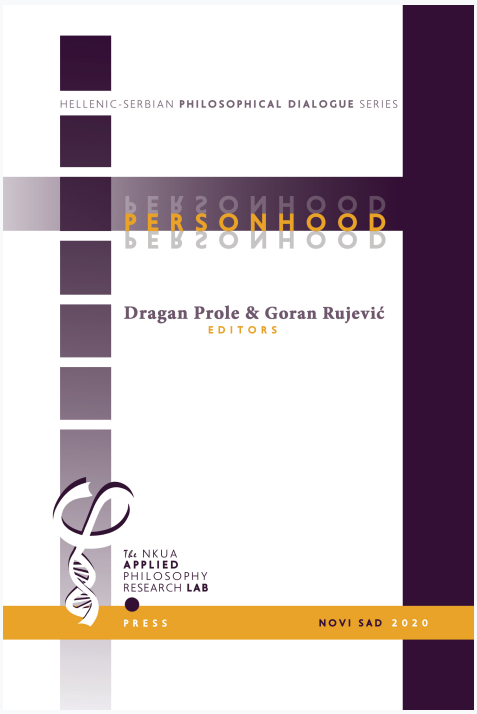
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Chapter

St. Augustine on Memory and Personhood

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Personhood

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St. Augustine on Memory and Personhood

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Abstract: In his *Confessions*, St. Augustine of Hippo offered his most famous analysis of time. Related to the problem of time is memory, human faculty that allows for our experience of the past and arranges it. Such experience of the past determines the manner in which a human being is aware of objects that are no longer co-present with his own existence, but which are present to his consciousness in a special mode – mediated through his experience of his own existence, as a re-presentation of objects once grasped and known. Memory, therefore, is a concept that refers to the relationship between person and world, and which reveals the world of created beings as a field of relations and interconnections. However, it is also a concept that refers to the person as such, while the experience of the past not only reveals the objects that were once given to the mind and co-present with our own existence, but it also summons our past self and allows for its unification with the present self. Such function of memory is, ultimately, the very condition of personhood, while the person is only possible through unified awareness of particular relations of soul with other beings, self and God. In this essay I will examine St Augustine's understanding of memory and personhood in both of its aspects presented in *Confessions* – the theoretical and the performative one; theoretical aspect being presented with St Augustine's analysis of memory, and the performative one being given with the very composition of *Confessions* as such.
Keywords: St. Augustine; personhood; memory; temporality; *Confessions*; creativity.

The problem of personhood, although philosophically questioned and defined in various different ways, seems to be bound to the heritage of Christian doctrine, inscribed in its first articulations and formulations. One of the most prominent ones is given by St. Augustine of Hippo, author equally devoted to the old realm of

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philosophy and to the new horizon of Christianity: philosophy of St. Augustine reflects and transforms ancient ideas towards Christian worldview, which he personally defined in many aspects. Namely, the thought of St. Augustine marked an important change in understanding various philosophical concepts and problems that were already present in ancient philosophy. However, he was also one of the main Christian thinkers to infuse philosophy with another kind of problems and concepts originating from Christian doctrine itself. Moreover, it was the sharp mind and erudition of St. Augustine that allowed for such an infusion to happen on a major scale, since those problems, closely connected to Christian worldview, could not be easily treated and adequately represented in philosophical manner.

It was the personal and private side of Christian doctrine, accentuating the importance of an individual, of personal self in search of personal salvation that was inaugurated as the new main problem of philosophy with St. Augustine. Although St. Augustine did deliver more abstract and more doctrinal works, defending the positions of Christianity against various heretical ideas and philosophical schools, it was this personal side of Christianity that made philosophy of his works and later – philosophy developed under his influence – more Christian in its very essence. The problem of personhood, which is to be addressed in this essay, is one of those problems originating from the fortunate and interesting interconnection between old philosophical and new Christian ways of St. Augustine's thought. Therefore, this problem could be considered as an extraordinary example of the transformation to which philosophy was subjected both in terms of its main issues and its concepts, language and arguments.

