

‘To Rest In Thee’:  
Conversion and Simple Subjectivity  
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“On the way from Plato to Descartes stands Augustine.”<sup>1</sup>

So begins Charles Taylor’s discussion of St. Augustine in his monumental reconstruction of Western history. It is not merely that Augustine stands in between Plato and Descartes, of course, for Augustine, according to Taylor, is the pivotal figure in the foundational moments of the history of the modern subject. Taylor’s argument is not unique, as there seems to be a general consensus that either Augustine was a proto-Cartesian, or that Descartes was an Augustinian, so that whatever flows from Descartes is also part of an Augustinian inheritance. Modernity was born, however amorphous that birth may have been, in the writings of St. Augustine. It must also be noted that within this general history, what we are usually concerned with is the Augustinian subject and the Cartesian subject. It is not just the figure of Augustine that stands at the foundations of the West, but more specifically the figure in Augustine, so that whatever the modern subject is, it makes its first appearance, again in very vague form, in Augustine.

This is, of course, a grand generalization of the state of the recent scholarship as well as the development of Western history. Although we can all agree on the importance of Augustine, it has proven singularly difficult to come to any agreement as to what this might actually mean. The differences here should not be overlooked so quickly. There is no single understanding of Augustine, and there is no single understanding of modernity. Maybe we ought to admit that there are theoretical limits to

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self; The Making of Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, 127.

any agreement in this case. In this case we would be admitting the heterogeneity of those moments that we designate as ‘Augustine,’ ‘Descartes,’ and ‘Modernity.’ The historical work will continue, but with the awareness that whichever of the three terms is fixed for us will determine the shape given to the other two.

In what follows I wish to propose another alternative. While remaining within the general consensus that Augustine stands, in some way, at the fountainhead of what will become the modern West, I would like to shift our focus of attention. What if, when we are looking for our Augustinian inheritance by looking for an Augustinian subject, we are looking in the wrong place? For Augustine never desired to offer a metaphysics of subjectivity. Rather his first concern was always with the Christian Truth and salvation in Jesus Christ. The Augustinian subject that does appear arrives only as a consequence of the need to affirm the truth of God’s creative activity, and Christ’s salvific activity. In other words, Augustine’s concern is with creation and conversion. In the words of Eric Alliez, Augustine should not be understood as beginning the history of a metaphysics of the subject, but rather a “metaphysics of conversion.”<sup>2</sup>

If this is the case then we will turn away from a search for the Augustinian subject to a search for the logic that the Augustinian subject participates in. Our focus will shift away from a static subject, and towards the subject that is a part of the movement of creation and salvation. (Although, in an ironic twist, we will also see that this ‘dynamic’ subject of creation and conversion is more frozen than we can imagine.) Much more will need to be said – about Augustine, about creation, about the Trinity, and about

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<sup>2</sup> Eric Alliez, *Capital Times; Tales from the Conquest of Time*. Trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996): 80.

conversion – but for now I want to begin to explore this nexus of creation, conversion, and subjectivity. The best place to do this is the *Confessions*.

Again, the general concern here is to understand modernity’s Augustinian inheritance. On the face of it, this inheritance will open up a number of paradoxes, not the least of which is the fact that the ‘Father of the Western Church’ will also become the ‘Genius of the Western Mind.’ Allow me, though, to begin by noting an oddity of a rather different nature. For a figure so tied to the modern it is worth noting that Augustine traveled by sea only twice, and this only by necessity and with trepidation. This may, of course, be only an historical oddity. As Peter Brown notes, “Our imaginations are dominated by the Africa of Carthage, the Africa of the Mediterranean coast. Augustine, however, grew up 200 miles from the sea, and 2,000 feet above it, cut off from the Mediterranean by great forests of pine, by high valleys of corn and olives. As a boy, he could only imagine what the sea was like by looking into a glass of water.”<sup>3</sup> Maybe it is not surprising that a child of the mountains would grow up to be uncomfortable on the sea.

Yet it is also impossible to miss Augustine’s fascination with the sea. The sea is more than just a curiosity for Augustine. His *Confession* is saturated with references to, allusions to, and metaphors about the sea. Similar appearances of the sea can be sighted in all his writings. Take the following passage from the *City of God*: “then there is the mighty spectacle of the sea itself, putting on its changing colours like different garments, now green, with all the many varied shades, now purple, now blue. Moreover, what a delightful sight it is when stormy, giving added pleasure to the spectator because of the

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969): 20.

agreeable thought that he is not a sailor tossed and heaved about on it!” (XXII.24). This passage captures both the fascination that Augustine had with the sea – its immense beauty and power – as well as his fear of the sea. The oddity of this fascination and fear arises not only for those of us with a misconception about Mediterranean Africa, but also for those of us today who live in a world made possible by the conquering of the seas. We who live in (or are visiting) this New World found by conquering the seas. It could be argued that the modern world is paradigmatically a world where the sea is conquered. Modernity, in this case, is that moment when a certain religious fervor is combined with an economic desire, and a scientific technology to conquer the world.

