

BOOK X

Memory

i (1) May I know you, who know me. May I 'know as I also am known' (1 Cor. 13: 12). Power of my soul, enter into it and fit it for yourself, so that you may have and hold it 'without spot or blemish' (Eph. 5: 27). This is my hope, and that is why I speak. In this hope I am placing my delight when my delight is in what it ought to be. As to the other pleasures of life, regret at their loss should be in inverse proportion to the extent to which one weeps for losing them. The less we weep for them, the more we ought to be weeping. 'Behold, you have loved the truth' (Ps. 51: 8), for he who 'does the truth comes to the light' (John 3: 21). This I desire to do, in my heart before you in confession, but before many witnesses with my pen.

ii (2) Indeed, Lord, to your eyes, the abyss of human consciousness is naked (Heb. 4: 13). What could be hidden within me, even if I were unwilling to confess it to you? I would be hiding you from myself, not myself from you. Now, however, my groaning is witness that I am displeased with myself. You are radiant and give delight and are so an object of love and longing that I am ashamed of myself and reject myself. You are my choice, and only by your gift can I please either you or myself. Before you, then, Lord, whatever I am is manifest, and I have already spoken of the benefit I derive from making confession to you. I am not doing this merely by physical words and sounds, but by words from my soul and a cry from my mind, which is known to your ear. When I am evil, making confession to you is simply to be displeased with myself. When I am good, making confession to you is simply to make no claim on my own behalf, for you, Lord, 'confer blessing on the righteous' (Ps. 5: 13) but only after you have first 'justified the ungodly' (Rom. 4: 5). Therefore, my God, my confession before you is made both in silence and not in silence. It is silent in that it is no audible sound; but in love it cries aloud. If anything I say to men is right, that is what you have first heard from me. Moreover, you hear nothing true from my lips which you have not first told me.

iii (3) Why then should I be concerned for human readers to hear my confessions? It is not they who are going to ‘heal my sicknesses’ (Ps. 102: 3). The human race is inquisitive about other people’s lives, but negligent to correct their own. Why do they demand to hear from me what I am when they refuse to hear from you what they are? And when they hear me talking about myself, how can they know if I am telling the truth, when no one ‘knows what is going on in a person except the human spirit which is within’ (1 Cor. 2: 11)? But if they were to hear about themselves from you, they could not say ‘The Lord is lying’. To hear you speaking about oneself is to know oneself.¹ Moreover, anyone who knows himself and says ‘That is false’ must be a liar. But ‘love believes all things’ (1 Cor. 13: 7), at least among those love has bonded to itself and made one. I also, Lord, so make my confession to you that I may be heard by people to whom I cannot prove that my confession is true. But those whose ears are opened by love believe me.

(4) Nevertheless, make it clear to me, physician of my most intimate self, that good results from my present undertaking. Stir up the heart when people read and hear the confessions of my past wickednesses, which you have forgiven and covered up to grant me happiness in yourself, transforming my soul by faith and your sacrament. Prevent their heart from sinking into the sleep of despair and saying ‘It is beyond my power.’ On the contrary, the heart is aroused in the love of your mercy and the sweetness of your grace, by which every weak person is given power, while dependence on grace produces awareness of one’s own weakness. Good people are delighted to hear about the past sins of those who have now shed them. The pleasure is not in the evils as such, but that though they were so once, they are not like that now.²

My Lord, every day my conscience makes confession, relying on the hope of your mercy as more to be trusted than its own innocence. So what profit is there, I ask, when, to human readers, by this book I confess to you who I now am, not what I once was? The profit derived from confessing my past I have seen and spoken about. But

¹ Like Plotinus and Porphyry, Augustine understood the Delphic maxim ‘Know yourself’ as the path to knowing God; conversely, knowing God is the way to self-knowledge. Plotinus 5. 3. 7. 2 f.

² The paragraph shows Augustine sensitive to the possibility that some among his readers may have a prurient interest in the record of his sexual excesses in youth.

what I now am at this time when I am writing my confessions many wish to know, both those who know me and those who do not but have heard something from me or about me; their ear is not attuned to my heart at the point where I am whatever I am. So as I make my confession, they wish to learn about my inner self, where they cannot penetrate with eye or ear or mind. Yet although they wish to do that and are ready to believe me, they cannot really have certain knowledge. The love which makes them good people tells them that I am not lying in confessing about myself, and the love in them believes me.

iv (5) But what edification do they hope to gain by this? Do they desire to join me in thanksgiving when they hear how, by your gift, I have come close to you, and do they pray for me when they hear how I am held back by my own weight? To such sympathetic readers I will indeed reveal myself. For it is no small gift, my Lord God, if 'many give you thanks on our account' (2 Cor. 1: 11), and if many petition you on our behalf. A brotherly mind will love in me what you teach to be lovable, and will regret in me what you teach to be regrettable. This is a mark of a Christian brother's mind, not an outsider's—not that of 'the sons of aliens whose mouth speaks vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of iniquity' (Ps. 143: 7 f.). A brotherly person rejoices on my account when he approves me, but when he disapproves, he grieves on my behalf. Whether he approves or disapproves, he is loving me. To such people I will reveal myself. They will take heart from my good traits, and sigh with sadness at my bad ones. My good points are instilled by you and are your gifts. My bad points are my faults and your judgements on them. Let them take heart from the one and regret the other. Let both praise and tears ascend in your sight from brotherly hearts, your censers. But you Lord, who take delight in the odour of your holy temple, 'have pity on me according to your mercy for your name's sake' (Ps. 50: 3). You never abandon what you have begun. Make perfect my imperfections.

(6) When I am confessing not what I was but what I am now, the benefit lies in this: I am making this confession not only before you with a secret exaltation and fear and with a secret grief touched by hope, but also in the ears of believing sons of men, sharers in my joy, conjoined with me in mortality, my fellow citizens and pilgrims,

some who have gone before, some who follow after, and some who are my companions in this life. They are your servants, my brothers, who by your will are your sons and my masters. You have commanded me to serve them if I wish to live with you and in dependence on you. This your word would have meant little to me if it had been only a spoken precept and had not first been acted out.³ For my part, I carry out your command by actions and words; but I discharge it under the protection of your wings (Ps. 16: 8; 35: 8). It would be a far too perilous responsibility unless under your wings my soul were submissive to you. My weakness is known to you. I am a child. But my Father ever lives and my protector is sufficient to guard me. He is one and the same who begat me and watches over me. You yourself are all my good qualities. You are the omnipotent one, who are with me even before I am with you. So, to those whom you command me to serve, I will reveal not who I was, but what I have now come to be and what I continue to be. 'But I do not sit in judgement on myself' (1 Cor. 4: 3). It is, therefore, in this spirit that I ask to be listened to.

v (7) You, Lord, are my judge. For even if 'no man knows the being of man except the spirit of man which is in him' (1 Cor. 2: 11), yet there is something of the human person which is unknown even to the 'spirit of man which is in him.' But you, Lord, know everything about the human person; for you made humanity. Although in your sight I despise myself and estimate myself to be dust and ashes (Gen. 18: 27), I nevertheless know something of you which I do not know about myself. Without question 'we see now through a mirror in an enigma', not yet 'face to face' (1 Cor. 13: 12). For this cause, as long as I am a traveller absent from you (2 Cor. 5: 6), I am more present to myself than to you. Yet I know that you cannot be in any way subjected to violence,⁴ whereas I do not know which temptations I can resist and which I cannot. There is hope because 'you are faithful and do not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear, but with the temptation make also a way of escape so that we can bear it' (1 Cor. 10: 13). Accordingly, let me confess what I know of myself. Let me confess too what I do not know of myself. For what I know of myself I know because you grant me light, and

³ By Jesus Christ.

⁴ Manichees held the opposite opinion.

what I do not know of myself, I do not know until such time as my darkness becomes 'like noonday' before your face (Isa. 58: 10).

vi (8) My love for you, Lord, is not an uncertain feeling but a matter of conscious certainty. With your word you pierced my heart, and I loved you. But heaven and earth and everything in them on all sides tell me to love you. Nor do they cease to tell everyone that 'they are without excuse' (Rom. 1: 20). But at a profounder level you will have mercy on whom you will have mercy and will show pity on whom you will have pity (Rom. 9: 15). Otherwise heaven and earth would be uttering your praises to the deaf. But when I love you, what do I love? It is not physical beauty nor temporal glory nor the brightness of light dear to earthly eyes, nor the sweet melodies of all kinds of songs, nor the gentle odour of flowers and ointments and perfumes, nor manna or honey, nor limbs welcoming the embraces of the flesh; it is not these I love when I love my God. Yet there is a light I love, and a food, and a kind of embrace when I love my God—a light, voice, odour, food, embrace of my inner man, where my soul is floodlit by light which space cannot contain, where there is sound that time cannot seize, where there is a perfume which no breeze disperses, where there is a taste for food no amount of eating can lessen, and where there is a bond of union that no satiety can part. That is what I love when I love my God.⁵

(9) And what is the object of my love? I asked the earth and it said: 'It is not I.' I asked all that is in it; they made the same confession (Job 28: 12 f.). I asked the sea, the deeps, the living creatures that creep, and they responded: 'We are not your God, look beyond us.' I asked the breezes which blow and the entire air with its inhabitants said: 'Anaximenes was mistaken; I am not God.'⁶ I asked heaven, sun, moon and stars; they said: 'Nor are we the God whom you seek.' And I said to all these things in my external environment: 'Tell me of my God who you are not, tell me something about him.' And with a great voice they cried out: 'He made us' (Ps. 99: 3). My question was the attention I gave to them, and their response was their beauty.

⁵ Cf. above VIII. iv (9). The mystical idea of five spiritual senses (repeated in X. xxvii (38)) was developed already by Origen in the third century. For the ecstasy of Christ's arrow, like Cupid, see above IX. ii (3).

⁶ Anaximenes of Miletus, in the sixth century BC, held air to be the origin of all else, and to be divine (cf. *City of God* 8. 5). The argument of Augustine here is strikingly like Plotinus 3. 2. 3. 20 ff.

Then I turned towards myself, and said to myself: 'Who are you?' I replied: 'A man.' I see in myself a body and a soul, one external, the other internal. Which of these should I have questioned about my God, for whom I had already searched through the physical order of things from earth to heaven, as far as I could send the rays of my eyes⁷ as messengers? What is inward is superior. All physical evidence is reported to the mind which presides and judges of the responses of heaven and earth and all things in them, as they say 'We are not God' and 'He made us'. The inner man knows this—I, I the mind through the sense-perception of my body. I asked the mass of the sun about my God, and it replied to me: 'It is not I, but he made me.'