The main problem of St. Augustine's thought is – interpreted somewhat from Heideggerian perspective – the problem of the transition from the pagan, non-Christian, to proper Christian life: 'what does it mean to be Christian at all' could be its integral articulation?[1] In St. Augustine's philosophy this

[1] Martin Heidegger, "Augustinus und der Neoplatonismus," in *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, ed. C. Strube (Frankfurt am Mein:

problem is to be seen in various domains – from the universal perspective, focused in his main work *De Civitate Dei*, to the personal perspective, reflected in various manners and in various works. In this essay I will address one of them, presented in his *Confessions - Quaestio mihi factus sum*.[2]

I. The Problem of Personhood

As one of the problems of St. Augustine's philosophy, the concept of personhood is not to be understood and interpreted from the contemporary perspective of its meaning and function. In my opinion, it should be understood as a consequence of the previously mentioned problem of the transition from the non-Christian to the proper Christian life.[3]

Such life, of course, is not restricted to religious practices – apart from those practices it encompasses the very transition of a human being from a non-Christian to the proper Christian understanding of self and the world.[4] Therefore, the problem of personhood is here to be interpreted as the problem of discovery of the true essence of human being, which is understood as a being constituted by its permanent relationship with God.[5] It could be said that such a relationship between human being and God does not simply reveal the true nature of human essence, but it also reveals the human being as a person – not, for example, as a rational being, political being, being that knows the difference between good and evil, true and false etc.

Understood in such manner, the essence of human being is, according to St Augustine, always present, even in its non-

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Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), 171-172.

[2] *Confessions* X, 33, 50.

[3] Jeff Nicoll, *Augustine's Problem: Impotence and Grace* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 142-143.

[4] Martin Heidegger, "Einleitung in die Phänomenologie der Religion," in *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, ed. M. Jung/T. Regehly (Frankfurt am Mein: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), 121-122.

[5] Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 5.

Christian existence. Therefore, the question here is not whether human existence is constituted through its relationship with God, since Augustine's answer to such question has to be affirmative, for all the dogmatic reasons. The real question here is how are we, human beings, to understand our essence and existence, in order to organize our lives and relationship towards the world according to such understanding? In Foucault's words:

> And we will have moved on to a regime in which the subject's relationship to truth will not be governed simply by the purpose: "how to become a subject of veridiction," but will have become: "how to be able to say the truth about oneself."[6]

The problem of personhood is, therefore, a twofold problem for St. Augustine: a) it is used in terms of defining the essence of the human being as such, and b) in order to be useful for such a definition, the problem of personhood is closely connected to the various possibilities of the experience of self as a human being. Such is the position of the human being for St. Augustine: its essence cannot be defined abstractly because it cannot be lived abstractly – it is lived essence, and therefore it has to be understood and defined from the perspective of corresponding lived experience.

However, such lived experience of human being has always been individual, personal and contingent. Therefore, its interpretation and understanding is challenged, while its medium is conceptual and abstract. In other words, simple concepts and usual philosophical definitions cannot fully grasp lived experience of human being; therefore, if St. Augustine is to give an account of personhood, he has to find new and more flexible ways of its conceptual and verbal articulation. This is what he actually does in the *Confessions*, using this new form of expression to articulate both his own person and the proper way

[6] Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject. Lectures at the College de France 1981-82* (New York: Pagrave Macmillan, 2005), 362.

of communicating its lived essence with other men, his readers.[7] One can assume that this strategy is a kind of 'performative' account of the human being – his autobiography is not a simple description of his life and experiences, but a kind of retroactive construction thereof. St. Augustine is not describing his life - he is interpreting its meaning.

However, to be able to deliver such an interpretation of his own life, Augustine has to rely on his own, human features and capacities, for it is he – and not something or someone different from him – who is efficiently delivering such an interpretation of (him) self. To be more concrete: he has to employ his reason, for the reason is the most divine aspect of human being, dealing with concepts and conceptual divisions, producing knowledge.[8] Therefore, if there is to be any knowledge of the essence of human being, such knowledge has to be produced by reason and through its activity.

