes to adopt. A mind as brilliant as Augustine's could have achieved this. But there was a motive against this more immediately involved in his religious experience. This was his deeply felt awareness of the element of grace in his own salvation. Whatever his own efforts had been to attain a position of moral and rational poise, the final victory had appeared to come not so much as a result of his effort but as a free gift. "Self surrender has been and always must be regarded as the vital turning point of the religious life, so far as religion is spiritual and no affair of outer works and ritual and sacraments."¹⁶ This is the genuine religious motive for the doctrine of grace, and there is no reason for doubting that it played its part in determining Augustine in his adoption of this doctrine and the associated doctrine of the mediatorship of Christ. As to the exact form of the compromise effected between the doctrines of grace and of free will, and the inhuman austerity of the application of the compromise doctrine to various cases of unfortunates, these can hardly be explained except as failures of the religious motive to gain completely satisfactory philosophical expression. What should here be noticed is that the oscillation between emphasis on the freedom of human action and emphasis on the determination of all action by God is due to the presence of two contrary impulsions in the religious life. Hence the attempt to work out a philosophy which does justice to all religious motives, as well as to questions of fact, results in the attempt to reconcile the principle of freedom with the principle of determinism. St. Augustine's solution is not satis-

¹⁶ William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 211.

factory, but the attempt to reconcile these two principles has characterized all later philosophical thought.

The foregoing analysis of St. Augustine's life and philosophy has shown that the chief influence of religion was to turn his attention to the inward or subjective aspects of reality. This led him to discover and emphasize philosophical principles drawn, not from the realm of outward nature, but from the self. We have insisted on the fact that these principles were genuinely metaphysical and not theological principles in the guise of philosophy. That they were so is indicated by the fact that they have largely influenced, if not quite determined, the character of philosophical thinking from that day to this. We do not say that Augustine was altogether or even chiefly responsible for this, but our analysis would seem to justify the conclusion that philosophy's immersion in a religious atmosphere for some fifteen hundred years accounts for the characteristic inwardness of modern philosophy as compared with ancient, and also accounts for the place which several specific principles and problems, enumerated above, have held in the later period.