(10) Surely this beauty should be self-evident to all who are of sound mind. Then why does it not speak to everyone in the same way? Animals both small and large see it, but they cannot put a question about it. In them reason does not sit in judgement upon the deliverances of the senses. But human beings can put a question so that 'the invisible things of God are understood and seen through the things which are made' (Rom. 1: 20). Yet by love of created things they are subdued by them,⁸ and being thus made subject become incapable of exercising judgement. Moreover, created things do not answer those who question them if power to judge is lost. There is no alteration in the voice which is their beauty. If one person sees while another sees and questions, it is not that they appear one way to the first and another way to the second. It is rather that the created order speaks to all, but is understood by those who hear its outward voice and compare it with the truth within themselves. Truth says to me: 'Your God is not earth or heaven or any physical body.' The nature of that kind of being says this. They see it: nature is a physical mass, less in the part than in the whole.⁹ In that respect, my soul, I tell you that you are already superior. For you animate the mass of your body and provide it with life, since no body is capable of doing that for another body.¹⁰ But your God is for you the life of your life.

⁷ In ancient optics the eyes are not merely passive recipients of images transmitted from the objects seen. A ray comes from the eyes: cf. Plotinus 4. 5. 7. 24; 5. 5. 7. 24 ff.

⁸ Plotinus 5. 1. 1. 18: 'To be in admiring pursuit is to admit inferiority.' Plotinus goes on (5. 1. 2) to argue the soul's superiority to all matter in earth or sky.

⁹ Plotinus 5. 1. 2. 30 ff. has this argument.

¹⁰ Plotinus 4. 3. 7. 14 ff.; 4. 3. 10. 38.

vii (11) What then do I love when I love my God? Who is he who is higher than the highest element in my soul? Through my soul I will ascend to him. I will rise above the force by which I am bonded to the body and fill its frame with vitality. It is not by that force that I find my God. For then he would be found by 'the horse and mule which have no understanding' (Ps. 31: 9), since it is the same force by which their bodies also have life. There exists another power, not only that by which I give life to my body but also that by which I enable its senses to perceive. The Lord made this for me, commanding the eye not to hear, the ear not to see, but providing the eye to see and the ear to hear, and each of the other senses in turn to be in its proper place and carry out its proper function.¹¹ I who act through these diverse functions am one mind. I will also rise above this power. For this also is possessed by the horse and the mule. They also perceive through the body.

viii (12) I will therefore rise above that natural capacity in a step by step ascent to him who made me. I come to the fields and vast palaces of memory,¹² where are the treasuries of innumerable images of all kinds of objects brought in by sense-perception. Hidden there is whatever we think about, a process which may increase or diminish or in some way alter the deliverance of the senses and whatever else has been deposited and placed on reserve and has not been swallowed up and buried in oblivion. When I am in this storehouse, I ask that it produce what I want to recall, and immediately certain things come out; some things require a longer search, and have to be drawn out as it were from more recondite receptacles. Some memories pour out to crowd the mind and, when one is searching and asking for something quite different, leap forward into the centre as if saying 'Surely we are what you want?' With the hand of my heart I chase them away from the face of my memory until what I want is freed of mist and emerges from its hiding places. Other memories come before me on demand with ease and without any confusion in their order. Memories of earlier

¹¹ Echo of Plotinus 5. 5. 12. 1-6.

¹² *Memoria* for Augustine is a deeper and wider term than our 'memory'. In the background lies the Platonic doctrine of *anamnesis*, explaining the experience of learning as bringing to consciousness what, from an earlier existence, the soul already knows. But Augustine develops the notion of memory by associating it with the unconscious ('the mind knows things it does not know it knows'), with self-awareness, and so with the human yearning for true happiness found only in knowing God.

events give way to those which followed, and as they pass are stored away available for retrieval when I want them. All that is what happens when I recount a narrative from memory.

(13) Memory preserves in distinct particulars and general categories all the perceptions which have penetrated, each by its own route of entry. Thus light and all colours and bodily shapes enter by the eyes; by the ears all kinds of sounds; all odours by the entrance of the nostrils; all tastes by the door of the mouth. The power of sensation in the entire body distinguishes what is hard or soft, hot or cold, smooth or rough, heavy or light, whether external or internal to the body. Memory's huge cavern, with its mysterious, secret, and indescribable nooks and crannies, receives all these perceptions, to be recalled when needed and reconsidered. Every one of them enters into memory, each by its own gate, and is put on deposit there. The objects themselves do not enter, but the images of the perceived objects are available to the thought recalling them. But who can say how images are created, even though it may be clear by which senses they are grasped and stored within. For even when I am in darkness and silence, in my memory I can produce colours at will, and distinguish between white and black and between whatever other colours I wish. Sounds do not invade and disturb my consideration of what my eyes absorb, even though they are present and as it were hide in an independent storehouse. On demand, if I wish, they can be immediately present. With my tongue silent and my throat making no sound, I can sing what I wish. The images of colours, which are no less present, do not intrude themselves or interrupt, when I draw upon another treasury containing sounds which flowed in through the ears. So I recall at pleasure other memories which have been taken in and collected together by other senses. I distinguish the odour of lilies from that of violets without smelling anything at all. I prefer honey to a sweet wine, a smooth taste to a rough one, not actually tasting or touching at the moment, but by recollection.

(14) These actions are inward, in the vast hall of my memory. There sky, land, and sea are available to me together with all the sensations I have been able to experience in them, except for those which I have forgotten. There also I meet myself and recall what I am, what I have done, and when and where and how I was affected

when I did it. There is everything that I remember, whether I experienced it directly or believed the word of others. Out of the same abundance in store, I combine with past events images of various things, whether experienced directly or believed on the basis of what I have experienced; and on this basis I reason about future actions and events and hopes, and again think of all these things in the present. 'I shall do this and that', I say to myself within that vast recess of my mind which is full of many, rich images, and this act or that follows. 'O that this or that were so', 'May God avert this or that'. I say these words to myself and, as I speak, there are present images of everything I am speaking of, drawn out of the same treasure-house of memory. I would never say anything like that if these images were not present.

(15) This power of memory is great, very great, my God. It is a vast and infinite profundity. Who has plumbed its bottom? This power is that of my mind and is a natural endowment, but I myself cannot grasp the totality of what I am. Is the mind, then, too restricted to compass itself, so that we have to ask what is that element of itself which it fails to grasp? Surely that cannot be external to itself; it must be within the mind. How then can it fail to grasp it? This question moves me to great astonishment. Amazement grips me. People are moved to wonder by mountain peaks,¹³ by vast waves of the sea, by broad waterfalls on rivers, by the all-embracing extent of the ocean, by the revolutions of the stars. But in themselves they are uninterested. They experience no surprise that when I was speaking of all these things, I was not seeing them with my eyes. On the other hand, I would not have spoken of them unless the mountains and waves and rivers and stars (which I have seen) and the ocean (which I believe on the reports of others) I could see inwardly with dimensions just as great as if I were actually looking at them outside my mind. Yet when I was seeing them, I was not absorbing them in the act of seeing with my eyes. Nor are the actual objects present to me, but only their images. And I know by which bodily sense a thing became imprinted on my mind.

ix (16) But these are not the only things carried by the vast capacity of my memory. Here also are all the skills acquired through the liberal arts which have not been forgotten. They are pushed

¹³ This passage was found intensely moving by Petrarch.

into the background in some interior place—which is not a place. In their case I carry not the images but the very skills themselves. For what literature is, what the art of dialectical debate is, how many kinds of question there are—all that I know about these matters lies in my memory in this distinctive way. It is not that I retain the images and leave the object outside me. It is not a sound which has passed away, like a voice which makes its impression through the ears and leaves behind a trace allowing it to be recalled, as if it were sounding though in fact it is no longer sounding. Nor does it resemble an odour which, as it passes and evaporates in the winds, affects the sense of smell and so puts into the memory an image of itself, which we recover through an act of recollection. Nor is it like food which cannot actually be tasted once it is in the stomach, and yet leaves the memory of its taste. Nor is it analogous to something which the body touches and feels, which even after contact with us has ceased, can be imagined by the memory. These objects have no entry to the memory: only their images are grasped with astonishing rapidity, and then replaced as if in wonderful storerooms, so that in an amazing way the memory produces them.

x (17) When I hear that there are three kinds of question, viz. 'Does P exist? What is P? What kind of a thing is P?'¹⁴ I retain images of the sounds which constitute these words. I know that they have passed through the air as a noise, and that they no longer exist. Moreover, the ideas signified by those sounds I have not touched by sense-perception, nor have I seen them independently of my mind. I hid in my memory not their images but the realities. How they came to me let them explain if they can. I run through all the entrance doors of my body but do not find one by which they have entered in. My eyes say: 'If they are coloured, we have informed you about them.' My ears say: 'If they made any sound, we were responsible for telling you.' My nostrils say: 'If they gave off any odour, they passed our way.' The sense of taste also says: 'If they are tasteless, do not ask me.' Touch says: 'If the object is not physical, I have no contact with it, and if I have no contact, I have no information to give on the subject.' Then how did these matters

¹⁴ School questions (Cicero, *De partitione oratoria* 62), interestingly different from those of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* 2. 1. (Is it the case that P? Why it is the case that P; if X is; what X is. Aristotle does not ask if P exists, or what P is.) The Neoplatonic schools started from Plato (?), *Ep.* 7, 343b 8, as in Plotinus 5. 5. 2. 7.

enter my memory? I do not know how. For when I learnt them, I did not believe what someone else was telling me, but within myself I recognized them and assented to their truth. I entrusted them to my mind as if storing them up to be produced when required. So they were there even before I had learnt them, but were not in my memory. Accordingly, when they were formulated, how and why did I recognize them and say, 'Yes, that is true'? The answer must be that they were already in the memory, but so remote and pushed into the background, as if in most secret caverns, that unless they were dug out by someone drawing attention to them, perhaps I could not have thought of them.¹⁵

xi (18) On this theme of notions where we do not draw images through our senses, but discern them inwardly not through images but as they really are and through the concepts themselves, we find that the process of learning is simply this: by thinking we, as it were, gather together ideas which the memory contains in a dispersed and disordered way, and by concentrating our attention we arrange them in order as if ready to hand, stored in the very memory where previously they lay hidden, scattered, and neglected. Now they easily come forward under the direction of the mind familiar with them. How many things in this category my memory carries which were once discovered and, as I have said, were ordered ready to hand—things we are said to have learnt and to know! Yet if for quite short periods of time I cease to recollect them, then again they sink below the surface and slip away into remote recesses, so that they have to be thought out as if they were quite new, drawn again from the same store (for there is nowhere else for them to go). Once again they have to be brought together (*cogenda*) so as to be capable of being known; that means they have to be gathered (*colligenda*) from their dispersed state. Hence is derived the word cogitate. To bring together (*cogo*) and to cogitate (*cogito*) are words related as *ago* (I do) to *agito* (agitate) or *facio* (I make) to *factito* (I make frequently).¹⁶ Nevertheless the mind claims the verb cogitate for its own province. It is what is collected (that is, by force) in the mind, not elsewhere, which is strictly speaking the object of recollection.