On the other side, reason as such cannot produce knowledge of personhood by itself - it cannot define a priori who Augustine or any other person is. Nor could knowledge of reason as such and its activity be the final step in understanding the essence of human being; Augustine is very clear on this question, for he demands that reason should turn away from its own domain and reflect upon those objects of thought that are clearly above his own capacities – numbers, virtues, beauty, truth as such, and finally God.[9] Those objects are given to our understanding, but have to be differentiated from it, because they reveal the domain of the immutable and the necessary, while our reason and souls are mutable and contingent.

Therefore, since reason alone cannot give us an account of human essence, and because it is itself revealed as contingent

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[7] Annemaré Kotzé, *Augustine's* Confessions*: Communicative Purpose and Audience* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 50, 53.

[8] Dewey J. Hoitenga, *Faith and Reason from Plato to Plantinga: An Introduction to Reformed Epistemology* (New York: SUNY, 1991), 98-99.

[9] Augustine, "On the Free Choice of the Will," in *On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, ed. P. King (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 41-43.

and mutual – *It is clear that each person has his own rational mind*[10] – Augustine has to turn his attention to another human faculty, one that in the fullest sense presents us with our own contingency and mutability, our finitude. Such faculty, of course, is our memory: it presents us with various versions of ourselves, with vivid experience of our mutable nature.[11]

It is, so to say, a fortunate collaboration of reason and memory that allows us to grasp our own essence, our personhood as such.[12] To be true, such collaboration will result in different 'persons' whenever we have different reason and different memory. Therefore, its result - concrete human person (Augustine) or the very concept of personhood abstracted from it - could only be understood as 'formal indications' of human essence, to use Heidegger's term. However, for this essence to be fully grasped, one has to allow for these faculties to step into an interaction.

To rephrase, the self – personhood – can only be revealed if it had previously been lived and understood from such lived experience.[13] The role of reason in such collaboration is to give rise to knowledge – to analyze, to understand, to reveal, to include/exclude and make a coherent unity out of seemingly disparate fragments of memory (while memory is not continuous and freed from disruptions). The role of memory, on the other side, is to offer different materials and fragments, different experiences of self, absolved of any fixed meaning and in need of it: as we have seen, it is not possible for every such fragment of memory to find its place in the final picture, the final story of self.[14] In the words of Hannah Arendt: "The triumph of memory is that in presenting the past and thus depriving it, in a sense, of its bygone quality, memory transforms the past into a future possibility."[15] The final result of the interplay between reason and memory is, in

[10] Augustine, "On the Free Choice of the Will," 43.
[11] Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 56-57.
[12] Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 460-461.
[13] Heidegger, "Augustinus und der Neoplatonismus," 195-196.
[14] Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 46, 68.
[15] Ibid., 48.

Augustine's case, presented with *Confessions* – it is, in a somewhat Wittgensteinian manner, rather *shown* than told.

Nevertheless, such 'performative' manner of constituting and analyzing his person – his own self – is by no means the only manner of understanding and defining personhood which St. Augustine mentions and presents in the *Confessions*. There is at least another one: namely, if the 'performative' manner is to be valid, St. Augustine has to explain why it is so – which features of human being allow for such strategy of re-creation and communication of self and, in consequence, which of them make it legitimate? We have already commented on the question of which human features are understood as the basis for self-understanding; therefore, we are left with the question of the legitimacy of such a project.

The answer to this question is given in the last three books of the *Confessions* – the so called 'philosophical' books, which are written in a more usual philosophical manner and are not presented as a personal confession. As such, they are often considered as a separate inquiry, differentiated from the first part of *Confessions*: in my opinion, this is not so – these books present the very basis on which the 'autobiographical' parts of inquiry are grounded, and therefore all of them have to be considered as parts of the same project.[16]

II. Memory and the Constitution of Personhood

The so called 'philosophical' books of *Confessions* are dedicated to some of the most important questions of Christian doctrine and to their philosophical interpretation. It is commonplace that the problem of time is one of the most prominent Augustine's problems in this context, and that his reflections on time have influenced some of the most important contemporary philosophers, such as Heidegger, for example.

