

St. Augustine: Study Questions Books 10-13

Book 10:

A martyr is literally a "witness." To what extent is Augustine a martyr and to what? How does Augustine connect Books 10-13 to the rest of his narrative? Do you agree with Gail's analysis why there is a shift in the narrative? Does this Augustine seem different to you than the protagonist in Books 1-9? If so, what sort of conversion or change has he undergone? How does this book teach us to behave/live after we have had a conversion experience? On p. 181 Augustine identifies the different people who might be in his audience. What strategies does Augustine use to appeal to these different audiences? Compare Augustine's discussion of the "authentic happy life" to Plato's description of happiness.

Book 11:

What is Augustine's theory of time? Do you agree with it? Give one example from your own life or readings that supports or disproves his theory. Why does Augustine return to the discussion of language and writing at this point in his narrative? How is Augustine's conception of God related to his understanding of time. Why does he return to psalms at the end of Book 11? Why is this a loaded example to choose? What does it say about his book overall and our present relationship to his narrative?

Book 12:

Why is Augustine concerned with change and mutability? How does this relate to Platonic thought? Why does Augustine return to Moses as a figure to examine? What are the ramifications of his choice? What do we make of the parallels between their lives? Is it egocentric of Augustine to think of his life typologically? (This relates to a larger issue in the *Confessions*--do you believe Augustine's effacement of the self/ego?) How does Augustine explicate the bible? What sorts of questions does he ask? What sorts of assumptions does he make? If Augustine had given us a lecture in Genesis instead of Peter Steinberger, how would it have differed? What might he have said?

Book 13:

(Did Book 13 live up to your expectations for what Augustine's lecture on Genesis might be? If not, why not? If so, what did you like about his lecture?) How does Book 13 wrap up the threads of Augustine's narrative? (What are the threads of and tensions in Augustine's narrative?) What type of plot structure does this work have overall? (Would Aristotle be pleased with this plot according to what you know from the *Poetics*?) What themes does Augustine return to here? What do you make of the last words of the *Confession* in light of your understanding of the intention of his work overall?

What to prepare for class:

1. Bring in 5 themes or issues that are present in the *Confessions* that we have discussed in other works this semester.
2. Bring in 3 terms that you think are key for people to know in order to understand the texts we have read this semester.
3. Bring in one possible exam question and one possible passage for identification.

Quotes on Evil and Its Sources

There was a pear tree near our vineyard laded with fruit, though attractive in neither colour nor taste. To shake the fruit off the tree and carry off the pears, I and a gang of naughty adolescents set off late at night after (in our usual pestilential way) we had continued our game in the streets. We carried off a huge load of pears. But they were not for our feasts but merely to throw to the pigs. Even if we ate a few, nevertheless our pleasure lay in doing what was not allowed.

So the soul fornicates (Ps. 72:27) when it is turned away from you and seeks outside you the pure and clear intentions which are not found except by returning to you.

God is good and is most mightily and incomparably superior to these things. But being God, God created good creatures. See how God surrounds and fills them. Then where and whence is evil? How did it creep in? What is its root and what is its seed? Or does it not have any being? Why should we fear and avoid what has not being? If our fear is vain, it is certain that fear itself is evil, and that the heart is groundlessly disturbed and tortured...Yet we still fear.

But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it you will be like the God, knowing good and evil.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff--
they comfort me.

Blessed is that slave whom his master will find at work when he arrives. Truly I tell you, he will put that one in charge of all his possessions. But if that wicked slave says to himself, "My master is delayed," and he begins to beat his fellow slaves, and eats and drinks with the drunkards, the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know. He will cut him into pieces and put him with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[H]is ugliness has come from addition of alien matter, and his business, if he is to be beautiful again, is to wash and clean, if he is to be beautiful again, is to wash and clean himself and so be again what he was before. So we shall be right in saying that the soul becomes ugly by mixture and dilution and inclination towards the body and matter. This is the soul's ugliness, not being pure and unmixed, like gold, but full of earthliness; if anyone takes the earthly stuff away the gold is left, and is beautiful, when it is singled out from other things and is alone by itself.

With this intention she opened the box, But it held no Recipe of Beauty. In it lurked Sleep of the Innermost Darkness the night of Styx, which freed from its cell rushed upon her and penetrated her whole body with a heavy cloud of unconsciousness and enfolded her where she lay..."Look now," he said. "Again you have ruined yourself, unhappy one, by your uncontrollable curiosity."

SOURCES: Augustine, *Confessions* II.iv, II.vi, VII.v; Genesis 3.4-5, Psalm 23.4. Matt. 24:46-51; Plotinus, *On Beauty* I.5; Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* Book 6 (Cupid & Psyche).