¹⁵ Augustine echoes Plato (*Meno*) that learning is remembering, bringing to the conscious mind something already present.

¹⁶ Augustine follows Varro, 'On the Latin language' 6. 43. *Cogo*, derived from con + ago, means both 'collect' and 'compel'. *Cogito* is derived from con + agito.

xii (19) Moreover, the memory contains the innumerable principles and laws of numbers and dimensions. None of them has been impressed on memory through any bodily sense-perception. They are not coloured. They give out no sound or odour. They cannot be tasted or touched. I have heard the sounds of the words which signify these things when they are the subject of discussion. But the sounds are one thing, the principles another. The sounds vary according to whether the terms are Latin or Greek. But numerical principles are neither Greek nor Latin nor any other kind of language. I have seen the lines drawn by architects. They are extremely thin, like a spider's web. But in pure mathematics lines are quite different. They are not images of the lines about which my bodily eye informs me. A person knows them without any thought of a physical line of some kind; he knows them within himself. I am also made aware of numbers which we use for counting on the basis of all the senses of the body. But they are different from the numbers by which we are able to think mathematically.¹⁷ Nor are they the images of numbers as mental concepts, which truly belong to the realm of being. A person who does not see that mental numbers exist may laugh at me for saying this, but I am sorry for the person who mocks me.

xiii (20) All these ideas I hold in my memory, and the way I hold them in the memory is the way that I learnt them. Many quite mistaken objections to these ideas I have heard and hold in my memory. Although they are false, yet it is not false that I remember them. I have seen the difference between the ideas which are true and the objections which are false, and this too I remember. Moreover, in one way in the present I see that I make this distinction, and in another way I remember how I often made this distinction whenever I used to give the matter thought. So I both remember that I often thought about these questions and also store up in the memory what in the present I discern and understand, so that afterwards I remember that at this time I understood them. Accordingly, I also remember that I remember, just as, in the future, if I recall the fact

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Physics* 4. 11, observed 'Number has two senses: what is counted or countable, and that by which we count.' Ancient Pythagoreans and Platonists were fascinated by the problem of numbers, especially outside the world of the senses in the realm of mind. The impact of these debates on Aristotle is evident in the last two books of his *Metaphysics*. A wholly independent discussion of the nature of number (without influence on Augustine) is in Plotinus 6. 6.

that at this present time I could remember these things, I shall certainly be recalling this by the power of memory.

xiv (21) The affections of my mind are also contained in the same memory. They are not there in the same way in which the mind itself holds them when it experiences them, but in another very different way such as that in which the memory's power holds memory itself. So I can be far from glad in remembering myself to have been glad, and far from sad when I recall my past sadness. Without fear I remember how at a particular time I was afraid, and without any cupidity now I am mindful of cupidity long ago. Sometimes also, on the contrary, I remember with joy a sadness that has passed and with sadness a lost joy. So far as the body is concerned, that is no cause for surprise. The mind is one thing, the body another. Therefore it is not surprising if I happily remember a physical pain that has passed away. But in the present case, the mind is the very memory itself. For when we give an order which has to be memorized, we say 'See that you hold that in your mind', and when we forget we say 'It was not in my mind' and 'It slipped my mind'. We call memory itself the mind. Since that is the case, what is going on when, in gladly remembering past sadness, my mind is glad and my memory sad? My mind is glad for the fact that gladness is in it, but memory is not saddened by the fact that regret is in it. Surely this does not mean that memory is independent of the mind. Who could say that? No doubt, then, memory is, as it were, the stomach of the mind, whereas gladness and sadness are like sweet and bitter food. When they are entrusted to the memory, they are as if transferred to the stomach and can there be stored; but they cannot be tasted. It is ridiculous to think this illustration offers a real parallel; nevertheless, it is not wholly inapposite.

(22) Note also that I am drawing on my memory when I say there are four perturbations of the mind—cupidity, gladness, fear, sadness¹⁸ and from memory I produce whatever I say in discussing them, when I am dividing particular cases according to their species and genus, and when I am offering a definition. I find in memory what I have to say and produce it from that source. Yet none of these perturbations disturbs me when by act of recollection I remember them. And even before I recalled and reconsidered them, they were

¹⁸ Cicero, *De finibus* 3. 10. 35; *Tusculan Disputations* 4. 6. 11.

there. That is why by reminding myself I was able to bring them out from memory's store. Perhaps then, just as food is brought from the stomach in the process of rumination, so also by recollection these things are brought up from the memory. But then why in the mind or 'mouth' of the person speaking, that is to say reminiscing, about past gladness or sadness is there no taste of sweetness or bitterness? Or is this a point where the incomplete resemblance between thought and rumination makes the analogy misleading? Who would willingly speak of such matters if, every time we mentioned sadness or fear, we were compelled to experience grief or terror? Yet we would not speak about them at all unless in our memory we could find not only the sounds of the names attaching to the images imprinted by the physical senses, but also the notions of the things themselves. These notions we do not receive through any bodily entrance. The mind itself perceives them through the experience of its passions and entrusts them to memory; or the memory itself retains them without any conscious act of commitment.

xv (23) Whether this happens through the medium of images or otherwise, who could easily tell? For example, I mention a stone, or I mention the sun, when the objects themselves are not present to my senses. Of course images of them are available to me in memory. I may mention physical pain when it is not present to me and I feel no discomfort. Yet if its image were not present in my memory, I would not know what I was talking about, and in discussing it I could not distinguish it from pleasure. I mention physical health. When I am in good health, the thing itself is present to me. But unless the image of it were also present in my memory, I would in no way remember what the sound of this word signified, nor would sick people know what was meant when health was mentioned, unless by the power of memory they held the same image, even though the thing itself was absent from their body. I mention the numbers by which we count things. It is remarkable that in my memory are present not their images but the numbers themselves. I mention the image of the sun, and this is present in my memory. I recall not the image of its image, but the image itself. In my act of remembering this image is available to me. I mention memory and I recognize what I am speaking about. Where is my recognition located but in memory itself? Surely memory is present to itself through itself, and not through its own image.

xvi (24) What then? When I mention forgetfulness, I similarly recognize what I am speaking of. How could I recognize it except through memory? I refer not to the sound of the word but to the thing which it signifies. If I had forgotten what the force of the sound was, I would be incapable of recognizing it. So when I remember memory, memory is available to itself through itself. But when I remember forgetfulness, both memory and forgetfulness are present—memory by means of which I could remember, forgetfulness which I did remember. But what is forgetfulness except loss of memory? How then is it present for me to remember when, if it is present, I have no power of remembering? What we remember, we retain by memory. But unless we could recall forgetfulness, we could never hear the word and recognize the thing which the word signifies. Therefore memory retains forgetfulness. So it is there lest we forget what, when present, makes us forget. Should the deduction from this be that, when we are remembering forgetfulness, it is not through its actual presence in the memory but through its image? If forgetfulness were present through itself, it would cause us not to remember but to forget. Who can find a solution to this problem? Who can grasp what is going on?

(25) I at least, Lord, have difficulty at this point, and I find my own self hard to grasp. I have become for myself a soil which is a cause of difficulty and much sweat (Gen. 3: 17 f.). For our present inquiry is not to 'examine the zones of heaven',¹⁹ nor are we measuring the distances between stars or the balancing of the earth. It is I who remember, I who am mind. It is hardly surprising if what I am not is distant from me. But what is nearer to me than myself? Indeed the power of my memory is something I do not understand when without it I cannot speak about myself. What shall I say when it is certain to me that I remember forgetfulness? Shall I say that what I recall is not in my memory? Or shall I say that forgetfulness is in my memory for this very purpose that I should not be forgetful? Both propositions are quite absurd. What of a third solution? Can I say that my memory holds the image of forgetfulness, not forgetfulness itself, when I am remembering it? How can I say this when, for the image of an object to be impressed upon the memory, it is first necessary for the object itself to be present, so that an impression of

¹⁹ Ennius, *Iphigenia*, quoted by Cicero, *On Divination* 2. 30; *Republic* 1. 30.

the image becomes possible? That is how I remember Carthage, and all places where I have been, the faces of people I have seen, and information derived from the other senses. That is also how I know of the healthy or painful condition of my body. When these things were present, memory took images of them, images which I could contemplate when they were present and reconsider in mind when I recollected them even though absent from me. If, then, memory holds forgetfulness not through itself but through its image, forgetfulness must itself have been present for its image to be registered. But when it was present, how did it inscribe its image upon the memory, when, by its very presence, forgetfulness deletes whatever it finds already there? Yet in some way, though incomprehensible and inexplicable, I am certain that I remember forgetfulness itself, and yet forgetfulness destroys what we remember.

xvii (26) Great is the power of memory, an awe-inspiring mystery, my God, a power of profound and infinite multiplicity. And this is mind, this is I myself. What then am I, my God? What is my nature? It is characterized by diversity, by life of many forms, utterly immeasurable. See the broad plains and caves and caverns of my memory. The varieties there cannot be counted, and are, beyond any reckoning, full of innumerable things. Some are there through images, as in the case of all physical objects, some by immediate presence like intellectual skills, some by indefinable notions or recorded impressions, as in the case of the mind's emotions, which the memory retains even when the mind is not experiencing them, although whatever is in the memory is in the mind. I run through all these things, I fly here and there, and penetrate their working as far as I can. But I never reach the end. So great is the power of memory, so great is the force of life in a human being whose life is mortal. What then ought I to do, my God? You are my true life. I will transcend even this my power which is called memory. I will rise beyond it to move towards you, sweet light. What are you saying to me? Here I am climbing up through my mind towards you who are constant above me. I will pass beyond even that power of mind which is called memory, desiring to reach you by the way through which you can be reached, and to be bonded to you by the way in which it is possible to be bonded.