However, if we are to find the problem of personhood in this context, we should read these books not as a consideration

[16] Kotzé, *Augustine's Confessions*, 50; Carl G. Vaught, *Access to God in Augustine's* Confessions: *Books X–XIII* (New York: SUNY, 2005), 104.

of metaphysical structure and origin of the world, but as an inquiry concerning the ontology of human being, questioning the specific manner of human existence.[17] Such existence is to be found in the realm of time – as all created beings, human beings included, exist as temporal beings. The problem of time is, therefore, chosen here as the connection between the usual, metaphysical – and my own, 'personal' and ontological interpretation of Augustine's *Confessions*.

In the context of metaphysics, Augustine sharply differentiates between the being of God and the being of his creatures – God is in eternity, and the creatures are in time.[18] Being in time, they are mutable and contingent – their being is not necessary, they do not have their being on their own grounds, but through the will of God – which is, according to Augustine, also in God, and of his eternal way of being.[19] In such a context, the time is presented as the special way of being, one that is common to all created beings. Time and eternity are, therefore, completely different: eternity is not, according to Augustine, prolonged or still time – they cannot be similar in any way, they are not to be identified or truly compared.[20]

One possible connection between time and eternity is the concept of *the present time* – a moment in the flow of time: in eternity everything is constantly present, whereas in time almost nothing is – in time there is only a passing moment of presence. Time itself is not fulfilled in that moment, but it is extended towards past and future, it has an ecstatic structure; however, in the moment of present time a contingent being is actually present to itself as such and could be aware of its

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[17] John C. Cavandini, "Time and Ascent in Confessions XI," in *Collectanea Augustiniana: Presbyter Factus Sum*, ed. Joseph T. Lienhard, Earl C. Muller, and Roland J. Teske (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 177.

[18] James F. Anderson, *St. Augustine and Being: A Metaphysical Essay* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), 15-16.

[19] Ibid., 17-18.

[20] Ronald J. Teske, *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1996), 16.

being. Moreover, given that time is of ecstatic structure, such being is present to itself *as contingent*, since it is aware that the moment of present time is passing, that it is not the eternal presence of the divine. Therefore, the real connection between eternity and time here is the concept of presence – not to be understood as dependent on the concept of time, as one of its structural moments. The presence is, consequently, a kind of a signal for the being as such – if there is presence, there is also being. Nevertheless, temporal being is never complete, while it is never present all together in one moment of time.

However, if this is so, how could a human being ever grasp its own personal essence, given that its own being is constantly fleeing from him? If this essence would be traditionally conceived, in terms of eternal and immutable essence of ancient philosophy, in this respect Augustine could rely upon old philosophical strategies and solutions. Nevertheless, Augustine's problem is more complicated – the essence he is searching for is personal essence, personhood we might say. In other words: although this formulation of 'personal essence' seems like an oxymoron, while 'essence' refers to something immutable, and 'person' to something mutable and ever changing, it is exactly such ambiguity and paradoxicality that is here in question and that has to be kept in mind. As we have already seen, Augustine's quest for personal essence is a consequence of Christian doctrine, while only an individual can relate to God, deserve everlasting life, be punished for his or hers sins and so on. Still, Augustine wants to understand – not only to believe, and therefore he has to accept such seemingly nonsensical problems and ideas.

Therefore, if he is to understand his personal essence, Augustine also has to accept that he is never in a position to have a complete identity of self, given that he is a being of time and in time.[21] But now, if this is so, how can we speak of essence here, even in more flexible sense of the term? This could only be possible if we would in fact be in a position to grasp such

[21] *Confessions* 10.8.15.

identity of the self, which would allow us to conceptualize it. However, personal identity cannot be objective one, immutable identity close to eternal essences of the traditional philosophy; it has to be 'subjective' identity, open to personal change and ever fleeing from one's grasp. Of course, human essence can be abstractly defined in terms of human being as an image of God, but such definition is not enough for Augustine – it presents us only with a sign, a 'formal indication' of real and factical personal life.

