



## Augustine's Confessions: Philosophy in Autobiography

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Augustine's Confessions is a masterpiece of world literature. Written by Augustine in his forties, at the height of his philosophical and rhetorical skills, the Confessions is at once autobiographical, philosophical, theological, and psychological. The aim of the eight essays commissioned for the present volume is to provide an examination and discussion of some of the philosophical issues raised by Augustine. What constitutes the happy or blessed

life and what is required to achieve it? The essays question the role that philosophical perplexity plays in the search for truth, and the mental discipline that is required for conducting the search; in addition to asking how Augustine depicts the acquisition of truth as a vision of God. Furthermore, they discuss the problems that arise in the attempt to understand minds, both our own and others, and ask about the interplay between what reason tells us is right and what we will to do. What are the impediments to an individual's moral progress, and how far are these impediments created by the temptations to indulge in such fictions as dramas and dreams? What is the nature of eternity, and how does eternity differ from time? How should scripture be interpreted, especially the account of creation of the material world in Genesis?

Readers with a basic knowledge of Augustine may perceive him to be simply a powerful definer and defender of religious orthodoxy, a figure who ranks behind only Jesus and Paul in the development of a distinctively Christian world-view. For such readers the intellectual honesty and psychological candour of the Confessions should come as a pleasant surprise.

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