Beasts and birds also have a memory. Otherwise they could not rediscover their dens and nests, and much else that they are habitually

accustomed to. Habit could have no influence on them in any respect except by memory. So I will also ascend beyond memory to touch him who 'set me apart from quadrupeds and made me wiser than the birds of heaven' (Job 35: 11). As I rise above memory, where am I to find you? My true good and gentle source of reassurance, where shall I find you? If I find you outside my memory, I am not mindful of you. And how shall I find you if I am not mindful of you?

xviii (27) The woman who lost her drachma searched for it with a lamp (Luke 15: 8). She would not have found it unless she had remembered it. When she found it, how could she know that it was the one she lost, if she had failed to remember it? I recall myself to have searched for and found many lost items. From this experience I know that, when I was searching for one of them and someone said to me 'Perhaps this is it, perhaps that is', I would always say 'No' until I was offered the object which I sought. Unless I had it in my memory, whatever it was, even if an offer was being made to me, I would not have found it because I would not have recognized it. That is also what happens when we seek and find something lost. If anything such as a visible body disappears from sight but not from memory, its image is retained within, and the search continues until it is once more seen. When it is found, it is recognized from the image which is within. We do not say we have found the thing which was lost unless we recognize it, and we cannot recognize it if we do not remember it. The object was lost to the eyes, but held in the memory.

xix (28) What when the memory itself loses something? This happens when we forget and attempt to recall. The only place to search is in the memory itself. If something other than what we want is offered us, we reject it until the thing we are looking for turns up. And when it comes, we say 'That is it.' We would not say this unless we recognized it, and we would not recognize it unless we remembered. It seems certain, then, that we had forgotten.

Or perhaps it had not totally gone: part was retained, and was used to help in the search for another part. That would presuppose that memory felt itself to be working with a whole to which it was accustomed; as if limping from being deprived of support to which it was accustomed, it would demand the return of the missing

element. For instance, our eyes may happen on a person known to us or we may think of him, and we try to recall his name. Other names that occur will not fit the case, because we are not in the habit of associating them with him, and so we reject them until that one comes up which at once corresponds to the familiarly known and is accepted as correct. Where does the right name come from if not from memory itself? Even when we recognize it after being prompted by someone else, memory is its source. We do not believe it as something we are hearing for the first time but, because we remember it, agree that the name mentioned is correct. If, however, it were wholly effaced from the mind, we would not remember even when prompted. When at least we remember ourselves to have forgotten, we have not totally forgotten. But if we have completely forgotten, we cannot even search for what has been lost.

xx (29) How then am I to seek for you, Lord? When I seek for you, my God, my quest is for the happy life. I will seek you that 'my soul may live' (Isa. 55: 3), for my body derives life from my soul, and my soul derives life from you. How then shall I seek for the happy life? It is not mine until I say: 'It is enough, it is there.' But then I ought to say how my quest proceeds; is it by remembering, as if I had forgotten it and still recall that I had forgotten? Or is it through an urge to learn something quite unknown, whether I never had known it or had so forgotten it that I do not even remember having forgotten it? Is not the happy life that which all desire, which indeed no one fails to desire? But how have they known about it so as to want it? Where did they see it to love it? Certainly we have the desire for it, but how I do not know. There is also another sense in which a person who has it is happy at a particular time, and there are some who are happy in hope of becoming so. The kind of happiness they have is inferior to that of those who have the real thing. But they are better than those who are happy neither in actuality nor in hope. Even they would not wish to be happy unless they had some idea of happiness. That this is what they want is quite certain, but how they came to know it I do not know. So also I do not know what kind of knowledge is theirs when they have it. My inquiry is whether this knowing is in the memory because, if it is there, we had happiness once. I do not now ask whether we were all happy individually or only corporately in that

man who first sinned, in whom we all died [Adam, 1 Cor. 15: 22] and from whom we were all born into a condition of misery.²⁰ My question is whether the happy life is in the memory. For we would not love it if we did not know what it is. We have heard the term, and all of us acknowledge that we are looking for the thing. The sound is not the cause of our pleasure. When a Greek hears the Latin term, it gives him no pleasure when he does not understand what has been said. But we are given pleasure, as he would be too if he heard this expressed in Greek. The thing itself is neither Greek nor Latin. Greeks and Latins and people of other languages yearn to acquire it. Therefore it is known to everyone. If they could be asked if they want to be happy, without hesitation they would answer with one voice that they so wish. That would not be the case unless the thing itself, to which this term refers, was being held in the memory.

xxi (30) That is surely not the way in which a person who has seen Carthage remembers it. For the happy life is not seen by the eyes, because it is no physical entity. It is surely not the way in which we remember numbers. A person who has a grasp of numbers does not still seek to acquire this knowledge. But the happy life we already have in our knowledge, and so we love it; and yet we still wish to acquire it so that we may be happy. Surely it is not the way in which we remember eloquence? No. When this word is heard, the thing itself is recalled by those who, though not yet eloquent, in many cases desire to be so. That shows that they already have a knowledge of it. It is through the bodily senses that they have seen other people who were eloquent, were given pleasure, and desired to possess it too. Yet without the basis of inward knowledge, they would not have been pleased nor wished to be eloquent unless they were given pleasure. But it is not by any bodily sense that we discern the happy life in others.

Surely this is not the way in which we recall joy? Well, perhaps it is. For even when sad, I remember my times of joy, like a wretched person thinking of the happy life. It is never by bodily sense that I have seen my joy or heard or smelt or tasted or touched it. I experienced it in my mind when I was glad, and the knowledge of it

²⁰ For Augustine Adam was not merely the start of the human race, but the representative of humanity, so that 'we are all Adam'.

stuck in my memory, so that I could remind myself of it, sometimes with scorn, sometimes with desire, according to the varied character of the things which I remember myself delighting in. For I derived a sprinkling of pleasure even from discreditable acts which I now recall with hatred and execration. But sometimes my delight was in good and honourable things, which I recall with longing even though they are no longer part of my life. In this sense I am sad as I remember joy of long ago.

(31) Where and when, then, have I experienced the happy life for myself, so that I can remember and love and long for it? The desire for happiness is not in myself alone or in a few friends, but is found in everybody.²¹ If we did not know this with certain knowledge, we would not want it with determination in our will. But what does this mean? If two people are asked if they want to serve in the army, it may turn out that one of them replies that he would like to do so, while the other would not. But if they are asked whether they would like to be happy, each would at once say without the least hesitation that he would choose to be so. And the reason why one would wish to be a soldier and the other would not is only that they want to be happy. Is it then the case that one person finds joy in one way, another in a different way? What all agree upon is that they want to be happy, just as they would concur, if asked, that they want to experience joy and would call that joy the happy life. Even if one person pursues it in one way, and another in a different way, yet there is one goal which all are striving to attain, namely to experience joy. Since no one can say that this is a matter outside experience, the happy life is found in the memory and is recognized when the words are uttered.

xxii (32) Far be it from me, Lord, far from the heart of your servant who is making confession to you, far be it from me to think myself happy, whatever be the joy in which I take my delight. There is a delight which is given not to the wicked (Isa. 48: 22), but to those who worship you for no reward save the joy that you yourself are to them. That is the authentic happy life, to set one's joy on you, grounded in you and caused by you. That is the real thing, and there is no other. Those who think that the happy life is found

²¹ From Cicero's *Hortensius*; cf. *Tusculan Disputations* 5. 28.

elsewhere, pursue another joy and not the true one. Nevertheless their will remains drawn towards some image of the true joy.²²

xxiii (33) It is uncertain, then, that all want to be happy since there are those who do not want to find in you their source of joy. That is the sole happy life, but they do not really want it. But perhaps everyone does have a desire for it and yet, because 'the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh so that they do not do what they wish' (Gal. 5: 17), they relapse into whatever they have the strength to do, and acquiesce in that, because in that for which they lack the strength their will is insufficient to give them the strength. For if I put the question to anyone whether he prefers to find joy in the truth or in falsehood, he does not hesitate to say that he prefers the truth, just as he does not hesitate to say he wants to be happy. The happy life is joy based on the truth. This is joy grounded in you, O God, who are the truth, 'my illumination, the salvation of my face, my God' (Ps. 26: 1; 41: 12). This happy life everyone desires; joy in the truth everyone wants. I have met with many people who wished to deceive, none who wished to be deceived. How then did they know about this happy life unless in the same way that they knew about the truth? They love the truth because they have no wish to be deceived, and when they love the happy life (which is none other than joy grounded in truth) they are unquestionably loving the truth. And they would have no love for it unless there were some knowledge of it in their memory. Why then do they not find their joy in this? Why are they not happy? It is because they are more occupied in other things which make them more wretched than their tenuous consciousness of the truth makes them happy. For among humanity there is 'still a little light'. May they walk, may they indeed walk, 'so that the darkness does not capture them' (John 12: 35).

(34) But why is it that 'truth engenders hatred'?²³ Why does your man who preaches what is true become to them an enemy (Gal. 4: 16) when they love the happy life which is simply joy grounded on truth? The answer must be this: their love for truth takes the form that they love something else and want this object of their love to be

²² Plotinus 3. 5. 9. 47 writes of the sense of need, aspiration, and the memory of rational principles coming together in the soul to direct it towards the good.