Personal essence and subjective identity, then, should be explained in terms of temporality of human being as such. Therefore, giving the account of the problem of time, St. Augustine also comments on memory – this very special human feature that allows us to experience our own changing nature, our own temporality. Connection between time and memory is very interesting: namely, memory is the mode of presence of past beings and events for us – the mode of our own consciousness that allows for the concept of past time – or of past being.[22] In an influential and important passage from the *Confessions* Augustine says that recollection of past beings does not put forward the past things themselves, but the images of those things which were immersed into soul – and the words which were formed out of those images.[23] Immediately after, Augustine connects this account on past things with his recollection on himself: his own childhood, he says, does not exist in the past, but in the present moment of time - through his memory it is currently in front of his mind.

Therefore, our past – versions of ourselves lived in past – are not objective features of ourselves, existing independently from our self-consciousness. Rather, they are real only if they are present to our current consciousness: although they are 'things of past,' they can only be real as something existing in present time. Thus, being that they are given via memory, it should be concluded that memory is a special feature of ours

[22] *Confessions* 10.17.26; Vaught, 48-49.

[23] *Confessions* 10.8.15; 10.15.23.

that allows us to be aware of our present and our past selves at the same moment.[24] That is, to have experience of our present and past selves opened at the same instance of time: such opening should further be interpreted as a point of rupture in the idea that human being could be understood as a being of finished and completed essence.

In other words, such opening represents not only the opening of various experiences of self, but also – and moreover – the opening of the possibility of self as such. Personal self, personhood, is never to be understood as a simple identity, but always as a relationship between at least two versions of self – the present one and the past one.[25] Although we are present to ourselves only in the moment of present time – be it even in the mode of our past selves – nevertheless such presence is never to be given in a form of pure and full presence of one person – actual personality; if it would be so, than we would be like God. On the contrary, such presence is fundamentally constituted by the gap between the conscious self and the past self, which represents its memory. This gap is a mark of our temporality and non-identity, our modificability – but it is also a realm in which such modificability is to be actualized.

The fact that our present and past selves are opened for us at the same moment of time reveals that our self is a matter of choice – a matter of free will. There is no predefined identity of anyone's person; it is something to be lived and actualized, something to be chosen over and over again. There are various possibilities of choice here, various selves that one can choose to become; of course, according to St. Augustine, there is only one true choice, the one that would guide our choosing with regard to our fundamental relationship with God. However, here we do not want to stress the problem of criterion of said choice, but the conditions of its possibility; as we have seen, memory is the most important one.

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[24] *Confessions* 11.11.13.

[25] Kenneth B. Steinhauser, "The Literary Unity of the *Confessions*," in *Augustine. From Rhetor to Teologian*, ed. J. McWilliam, T. Barnes, M. Fahey, and P. Slater (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), 24.

If we accept our previous findings, we can now conclude that memory is not only a passive container of material to be recollected and gathered by the active and actual, present self. On the contrary, it is in itself active – creative and formative, influencing the final result of choice of the personal essence. Memory is in itself selective, while we do not remember every single event we've lived through and which we've experienced. Therefore, even if we take memory to be a passive container of materials to be formed and organized by reason, the most active and divine-like feature of human being, we would be compelled to treat it as failing to fulfill its purpose, because it could never deliver all of our past experiences for reason to choose freely among them. If there is choice to be made, then it is made on unstable grounds – and it is made by the joint interactive relationship of memory and reason.

Further, the fact that memory cannot deliver fullness of past experiences leaves us with the above-mentioned problem: resulting personal identity is always contingent and therefore can be put in question and once again reconstructed at any given moment. However, this should not be understood as a negative feature of human being, but as a constitutive feature – human being is a being of time.[26] Its constitutive and reflexive relationship with itself, opened by the presence of the actual and the past self, reflects the fundamental relationship ontologically inscribed in human being, namely relationship between us and God. Therefore, its identity is in a mode of becoming – not in the mode of full metaphysical or the empty formal identity.

