

**Brian Stock, *The Integrated Self: Augustine, the Bible, and Ancient Thought*. (Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).
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Review

In his latest work, *The Integrated Self*, Brian Stock continues his long-running project of reading Augustine. In this text, Stock — one of the leading scholars on the subjects of spiritual contemplation and reading in history — sets his focus on the notion of the self. Augustine has traditionally been the point of reference to which scholars return when reflecting on Western traditions of reading and meditation, and in this study he is framed as a major force in shaping conceptions of the self.

The central contention of this collection of essays is that in the years leading up to Augustine's conversion to Christianity in the spring of 386, he abandoned a dualistic view of the body and soul and developed the notion of an 'integrated self'. In this model of the self, mind and body operate as two independent halves rather than in different roles as in the dualistic view stipulated. Stock defines Augustine's model as not purely theoretical, but pragmatic. Throughout his many works Augustine developed a detailed programme of self-improvement through which an enlightened state could be reached, requiring the individual to undertake a series of spiritual exercises and mystical contemplation.

Each of the essays in this collection address a different aspect of Augustine's model of the self with Stock engaging in a number of close reading exercises. The breadth and scope of these essays is impressive, drawing from a wide selection of Hellenic, Latin, and early Christian authors. Stock sets the historical parameters of his scholarly investigation between the birth of Cicero in 106 BC and the death of Augustine in AD 430. This study is thus not only concerned with Augustine, but also the writers that preceded him. The *Integrated Self* presents a detailed examination of

the rhetorical and philosophical techniques that emerged from antiquity, illustrating how Augustine adapted the teachings of this era into his own writings.

As Stock demonstrates in this study, Augustine's idea of the self was largely shaped through his use of *lectio divina* (divine reading) and Socratic self-examination. Through combining these exercises, Augustine arrived at this possibility of the 'holistic self', a notion that had emerged out of the Stoic and Epicurean schools of thought. However, Stock argues that Augustine devised this notion primarily through contemplation of the Bible, rather than through the traditional intellectual path of Greco-Roman scholasticism. Through this method, Stock argues that Augustine offers the finest Christian response to Socratic learning in this period.

The first three chapters are primarily concerned with establishing this concept of *lectio divina*, and highlighting its intellectual origins. 'Reading with the Whole Self' presents John Cassian and Benedict of Nursia as developing an early concept of a holistic self, constructed as a single entity of both mind and body. The asceticism and spiritual meditation techniques that these two figures propagated are framed as the foundation for Augustine's notion of the self. As Stock illustrates, it was only under Augustine that the techniques presented by these early Christian writers were adapted into a broader framework of spiritual contemplation.

Chapter 2, 'The Contemplative Imagination', covers how Augustine figured Cicero's and Quintilian's writings on the imagination into his own concept of 'creative imagination'. This is primarily achieved through Augustine's transformation of Greek *phantasiae* (memory through images) into its Latin variation *imaginatio*, to which Stock provides illustrative examples from *Confessiones*. In Chapter 3, 'The Philosophical Soliloquy', Stock investigates how Augustine used the exercise of inner dialogue, *soliloquium*, to further delve into the philosophical and

spiritual considerations of the self. The reflections that Augustine offers in texts such as *De Ordine*, *Soliloquia*, and *Confessioness* are unique in that they present a Christian interpretation of traditional Hellenic and Latin philosophical techniques. It is in these first three chapters that Stock highlights Augustine's intellectual lineage, positioning him as the Christian successor to some of the greatest thinkers of the classical era.

Chapter 4, 'Self and Soul', studies Augustine's reflections on the relationship between these two notions, focusing on two of his early works, *De Immortalitate Animae* and *De Quantitate Animae*. Stock notes that it is difficult to pin down Augustine's philosophical sources for understandings of the soul but nevertheless points to the influence of Seneca, Plutarch, and Marcus Aurelius. These figures presented the view that our knowledge of the self is largely the result of the interweaving of our personal memories. Augustine further developed this principle, applying it to his interpretation of the soul. This chapter largely serves as an anchor for this text, expanding *The Integrated Self's* primary argument on the self to include conceptions of the soul.

Chapter 5, 'Rhythms of Time', addresses Augustine's concept of 'harmony' in relation to his construction of the self and soul. Harmony appears as a modified form of ancient Stoic doctrine in Augustine's writings, while also bearing some resemblance to the Platonic theory of time. However, in the Augustinian model, the Stoic idea of the natural as the principle creative force in the universe is replaced with that of God. Furthermore, Augustine posits time as the central force behind universal harmony. Rather than looking to *Confessioness* for Augustine's understanding of time and harmony, Stock highlights *De Musica*. In this text, the soul is represented as possessing a form of self-awareness in which it is in harmony with the divine spirit. Augustine posits the singing of a hymn as an example of his

theory on harmony as this act brings together a number of spiritual exercises into one particular contemplative experience.

Chapter 6, 'Loss and Recovery' shifts its focus to modern society's fascination with mind-body medicine, building on the discussions of the holistic self that are presented throughout *The Integrated Self*. Stock argues, rather convincingly, that this modern aspiration to 'mindfulness' is carried out in a similar fashion to which Augustine presented his notion of an integrated mind and body model, albeit with some key differences. It is in this chapter that Stock highlights the prescience of this study, illustrating that these debates about the self are just as relevant now as they were in late antiquity.

The Integrated Self concludes on a rather poignant note, warning that modern society has forgotten the wisdom of the ancients. Stock asserts that we have lost the initiative to ask probing questions in preparation for spiritual crisis, unlike the ancients who spent their entire lives in spiritual meditation. This point is entirely justified by the extensive analysis of Augustine that Stock establishes throughout this study. What Stock illustrates in *The Integrated Self* is that Augustine was writing within a rich philosophical tradition, infusing centuries of Greek and Roman thought with emerging Christian theological notions. It is in this sense that Stock masterfully communicates the enduring legacy and relevance of Augustine of Hippo.

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