²³ Terence, *Andria* 68.

the truth; and because they do not wish to be deceived, they do not wish to be persuaded that they are mistaken. And so they hate the truth for the sake of the object which they love instead of the truth. They love truth for the light it sheds, but hate it when it shows them up as being wrong (John 3: 20; 5: 35). Because they do not wish to be deceived but wish to deceive, they love truth when it shows itself to them but hate it when its evidence goes against them. Retribution will come to them on this principle: those who resist being refuted the truth will make manifest against their will, and yet to them it will not be manifest. Yes indeed: the human mind, so blind and languid, shamefully and dishonourably wishes to hide, and yet does not wish anything to be concealed from itself. But it is repaid on the principle that while the human mind lies open to the truth, truth remains hidden from it. Yet even thus, in its miserable condition, it prefers to find joy in true rather than in false things. It will be happy if it comes to find joy only in that truth by which all things are true—without any distraction interfering.

xxiv (35) See how widely I have ranged, Lord, searching for you in my memory. I have not found you outside it. For I have found nothing coming from you which I have not stored in my memory since the time I first learnt of you. Since the day I learnt of you, I have never forgotten you. Where I discovered the truth there I found my God, truth itself, which from the time I learnt it, I have not forgotten. And so, since the time I learnt of you, you remain in my consciousness, and there I find you when I recall you and delight in you. These my holy delights you have given me, in your mercy looking upon my poverty.

xxv (36) But where in my consciousness, Lord, do you dwell? Where in it do you make your home? What resting-place have you made for yourself? What kind of sanctuary have you built for yourself? You conferred this honour on my memory that you should dwell in it. But the question I have to consider is, In what part of it do you dwell? In recalling you I rose above those parts of the memory which animals also share, because I did not find you among the images of physical objects. I came to the parts of my memory where I stored the emotions of my mind, and I did not find you there. I entered into the very seat of my mind, which is located in my memory, since the mind also remembers itself. But you were

not there because, just as you are not a bodily image nor the emotional feeling of a living person such as we experience when glad or sad, or when we desire, fear, remember, forget, and anything of that kind, so also you are not the mind itself. For you are the Lord God of the mind. All these things are liable to change. But you remain immutable above all things, and yet have deigned to dwell in my memory since the time I learnt about you.

Why do I ask in which area of my memory you dwell, as if there really are places there? Surely my memory is where you dwell, because I remember you since first I learnt of you, and I find you there when I think about you.

xxvi (37) Where then did I find you to be able to learn of you? You were not already in my memory before I learnt of you. Where then did I find you so that I could learn of you if not in the fact that you transcend me? There is no place, whether we go backwards or forwards;²⁴ there can be no question of place. O truth, everywhere you preside over all who ask counsel of you. You respond at one and the same time to all, even though they are consulting you on different subjects. You reply clearly, but not all hear you clearly. All ask your counsel on what they desire, but do not always hear what they would wish. Your best servant is the person who does not attend so much to hearing what he himself wants as to willing what he has heard from you.

xxvii (38) Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you. And see, you were within and I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely created things which you made. You were with me, and I was not with you. The lovely things kept me far from you, though if they did not have their existence in you, they had no existence at all. You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours.²⁵

²⁴ Echo of Plotinus 4. 4. 10. 5 (of time).

²⁵ Augustine's Latin in this chapter is a work of high art, with rhymes and poetic rhythms not reproducible in translation. He is fusing imagery from the Song of Solomon with Neoplatonic reflection on Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, and simultaneously summarizing the central themes of the *Confessions*. For the five spiritual senses see above x. vi (8).

xxviii (39) When I shall have adhered (Ps. 72: 28) to you with the whole of myself, I shall never have ‘pain and toil’ (Ps. 89: 10), and my entire life will be full of you. You lift up the person whom you fill. But for the present, because I am not full of you, I am a burden to myself. There is a struggle between joys over which I should be weeping and regrets at matters over which I ought to be rejoicing, and which side has the victory I do not know. There is a struggle between my regrets at my evil past and my memories of good joys, and which side has the victory I do not know. Alas, ‘Lord have mercy upon me’ (Ps. 30: 10), wretch that I am. See, I do not hide my wounds. You are the physician, I am the patient. You are pitiful, I am the object of pity. Is not human life on earth a trial (Job 7: 1)? Who desires troubles and difficulties? You command that they should be endured, not loved. No one loves what he endures, even if he loves to be able to endure it. Although he is glad he can endure it, he would prefer that what he endures should not be there. In adversities I desire prosperity, in prosperous times I fear adversities. Between these two is there a middle ground where human life is not a trial? Cursed are the prosperities of the world, not once but twice over, because of the fear of adversity and the corruption of success. Cursed are the adversities of the world, not once or twice but thrice, because of the longing for prosperity, because adversity itself is hard, and because of the possibility that one’s endurance may crack. Is not human life on earth a trial in which there is no respite?

xxix (40) My entire hope is exclusively in your very great mercy. Grant what you command, and command what you will. You require continence. A certain writer has said (Wisdom 8: 21): ‘As I knew that no one can be continent except God grants it, and this very thing is part of wisdom, to know whose gift this is.’ By continence we are collected together and brought to the unity from which we disintegrated into multiplicity.²⁶ He loves you less who together with you loves something which he does not love for your sake. O love, you ever burn and are never extinguished. O charity, my God, set me on fire. You command continence; grant what you command, and command what you will.²⁷

²⁶ Plotinus 4. 3. 32. 20: the higher soul gathers multiplicity into one. 1. 2. 5. 6: the soul collects itself apart from the body, aware of pleasure only when it has to be.

²⁷ This passage was quoted in the cars of Pelagius, the British monk, by a bishop who

xxx (41) You command me without question to abstain 'from the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the ambition of the secular world' (1 John 2: 16). You commanded me to abstain from sleeping with a girl-friend and, in regard to marriage itself, you advised me to adopt a better way of life than you have allowed (1 Cor. 7: 38). And because you granted me strength, this was done even before I became a dispenser of your sacrament. But in my memory of which I have spoken at length, there still live images of acts which were fixed there by my sexual habit. These images attack me. While I am awake they have no force, but in sleep they not only arouse pleasure but even elicit consent, and are very like the actual act. The illusory image within the soul has such force upon my flesh that false dreams have an effect on me when asleep, which the reality could not have when I am awake. During this time of sleep surely it is not my true self, Lord my God? Yet how great a difference between myself at the time when I am asleep and myself when I return to the waking state. Where then is reason which, when wide-awake, resists such suggestive thoughts, and would remain unmoved if the actual reality were to be presented to it? Surely reason does not shut down as the eyes close. It can hardly fall asleep with the bodily senses. For if that were so, how could it come about that often in sleep we resist and, mindful of our avowed commitment and adhering to it with strict chastity, we give no assent to such seductions? Yet there is a difference so great that, when it happens otherwise than we would wish, when we wake up we return to peace in our conscience. From the wide gulf between the occurrences and our will, we discover that we did not actively do what, to our regret, has somehow been done in us.²⁸

(42) It cannot be the case, almighty God, that your hand is not strong enough to cure all the sicknesses of my soul and, by a more abundant outflow of your grace, to extinguish the lascivious impulses of my sleep. You will more and more increase your gifts in me, Lord, so that my soul, rid of the glue of lust, may follow me to you,

appeared to be condoning the number of Christians whose sexual life appeared unregenerate. The incident marked the start of the Pelagian controversy, Pelagius being the unqualified advocate of an ethical perfectionism as a requirement of the gospel and the opponent of the passivity in Augustine's understanding of grace.

²⁸ Porphyry also held that nocturnal emissions do not pollute the conscience. An epigram in the Greek Anthology (5. 2) turns on the greater vividness of an erotic dream in comparison with actuality.

so that it is not in rebellion against itself, and so that even in dreams it not only does not commit those disgraceful and corrupt acts in which sensual images provoke carnal emissions, but also does not even consent to them. You are omnipotent, ‘able to do more than we ask or think’ (Eph. 3: 20). It is no great matter for you to cause the impulse to give no pleasure at all or no more than can be checked at will in the chaste mind of a sleeping man, not merely in later life but at my present age. Nevertheless, I have now declared to my good Lord what is still my present condition in respect of this kind of evil. I ‘exult with trembling’ (Ps. 2: 11) in what you have granted me, and grieve at my imperfect state. I hope that you will perfect in me your mercies to achieve perfect peace (cf. Ps. 30: 7–8) which I shall have with you, inwardly and outwardly, when ‘death is swallowed up in victory’ (1 Cor. 15: 54).

xxxii (43) There is another ‘evil of the day’, and I wish it sufficed for the day (Matt. 6: 34). We restore the daily decay of the body by eating and drinking, until in time you destroy both food and stomach (1 Cor. 6: 13), when you will kill need with a wonderful satiety and when you clothe this corruptible body with everlasting incorruption (1 Cor. 15: 53). But at the present time the necessity of food is sweet to me, and against that sweetness I fight lest I become a captive. I wage a daily battle in fastings, often ‘bringing my body into captivity’ (1 Cor. 9: 26–7). My pains are driven away by pleasure. For hunger and thirst are a kind of pain, which burns and can kill like a fever, unless the medicine of sustenance brings help. Because this cure is granted to us, thanks to the consolation of your gifts, by which earth and water and sky minister to our infirmity, a calamity can be called a delight.²⁹

(44) You have taught me that I should come to take food in the way I take medicines. But while I pass from the discomfort of need to the tranquillity of satisfaction, the very transition contains for me an insidious trap of uncontrolled desire.³⁰ The transition itself is a pleasure, and there is no other way of making that transition, which

²⁹ The discussion of the pull of the five bodily senses, here and in what follows, is akin to Porphyry, *On Abstinence from animal food* 1. 33 f. Plotinus 4. 4. 21 speaks of eating and drinking as to be controlled by reason, not desire. Augustine’s biographer Possidius, who had lived with him, records the austerity of his table in food; but, no doubt as a sign of anti-Manichee convictions, there was always wine (*Vita* 22).

³⁰ Plotinus 1. 2. 5. 18–22: insofar as the soul is involved in hunger, thirst, or sexual desire, there is never involuntary and uncontrolled desire.

is forced upon us by necessity. Although health is the reason for eating and drinking, a dangerous pleasantness joins itself to the process like a companion. Many a time it tries to take first place, so that I am doing for pleasure what I profess or wish to do only for health's sake. They do not have the same measure: for what is enough for health is too little for pleasure. And often there is uncertainty whether the motive is necessary care of the body seeking sustenance or the deceptive desire for pleasure demanding service. In this uncertainty the unhappy soul finds a source of cheerfulness and by means of it has a ready-made defence and excuse. It is delighted not to be clear how much is sufficient to maintain health, so that the quest for pleasure is obscured by the pretext of health. Every day I try to resist these temptations. I invoke the help of your right hand (cf. Ps. 59: 7) and report to you my impulses, because in this matter my mind has not yet achieved a settled pattern.