The role of memory in such context is, as we have seen, undeniable – it is in fact delivering both content (material and the form) choice of the self. If it weren't so, then one could have an idea of his own personality only as a philosopher, rationally approaching to self, but not in ordinary mundane life. Of course, conscious use of reason in the process of self-becoming is an ideal case, presented by Augustine, while reason is the feature that can reveal this process in its – and our – essence. However,

[26] Teske, 38.

the true realm of freedom and choice is offered by the very temporal mode of our being, brought about through memory, through (our) consciousness that we were someone else and that we could once again become someone else – that we can choose who we are.[27]

Left to its own operations, memory has no principle of choosing – only the choice as such – and it can deliver our identity as a result of any of various possible interconnections of our past experiences. That is why the reason is important, while only reason can offer the true understanding of the abstract essence of human being, and then apply it to concrete circumstances.[28] Only reason can show that we are images of God, and that our choice of self should be governed by this fundamental relationship; but for it to be actualized, it has to be chosen over and over again. In Hannah Arendt's words:

> The very fact that man has not made himself but was created implies that the meaningfulness of human existence both lies outside itself and antedates it. [...] Hence, to "return to God" is actually the only way in which a created thing can "return to itself."[29]

III. Concluding remarks

St. Augustine's concept of personhood, as we have previously seen, lays in the very heart of his philosophy. The concept of personhood, namely, represents the very connection between the new Christian problems and ideas of St. Augustine on one side, and the old philosophical conceptual and argumentative framework of his thought on the other side. This problem is closely connected to the understanding of human soul in new

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[27] Memory, therefore, transcends itself, and because of that it points us beyond our own being. See Vaught, 63.

[28] Paige E. Hochschild, *Memory in Augustine's Theological Anthropology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 151-152.

[29] Arendt, 50-51.

Christian manner, since Christian soul cannot be pure and abstract form of human being, as later quarrels concerning Averroism clearly show. Therefore, such soul has to be personal one, has to retain all the individual moments and specific feature of a person living its life, in order to be considered responsible for its choices, good and bad deeds.

Now, if such understanding of human soul is to be philosophically analyzed, if it is even possible to accept it as a philosophical problem, then philosophy used for such analysis has to be subjected to a specific transformation. The question is more than important, given that the salvation of personal soul is in the very center of Christian doctrine; therefore, positive answer to such question would also define the possibility of rewarding collaboration between philosophy and Christianity in general. Nevertheless, the very transformation of philosophy that is here required should also be legitimized and proven as philosophical in its core, since mere proclamation of the possibility for Christianity and philosophy to be connected is not valid enough to persuade any rational mind.

Dealing with this problem, St. Augustine opted for a twofold strategy. Firstly, to be able to analyze his own soul, his own person in terms of philosophy, but yet honoring its Christian meaning and function, he had to reach for a rather unusual mode of philosophical writing. Namely, he presented us with his autobiography, with his own life told and explained in a mode of unique story of personal growth and development, diverging in various ways, but essentially leading towards baptism and transition from non-Christian to Christian self. In other words, St. Augustine presented us with a personal story organized in such a manner to clearly show all important aspects of both human life and retroactive knowledge of its fundamental meaning and truth. By extracting those essential aspects of human existence out of background horizon of individual life, Augustine aims for the impossible: to sketch, with a single stroke, both universal structure of human being, which applies to any individual human being, and the fact that

there are only individual human beings, singular persons with their personal and unique lives. Such strategy, finally, allows him to present his *Confessions* not only as a personal confession, but also as a philosophical treatise dedicated to the inquiry of human nature as such.[30]

However, Augustine's efforts in this respect are merely presenting the results of already acquired knowledge of self. No matter how natural and simple those parts of *Confessions* seem to be to their readers, they are not some plain personal confession, put to paper as a consequence of a uninterrupted mind flow. They are much more than that: this is carefully organized text, with philosophical point apart from doctrinal one. Most of all, they are clearly written as a reconstruction of personal life which is to give it its proper meaning: interpretative line of Augustine's life is to be seen both in the final point of the autobiographical books – namely, that human person is not to be realized in full without actual and engaged relationship with God,[31] and in the manner in which text was organized, since every single detail in it has its meaning and purpose, defined by the very same final point of Augustine we've mentioned.