(45) I hear the voice of my God giving command: 'Your hearts shall not be weighed down in gluttony and drunkenness' (Luke 21: 34). Drunkenness is far from me; your mercy will ensure that it does not come close to me. But occasionally gluttony creeps up on your servant. May your mercy put that far from me. 'None can be continent unless you grant it' (Wisd. 8: 21). You give us many things when we pray, and whatever good we received before we prayed for it, we have received from you. We have also received from you the grace that later we came to realize this. I have never been a drunkard, but I have known drunkards made sober by you.³¹ So it was your doing that those who never have been drunkards have been free of this vice, and that those who have been so have not been permanently addicted. It has also been your doing that both have come to realize that you brought this about. I heard another utterance of yours: 'Do not go after your lusts and forbid yourself from your pleasure' (Ecclus. 18: 30). By your gift I have also heard the saying which I have much loved: 'Neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse' (1 Cor. 8: 8). That means that neither will eating make me prosperous nor will not eating bring me adversity. I have also heard another saying: 'I have learnt in whatever state I am that it is sufficient. I have learnt to be prosperous and I have learnt to suffer poverty. I can do all

³¹ One of Augustine's letters (93. 48) records that drunkenness was a social problem in his time.

things in him who comforts me.’ (Phil. 4: 11–12). See in this text the soldier of the heavenly host, not the dust which we are. But remember, Lord ‘that we are but dust’ (Ps. 102: 14). You have made man of the dust (Gen. 3: 19). ‘He was lost and is found’ (Luke 15: 24, 32). Paul had no power in himself because he was of the same dust as we, but he said these words under the breath of your inspiration and I loved him for it. ‘I can do all things’ (he said) ‘in him who comforts me.’ Strengthen me that I may have this power. Grant what you command, and command what you will. He confesses that he has received the power and that, when he glories, he glories in the Lord (1 Cor. 1: 31). I have heard another begging to receive help: ‘Take from me’, he asked, ‘the lust of the belly’ (Ecclus. 23: 6). That makes it clear, my holy God, that it is by your gift that your command is kept.

(46) Good Father, you have taught me ‘All things are pure to the pure’ (Titus 1: 15), but it is ‘evil for the person who eats and is offended’ (Rom. 14: 20). And ‘all your creation is good, and nothing is to be rejected which is received with thanksgiving’ (1 Tim. 4: 4). And ‘meat does not commend us to God’ (1 Cor. 8: 8). And ‘Let no one judge us in the matter of food or drink’ (Col. 2: 16). And ‘one who eats is not to despise one who does not eat, and one who does not eat shall not judge one who does’ (Rom. 14: 3).

I have learnt this, thanks to you, praise to you, my God, my teacher. Your words strike my ears (Rev. 3: 20), and illuminate my heart. Deliver me from all temptation (Ps. 17: 30). It is not the impurity of food I fear but that of uncontrolled desire. I know Noah was allowed to eat every kind of meat used for food (Gen. 9: 2); that Elijah was restored by eating meat (1 Kings 17: 6); that John, practising admirable abstinence, was undefiled by the animals, that is the locusts granted him for food (Matt. 3: 4); and I know how Esau was deceived by his greed for lentils (Gen. 25: 34), and David rebuked himself for wanting water (2 Sam. 23: 15 ff.). And our King was tempted to eat not meat but bread (Matt. 4: 3). That explains why the people in the wilderness deserved reproof, not because they wanted meat but because the desire for meat led them to murmur against the Lord (Num. 11: 1 ff.).³²

³² Augustine’s texts significantly point to the conclusion that, while meat may be something of a luxury, total abstinence from it is not required; i.e. the argument reflects defence against Manichee criticism of Catholic failure to enforce vegetarianism.

(47) Placed among these temptations, then, I struggle every day against uncontrolled desire in eating and drinking. It is not something I could give up once and for all and decide never to touch it again, as I was able to do with sexual intercourse. And so a rein has to be held upon my throat, moderated between laxity and austerity. Who is the person, Lord, who is never carried a little beyond the limits of necessity? Whoever this may be is great and will magnify your name (cf. Ps. 68: 31). I am not like that, for I am a sinful man. Yet I too magnify your name. And he who has overcome the world (John 16: 33) intercedes with you for my sins (Rom. 8: 34). He counts me among the weak members of his body, for 'your eyes have seen its imperfection and in your book everyone is inscribed' (Ps. 138: 16).

xxxii (48) The allurements of perfumes is not a matter of great concern to me. When they are absent, I do not look for them. When they are present, I do not reject them. I am ready to go without them all the time. That is how I see myself, but perhaps I am deceived. For there are those deplorable blind spots where the capacity that lies in me is concealed from me. My mind on examining myself about its strengths does not regard its findings as easy to trust. What lies within is for the most part hidden unless experience reveals it. No one should be complacent in this life which is called a 'total temptation' (Job 7: 1). Anyone who could change from the worse to the better can also change from the better to the worse. There is one hope, one ground of confidence, one reliable promise—your mercy.

xxxiii (49) The pleasures of the ear had a more tenacious hold on me, and had subjugated me; but you set me free and liberated me. As things now stand, I confess that I have some sense of restful contentment in sounds whose soul is your words, when they are sung by a pleasant and well-trained voice. Not that I am riveted by them, for I can rise up and go when I wish. Nevertheless, on being combined with the thoughts which give them life, they demand in my heart some position of honour, and I have difficulty in finding what is appropriate to offer them. Sometimes I seem to myself to give them more honour than is fitting. I feel that when the sacred words are chanted well, our souls are moved and are more religiously and with a warmer devotion kindled to piety than if they are not so sung. All the diverse emotions of our spirit have their various

modes in voice and chant appropriate in each case, and are stirred by a mysterious inner kinship.³³ But my physical delight, which has to be checked from enervating the mind, often deceives me when the perception of the senses is unaccompanied by reason, and is not patiently content to be in a subordinate place. It tries to be first and to be in the leading role, though it deserves to be allowed only as secondary to reason. So in these matters I sin unawares, and only afterwards become aware of it.

(50) Sometimes, however, by taking excessive safeguards against being led astray, I err on the side of too much severity. I have sometimes gone so far as to wish to banish all the melodies and sweet chants commonly used for David's psalter from my ears and from the Church as well. But I think a safer course one which I remember being often told of bishop Athanasius of Alexandria. He used to make the Reader of the psalm chant with so flexible a speech-rhythm that he was nearer to reciting than to singing. Nevertheless, when I remember the tears which I poured out at the time when I was first recovering my faith, and that now I am moved not by the chant but by the words being sung, when they are sung with a clear voice and entirely appropriate modulation, then again I recognize the great utility of music in worship.³⁴

Thus I fluctuate between the danger of pleasure and the experience of the beneficent effect, and I am more led to put forward the opinion (not as an irrevocable view) that the custom of singing in Church is to be approved, so that through the delights of the ear the weaker mind may rise up towards the devotion of worship. Yet when it happens to me that the music moves me more than the subject of the song, I confess myself to commit a sin deserving punishment, and then I would prefer not to have heard the singer.

See my condition! Weep with me and weep for me, you who have within yourselves a concern for the good, the springs from which good actions proceed. Those who do not share this concern will not be moved by these considerations. But you 'Lord my God, hear, look and see' (Ps. 12: 4) and 'have mercy and heal me' (Ps. 79: 15). In your eyes I have become a problem to myself, and that is my sickness.

³³ Plato's *Timaeus* taught that the soul and music are akin.

³⁴ There was deep disagreement in the churches of North Africa at this time whether any music should be admitted to worship and, if so, of what kind.

xxxiv (51) There remains the pleasure of the eyes of my flesh which I include in confessions which are heard by the ears of your temple—the devout ears of Christian brothers. So we may conclude the account of the temptations of the lust of the flesh which still assail me, despite my groans and my ‘desire to be clothed with my habitation which is from heaven’ (2 Cor. 5: 2). A delight to my eyes are beautiful and varied forms, glowing and pleasant colours. May these get no hold upon my soul; may God hold it! ‘He has made these sights and they are very good’ (Gen. 1: 31). But he is my good, not these. They touch me, wide awake, throughout the day, nor do they give me a moment’s respite, in the way the voices of singers, sometimes the entire choir, keep silence. The very queen of colours, which bathes with light all that we see, wherever I may be during the day, comes down upon me with gentle subtlety through many media, while I am doing something else and not noticing it. But the light makes its way with such power that, if suddenly it is withdrawn, it is sought for with longing. And if it is long absent, that has a depressing effect on the mind.

(52) Light which Tobit (4: 2 f.) saw when, with his eyes closed, he taught his son the way of life and walked before him with the step of charity, never erring!

Light which Isaac saw when, despite the state of his bodily eyes, weighed down and dimmed by old age, he was granted to bless his sons without recognizing them, yet in the act of blessing to distinguish one from the other (Gen. 27)!

Light which Jacob saw, though because of his great age he had lost his eyesight (Gen. 48–9)! With light in his heart, he shed radiance through his sons on the generations to come whom they prefigured. On his grandsons by Joseph he mystically laid crossed hands in blessing. This was not as their father wished, and he wanted to correct him; but he saw only the externals; Jacob himself discerned it by inward vision.

This light itself is one,³⁵ and all those are one who see it and love it.

The physical light of which I was speaking works by a seductive and dangerous sweetness to season the life of those who blindly

³⁵ Plotinus 6. 4. 8 sees the light of the sun as analogous to the light which is the One, and sharply distinguishes physical sunlight from the metaphysical Light of the transcendent realm (2. 1. 7. 28).

love the world. But those who know how to praise you for it, ‘God creator of all things,’³⁶ include it in their hymn of praise to you, and are not led astray by it in a sleepy state. That is how I would wish myself to be. I resist the allurements of the eyes lest my feet are caught as I walk along your way. I lift up to you invisible eyes, that you may ‘rescue my feet from the trap’ (Ps. 24: 15). Repeatedly you are rescuing them, for they fall into the trap. You do not cease to rescue me, though I am frequently becoming stuck in the snares which surround me on every side, because ‘you will not sleep nor slumber, you guardian of Israel’ (Ps. 120: 4).

(53) To entrap the eyes men have made innumerable additions to the various arts and crafts in clothing, shoes, vessels, and manufactures of this nature, pictures, images of various kinds, and things which go far beyond necessary and moderate requirements and pious symbols. Outwardly they follow what they make. Inwardly they abandon God by whom they were made, destroying what they were created to be. But, my God and my glory, for this reason I say a hymn of praise to you and offer praise to him who offered sacrifice for me. For the beautiful objects designed by artists’ souls and realized by skilled hands come from that beauty which is higher than souls; after that beauty my soul sighs day and night (Ps. 1: 2). From this higher beauty the artists and connoisseurs of external beauty draw their criterion of judgement, but they do not draw from there a principle for the right use of beautiful things. The principle is there but they do not see it, namely that they should not go to excess, but ‘should guard their strength for you’ (Ps. 58: 10) and not dissipate it in delights that produce mental fatigue. But, although I am the person saying this and making the distinction, I also entangle my steps in beautiful externals. However, you rescue me, Lord, you rescue me. ‘For your mercy is before my eyes’ (Ps. 25: 3). I am pitifully captured by them, and in your pity you rescue me, sometimes without me realizing it because I had suffered only a light fall, and sometimes with a painful wrench because I became deeply involved.

xxxv (54) To this I may add another form of temptation, manifold in its dangers. Beside the lust of the flesh which inheres in the delight given by all pleasures of the senses (those who are enslaved to it

³⁶ Ambrose’s evening hymn praises God for light by day and spiritual illumination by night.

perish by putting themselves far from you), there exists in the soul, through the medium of the same bodily senses, a cupidity which does not take delight in carnal pleasure but in perceptions acquired through the flesh. It is a vain inquisitiveness dignified with the title of knowledge and science. As this is rooted in the appetite for knowing, and as among the senses the eyes play a leading role in acquiring knowledge, the divine word calls it 'the lust of the eyes' (1 John 2: 16). Seeing is the property of our eyes. But we also use this word in other senses, when we apply the power of vision to knowledge generally. We do not say 'Hear how that flashes', or 'Smell how bright that is', or 'Taste how that shines' or 'Touch how that gleams'. Of all these things we say 'see'. But we say not only 'See how that light shines', which only the eyes can perceive, but also 'See how that sounds, see what smells, see what tastes, see how hard that is'. So the general experience of the senses is the lust, as scripture says, of the eyes, because seeing is a function in which eyes hold the first place but other senses claim the word for themselves by analogy when they are exploring any department of knowledge.³⁷

(55) From this observation it becomes easier to distinguish the activity of the senses in relation to pleasure from their activity in relation to curiosity. Pleasure pursues beautiful objects—what is agreeable to look at, to hear, to smell, to taste, to touch. But curiosity pursues the contraries of these delights with the motive of seeing what the experiences are like, not with a wish to undergo discomfort, but out of a lust for experimenting and knowing. What pleasure is to be found in looking at a mangled corpse, an experience which evokes revulsion?³⁸ Yet wherever one is lying, people crowd around to be made sad and to turn pale. They even dread seeing this in their dreams, as if someone had compelled them to look at it when awake or as if some report about the beauty of the sight had persuaded them to see it. The same is true of the other senses, but it would be too long to follow the theme through. To satisfy this diseased craving, outrageous sights are staged in public shows. The same motive is at work when people study the operations of nature which lie beyond our grasp, when there is no advantage in knowing

³⁷ 'Of all the senses, sight is the principal way in which we acquire knowledge': Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1. 1.

³⁸ Plato, *Republic* 439e.

and the investigators simply desire knowledge for its own sake.³⁹ This motive is again at work if, using a perverted science for the same end, people try to achieve things by magical arts. Even in religion itself the motive is seen when God is ‘tempted’ by demands for ‘signs and wonders’ (John 4: 48) desired not for any salvific end but only for the thrill.⁴⁰

(56) In this immense jungle full of traps and dangers, see how many I have cut out and expelled from my heart, as you have granted me to do, ‘God of my salvation’ (Ps. 17: 47; 37: 23). Nevertheless, when so many things of this kind surround our daily life on every side with a buzz of distraction, when may I be so bold as to say, when can I venture the claim, that nothing of the sort tugs at my attention to go and look at it and that I am not caught by any vain concern? True, theatres do not now capture my interest. I do not study to understand the transit of the stars. My soul has never sought for responses from ghosts. I detest all sacrilegious rites. Lord my God, to whom I owe humble and simple service, how many machinations are used by the Enemy to suggest to me that I should seek from you some sign! But I beseech you by our King and by Jerusalem our simple and pure home, that as consent to these suggestions is far from me, so it may always remain distant and even more remote. But when I pray to you for the good of someone,⁴¹ my intention is directed to a very different goal. Grant me now and in the future to follow gladly as you do with me what you will.

(57) Nevertheless, there are many respects, in tiny and contemptible matters, where our curiosity is provoked every day. How often we slip, who can count? How many times we initially act as if we put up with people telling idle tales in order not to offend the weak, but then gradually we find pleasure in listening. I now do not watch a dog chasing a rabbit when this is happening at the circus. But if by chance I am passing when coursing occurs in the countryside, it distracts me perhaps indeed from thinking out some weighty matter.

³⁹ Augustine’s attitude to ‘curiosity’ here, as in v. iii, contains an element of Academic scepticism, mingled with Plotinus’ doctrine that the clarity of the mind’s vision depends on whether it is contemplating purely intellectual things or muddy matter (4. 8. 4).

⁴⁰ That is to confuse means with ends, use with ‘enjoyment’, an error which is for Augustine fundamental.

⁴¹ Augustine contrasts his intercession for some sick or needy person with the superstitious rites, magic, and astrology commonly employed by pagans for therapy.

The hunt turns me to an interest in the sport, not enough to lead me to alter the direction of the beast I am riding, but shifting the inclination of my heart. Unless you had proved to me my infirmity and quickly admonished me either to take the sight as the start for some reflection enabling me to rise up to you or wholly to scorn and pass the matter by, I would be watching like an empty-headed fool. When I am sitting at home, a lizard catching flies or a spider entrapping them as they rush into its web often fascinates me. The problem is not made any different by the fact that the animals are small. The sight leads me on to praise you, the marvellous Creator and orderer of all things; but that was not how my attention first began. It is one thing to rise rapidly, another thing not to fall. My life is full of such lapses, and my one hope is in your great mercy. When my heart becomes the receptacle of distractions of this nature and the container for a mass of empty thoughts, then too my prayers are often interrupted and distracted; and in your sight, while I am directing the voice of my heart to your ears, frivolous thoughts somehow rush in and cut short an aspiration of the deepest importance.

xxxvi (58) We can hardly regard this as a trivial matter. But nothing can restore hope to us except your mercy, known since you began to transform us. You know how great a transformation you have brought about. You cured me in the first place of my lust for self-justification to show yourself propitious to all my other iniquities; you heal all my diseases, you redeem my life from corruptions, crown me with compassion and mercy, and satisfy my longing with good things (Ps. 102: 3–5). By fear of you, you repressed my pride and by your yoke you made my neck submissive; now I carry that yoke, and it is gentle, exactly as you promised and as you made it (Matt. 11: 30). In truth it was gentle already, but I did not realize it at the time when I was afraid to submit to it.

(59) Lord you alone exercise rule without pride, since you alone are truly Lord (Isa. 37: 20), and you have no master. Surely the third kind of temptation (1 John 2: 16) has not ceased to trouble me, nor during the whole of this life can it cease. The temptation is to wish to be feared or loved by people for no reason other than the joy derived from such power, which is no joy at all. It is a wretched life, and vanity is repulsive. This is the main cause why I fail to love

and fear you in purity. Therefore ‘you resist the proud but give grace to the humble’ (1 Pet. 5: 5). You ‘thunder’ upon the ambitions of the world, and ‘the foundations of the hills tremble’ (Ps. 17: 4, 8). If we hold certain offices in human society it is necessary for us to be loved and feared by people, and the enemy of our true happiness is constant in attack, everywhere laying traps with ‘Well done, well done’ (Ps. 34: 21). When we are avid to amass such approval, we are caught off our guard. We cease to find our joy in your truth and place it in the deceitfulness of men. It becomes our pleasure to be loved and feared not for your sake, but instead of you. By this method the Enemy makes people resemble himself, united with him not in loving concord but in sharing a common punishment. The Enemy is he who ‘decided to place his throne in the north’ (Isa. 14: 13 f.) so that in the dark and the cold men should serve him who, by a perverted and twisted life, imitates you. But look, Lord, we are your little flock (Luke 12: 32), take possession of us (Isa. 26: 13). Stretch out your wings, and let us find refuge under them. Be our glory. Let it be for your sake that we are loved, and let it be your word in us which is feared. The person who wishes to be praised by men when you think him at fault will find no defence in any human support when you are the judge, nor will he escape if you condemn him. But when it is not a case of ‘a sinner praised for the desires of his soul nor one being blessed for the wickedness of his actions’ (Ps. 9B: 24), but rather of a person praised for some gift which you bestowed, who nevertheless finds more joy in being praised than in having the gift for which he is praised, then he also, though admired by human judgement, is blamed by you. In this case the person who gives the praise is superior to the recipient of the praise, for the former is pleased by God’s gift to a man, whereas the latter is more pleased with what man gives than with what God has given.

xxxvii (60) Every day, Lord, we are beset by these temptations. We are tempted without respite. The human tongue is our daily furnace (Prov. 27: 21). In this respect also you command us to be continent: grant what you command, and command what you will. In this matter you know the ‘groaning’ of my heart towards you (Ps. 37: 9), and the rivers which flow from my eyes (Ps. 118: 136). I cannot easily be sure how far I am cleansed from that plague (Ps. 18: 13). I

have great fear of my subconscious impulses which your eyes know but mine do not (Ecclus. 15: 20).

In temptations of a different sort I have some capacity for self-exploration, but in this matter almost none. It is simple to see how far I have succeeded in restraining my mind from carnal pleasures and from curious quests for superfluous knowledge; for I do not indulge in these things, either by choice or because they are not available. I then ask myself whether it is more or less vexatious to me not to have them. Riches, moreover, are sought to provide means for one or two or all of the three lusts. If the mind cannot clearly perceive whether it despises the possession of them, that can be simply tested by giving them away.

But how can we live so as to be indifferent to praise, and to be sure of this in experience? Are we to live evil lives, so abandoned and depraved that no one who knows us does not detest us? Nothing more crazy can be suggested or imagined. If admiration is the usual and proper accompaniment of a good life and good actions, we ought not to renounce it any more than the good life which it accompanies. Yet I have no way of knowing whether my mind will be serene or upset to be lacking something unless it is actually absent.