If they would be considered only as personal confession, *Confessions* would need no additional elements, and St. Augustine could have stopped his writing at any given point. However, they are not only personal confession, but the presentation of knowledge of 'personal essence,' that is of knowledge of lived human essence, gained through analysis of personal self-awareness. Now, given that it is exactly knowledge – and not just some random explication of self – that is here in question, Augustine has to deliver some arguments in its favor; he has to show that his strategy is legitimate. Nevertheless, he cannot do that in the usual philosophical manner, using already known philosophical means, since the knowledge he gained is too interconnected with rather contingent and concrete life events.[32]

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[30] Hochschild, 142.

[31] *Confessions* 10.17.26.

[32] Steinhauser, 25.

Therefore, he reaches for another possibility: he legitimizes his project by explaining its origins, its conditions and, consequently, the very fact that it could not be legitimized in any other way.

In my opinion, non-autobiographical books of the *Confessions* are meant to do just that: to offer legitimatization of autobiographical books and the project St. Augustine realized with them. Namely, his presentation of the creation and of the difference between God and his creatures in terms of eternity and temporality ought to impose clear restrictions on possible line of conclusion – so the mind would accept the fundamental temporal constitution of its own character. If our mind is also temporal in its essence, although it can contemplate on eternal and immutable things, it has to consider that the knowledge it can deliver is also temporal and mutable – especially if it is knowledge of human (and its own) essence, which is to be understood as temporal. Therefore, if such knowledge is to be delivered not only in terms of stating that human essence is mutable, but in full expression of the content of that statement, manner in which it is presented also has to indicate the fundamental temporality of its subject. Autobiographical mode of writing is, thus, proved as a proper manner of verbal expression of human essence, since it is always personal and individual human soul.

However, Augustine was not satisfied with just that – he also presented the concept of memory and its analysis, as the constitutive feature of human being allowing for both our awareness of ourselves in our temporal and mutable nature and our ability to use that awareness to gain proper philosophical knowledge of our nature and its character.[33] Memory is, therefore, *conditio sine qua non* of any self-understanding, be it ordinary non-theoretical semi-unconscious understanding of ourselves as having some kind of past, present and future,[34] or be it highly theoretical and philosophical knowledge of temporality as the fundamental mode of human being. To

[33] Hochschild, 144.

[34] Teske, 46.

give an account of memory, then, is to give a legitimatization of the whole project of *Confessions*, in both their Christian and philosophical character.[35] The fact that such account was itself incorporated into a project to which it was supposed to give legitimatization should, finally, suggest that St. Augustine considered it crucial for his main goal – to show that Christianity and philosophy are closely interconnected.[36]

The account of memory St. Augustine presents us with is, however, rather unusual. As we have already seen, memory is to be understood as an active faculty, not as a storage container for past experiences. Memory is not only active, but also creative faculty of human being, for it organizes, creates and recreates various experiences into a more or less coherent web we consider to be our person. Such a web, of course, could be reconstructed at any given moment merely by enlarging it with some new fragments of memory, or by diminishing it through discarding some fragment. Such possibilities are endless, and they are always presented in memory and through memory.[37] However, freedom of memory to make any of such connections, although it presents the very foundation of personhood according to St. Augustine, is not able to lead us to proper knowledge of our personal essence; only reason can do that. Memory, on the contrary, can deliver anything but the knowledge – it is a mode of self-experience, temporally orientated towards past.[38]

Nevertheless, its creative capacities can be used for a more dignified purpose: for achieving life which is led according to the truth of oneself as a human being. Namely, once reason delivers proper knowledge of our human essence and its mode of being, such knowledge can retroactively be applied to organize and define our awareness of ourselves; it can become a principle regulating workings of memory, as presented with

[35] Hochschild, 1.
[36] Vaught, 56-57.
[37] Vaught, 58.
[38] Cavandini, 179.

Confessions. The problem of personhood in philosophy of St. Augustine is, therefore, always to be considered in both of its aspects – the theoretical and contemplative one, as well as the practical, performative and lived one.

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