(61) What then, Lord, have I to confess to you in this kind of temptation? I cannot pretend I am not pleased by praise; but I am more delighted to have declared the truth than to be praised for it. If I were given the choice of being universally admired, though mad or wholly wrong, or of being universally abused, though steadfast and utterly certain in possessing the truth, I see which I should choose. I would not wish the approving voice of another person to enhance my pleasure at the presence of something good in me. But I have to admit not only that admiration increases my pleasure, but that adverse criticism diminishes it. When this symptom of my wretched state disturbs me, self-justification worms its way into me, of a kind which you know, my God. But it makes me uncertain.

You have not only commanded us to be continent, that is to restrain our love for certain things, but also to maintain justice, that is, the object on which to direct our love. Your will is that we should love not only you but also our neighbour. Often when I am pleased to be praised by someone whose understanding is good, my pleasure

lies in my neighbour's progress or promise of it. On the other hand, I am saddened by his failure when I hear him finding fault with something which he does not understand or which is good. And sometimes I am grieved at being admired when people approve qualities in me which to myself are displeasing, or when they estimate at more than their true value good things which are minor and of slight importance. But once again how can I know whether that is my reaction because I do not want my admirer to hold a view of me different from my own, not because I am moved to consider his benefit but because the same good qualities which please me when I possess them are pleasanter to me when they also please someone else?⁴² In a certain sense it is to me no praise when my opinion of myself is not approved, or when things which displease me are commended, or when things which please me little are admired more than they should be. So on this point I feel unsure of myself.

(62) Truth, in you I now see that, if I am praised, I should be touched not on my own account, but for the benefit of my neighbour. Whether that is my actual state of mind I do not know. In this matter I know myself less well than I know you. I beseech you, my God, show me myself so that to my brothers who will pray for me I may confess what wound I am discovering in myself. Again I would conscientiously put the question to myself: if what is good for my neighbour should move me when I am being praised, why am I less moved if someone else is unfairly blamed than if I am myself? Why do I feel the sting of an insult directed against myself more acutely than one flung against someone else in my presence, when in both cases it is equally unfair? Or is this too beyond my knowledge? Is the one remaining answer that I am deceiving myself (Gal. 6: 3) and 'do not the truth' (John 3: 21) before you in my heart and tongue? Put this folly, Lord, far from me, lest the words of my mouth be 'the oil of the sinner to make my head swell' (Ps. 140: 5).

xxxviii (63) 'I am poor and needy' (Ps. 108: 22), but am better if, secretly groaning, I am vexed with myself and seek your mercy, until my defect is repaired and I am perfectly restored to that peace which is unknown to the arrogant observer. But the word proceeding

⁴² Aristotle remarks that the pleasure given to a distinguished person by an honour is to see other people agreeing with a conclusion long apparent to himself.

out of the mouth and the actions which become known to people contain a most hazardous temptation in the love of praise. This likes to gather and beg for support to bolster a kind of private superiority. This is a temptation to me even when I reject it, because of the very fact that I am rejecting it. Often the contempt of vainglory becomes a source of even more vainglory. For it is not being scorned when the contempt is something one is proud of.

xxxix (64) Within us lies another evil in the same category of temptation. This makes people who are pleased with themselves grow in vanity, though they either fail to please other people or actually annoy others whom they take no pains to please. But in pleasing themselves, they greatly displease you, not only because they think well of actions which are not good, but also because they claim good qualities as their own when you have bestowed them, or because they do not recognize them to be your gifts and think they have earned them by their merits. Or, if they know these gifts to be from your grace, they do not delight in sharing this grace with the community but grudge it to others. Amid all these temptations and in dangers and toils of this kind, you see my heart trembling. I have not ceased to experience such wounds, but continually they are being healed by you.

xl (65) Truth, when did you ever fail to walk with me, teaching me what to avoid and what to seek after when I reported to you what, in my inferior position, I could see and asked your counsel? To the best of my powers of sense-perception, I travelled through the external world. Starting from myself I gave attention to the life of my own body, and examined my own senses. From there I moved into the recesses of my memory, manifold vastnesses full of innumerable riches in wonderful ways, and 'I considered and was afraid' (Hab. 3: 2). Without you I could discern none of these things, and I found that none of these things was you. Nor was I you, though I had made these discoveries. I traversed everything, and tried to make distinctions and to evaluate each entity according to its proper rank. Some things I observed in interrogating the reports of my senses. Other things I felt to be mixed with my own self. I identified and numbered the senses reporting to me. Then in the wide riches of memory, I examined other things, hiding some away, drawing out others. But as I did this, the ego, that is the power by which I was

doing it, was not you. For you are the abiding light by which I investigated all these matters to discover whether they existed, what they were, and what value should be attached to them. I listened to you teaching me and giving instructions. This I frequently do. It gives me delight, and I take refuge in this pleasure from necessary business, so far as I am able to take relief. But in all these investigations which I pursue while consulting you, I can find no safe place for my soul except in you. There my dispersed aspirations are gathered together, and from you no part of me will depart.

And sometimes you cause me to enter into an extraordinary depth of feeling marked by a strange sweetness. If it were brought to perfection in me, it would be an experience quite beyond anything in this life. But I fall back into my usual ways under my miserable burdens. I am reabsorbed by my habitual practices. I am held in their grip. I weep profusely, but still I am held. Such is the strength of the burden of habit. Here I have the power to be, but do not wish it. There I wish to be, but lack the power.⁴³ On both grounds I am in misery.

xli (66) So under the three forms of lust I have considered the sicknesses of my sins, and I have invoked your right hand to save me (Ps. 102: 3). For I have caught a glimpse of your splendour with a wounded heart, and being rebuked I said ‘Who can attain that?’ ‘I am cast out from the sight of your eyes’ (Ps. 30: 23). You are the truth presiding over all things. But in my greed I was unwilling to lose you, and wanted to have you at the same time as holding on to a lie, in much the same way as no one wants to become such a liar as to lose all awareness of what the truth is. This is why I lost you: you do not condescend to be possessed together with falsehood.

xlii (67) Who could be found to reconcile me to you? Was I to beg the help of the angels? What prayer should I use? What sacred rites? Many have tried to return to you, and have not had the strength in themselves to achieve it, so I have been told. They have attempted these methods and have lapsed into a desire for curious visions, and have been rewarded with illusions.⁴⁴ For in their quest they have

⁴³ Plotinus 4. 8. 4. 33 has the same antithesis for the soul split between ‘there’ and ‘here’. On the transience of the experience of mystical union see Plotinus 6. 9. 10; and above VII. xvii (23).

⁴⁴ Pagan Neoplatonists made much of ritual practices (‘theurgy’) as means of attaining mystical visions. This chapter anticipates the full-scale attack on Porphyry in *City of God* 9.

been lifted up by pride in their high culture, inflating their chest rather than beating their breast. Through an affinity in heart they attracted to themselves as associates and allies of their pride 'the powers of the air' (Eph. 2: 2) who deluded them with magical powers. They sought a mediator to purify them, and it was not the true one. For it was 'the devil transforming himself into an angel of light' (2 Cor. 11: 14). It was a potent enticement for proud flesh that he had no carnal body. They were mortal and sinful men. But you, Lord, to whom in pride they sought to be reconciled, are immortal and without sin. But a mediator between God and the human race ought to have something in common with God and something in common with humanity. If the Mediator were in both aspects like humanity, he would be far distant from God. If he were in both aspects like God, he would be far distant from humanity, and so would be no mediator. That is why the deceiving mediator, by whom through your secret judgements pride deserved to be deluded, has one thing in common with human beings, namely sin. He wishes to appear to have another feature in common with God: since he is not clothed with mortal flesh, he boasts that he is immortal. But because 'the wages of sin is death' (Rom. 6: 23), he in common with mankind is condemned to death.

xliii (68) The true Mediator you showed to humanity in your secret mercy. You sent him so that from his example they should learn humility. He is 'the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus' (1 Tim. 2: 5). He appeared among mortal sinners as the immortal righteous one, mortal like humanity, righteous like God. Because the wages of righteousness are life and peace (Rom. 6: 23), being united with God by his righteousness he made void the death of justified sinners, a death which it was his will to share in common with them. He was made known to the ancient saints so that they could be saved through faith by his future passion, just as we are saved through faith in his passion now that it is past. It is as man that he is mediator. He is not midway as Word; for the Word is equal to God and 'God with God' (John 1: 1), and at the same time there is but one God.

(69) How you have loved us, good Father: you did not 'spare your only Son but delivered him up for us sinners' (Rom. 8: 32). How you have loved us, for whose sake 'he did not think it a usurpation

to be equal to you and was made subject to the death of the cross' (Phil. 2: 6, 8). He was the only one to be 'free among the dead' (Ps. 87: 5). He had power to lay down his soul and power to take it back again (John 10: 18). For us he was victorious before you and victor because he was victim. For us before you he is priest and sacrifice, and priest because he is sacrifice. Before you he makes us sons instead of servants by being born of you and being servant to us. With good reason my firm hope is in him. For you will cure all my diseases (Ps. 102: 3) through him who sits at your right hand and intercedes with you for us (Rom. 8: 34). Otherwise I would be in despair. Many and great are those diseases, many and great indeed. But your medicine is still more potent. We might have thought your Word was far removed from being united to mankind and have despaired of our lot unless he had become flesh and dwelt among us (John 1: 14).

(70) Terrified by my sins and the pile of my misery, I had racked my heart and had meditated taking flight to live in solitude.⁴⁵ But you forbade me and comforted me saying: 'That is why Christ died for all, so that those who live should not live for themselves, but for him who died for them' (2 Cor. 5: 15). See, Lord, 'I cast my anxiety on you that I may live' (Ps. 54: 23), and 'I will consider the wonders from your law' (Ps. 118: 18). You know my inexperience and weakness (Ps. 68: 6). 'Teach me and heal me' (Ps. 6: 3; 142: 10). Your only Son 'in whom are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col. 2: 3) had 'redeemed me by his blood' (Rev. 5: 9). 'Let not the proud speak evil of me' (Ps. 118: 22), for I think upon the price of my redemption, and I eat and drink it, and distribute it.⁴⁶ In my poverty I desire to be satisfied from it together with those who 'eat and are satisfied' (Ps. 61: 5). 'And they shall praise the Lord who seek him' (Ps. 21: 27).

⁴⁵ Perhaps because of the influence of Athanasius' *Life of Antony*: above, VIII. vi (14). This text is unique evidence of Augustine's aspiration to be a hermit.

⁴⁶ In the Eucharist.