If we are to find a connection between Augustine and ourselves today, might it be found at sea? In Augustine’s fascination and fear of the sea can we begin to glimpse the shape of the modern moment? Catherine Keller has recently argued that the motif of “the sea,” which she reads in dynamic interaction with the *tehom* of the opening passages of Genesis, is the structuring element that can bind together the two disparate sections of Augustine’s *Confessions*.<sup>4</sup> Although this latter claim may be challenged, she does offer a hint as to the importance of the sea in the *Confessions*.

Before following out her suggestion, a provisional division to the *Confessions*: Augustine recollecting himself out of the depths of his life (Books I – IX); a discourse on memory, as a theoretical doubling of Augustine’s autobiographical recollection (Book X); an exegesis of Genesis 1, which is itself God’s recollecting of the creation (Books XI – XIII). This division is used to mark three moments of the same movement of what I want to call conversion. As will become apparent, conversion here is not merely a

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<sup>4</sup> Catherine Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming*. (New York: Routledge, 2003): 66.

religious conversion, nor is it simply an Augustinian conversion of the “turning of the will.” Rather, I want to propose of use of conversion that is more from Marx than religion: conversion as the act whereby different ‘things’ are converted into a unity that can be exchanged. Briefly, the three moments of the *Confession* are three moments whereby different and disparate things are brought together – ‘recollected’ – into a unity that can enter into relation with a simple and immutable God. In other words, the raging, fluid, chaotic seas – of both creation and Augustine’s soul – are brought together in the calm of unity.

Finally it should be noted that within this division of the *Confessions*, the final section retrospectively explains and, more importantly, justifies, the first two sections. So, again provisionally, as God brings creation into order, Augustine will also bring his own life into order. Yet a first hesitation arises to the extent that an uncontrollable remainder that must always await a further recollection splits both God’s creation and Augustine’s. A second hesitation to the extent that both God’s creation and Augustine’s are never theirs alone, but are always mediated by a second. A final hesitation to the extent that the creation, and Augustine as created, will always be created, so that there will always be this distinction between the author who confesses his dependence on God, and the Author of creation who is always the only creator.

The confession begins with a cry from the deep, “Listen to my soul and hear it crying from the depth”(XI.3). Augustine begins in the “great and fearful ocean” of his own life, crying out for a wisdom that will create a safe passage. How is he to understand this predicament? Later, Augustine will find solace in the company of his fellow miserable souls infected by original sin. But this will only shift the ground of the original

question; it still does not answer how the good creation of a good God could possibly turn away from the source of its being and goodness, a turning away which is near dissolution in the near nothingness of this earth. “See, heaven and earth exist, they cry aloud that they are made, for they suffer change and variation.... You Lord, who are beautiful, made them for they are beautiful. You are good, for they are good. You are, for they are. Yet they are not beautiful or good or possessed of being in the sense that you their Maker are”(XI.6). So his cry is “to hear and understand how in the beginning [God] made heaven and earth”(XI.5).

Augustine is initially tempted to begin where he himself might have begun, with the invisible and unorganized earth, of Genesis 1.2. Like his own life prior to its recollection, this earth was a chaotic sea, “a deep abyss over which there was no light because it had no form”(XII.3). But without form nor light, would it not then be a nothing? Yet this earth, our earth, is not without form; it is overflowing with bodies that have form. The mark of these bodies is not their absence of form, but the very fact that they change form, “they cease to be what they were and begin to be what they are not”(XII.6). A gap seems to open in the text of Genesis between the absolute nothing of the deep abyss with no form nor light, and the mutable bodies of this earth. Here then a gap also opens, if only momentarily, in Augustine’s own text. To answer where this mutability comes from, Augustine proposes a certain “nothing something,” “a being which is non-being”(XII.6). God’s creation is not a simple matter of the movement from nothing to something; there is first this intermediary “nothing something.” The deep abyss, the chaotic sea, is now the site of Augustine’s attention, and will become the distinguishing mark of his exegesis. It will also be the site from which the Western world

is born. This "nothing something" is the site of God's creation, and will become the world that the West comes to control. Before that history unfolds itself in this space, God must continue to work, and so must Augustine.

Augustine is tempted by the sight of this "nothing something," tempted to see it as the formless matter out of which God created. His own thought, and the text of Genesis 1, continually wants to separate out this "nothing something," into a creation which "made something and made it out of nothing." If this "nothing" is to take form, must it then be the "nothing something"? A "nothing something" spoken of as "nothing" for those of us with "slower minds" for us to have "some notion of the meaning here no word is available except that of familiar usage." But this would then mean that this "nothing something" was co-eternal with God. This challenge to God's preeminence would not be allowed. For only God is eternal, and it is the very mark of eternity that it is only God who knows eternity: "'You alone have immortality,' for you are changed by no form or movement"(XII.11). So even this "next-to-nothing" was itself created out of nothing (XII.8). God created this chaotic, formless abyss out of nothing, and from this "nothing something" all else would be created.

On the one hand, this exegetical work could lead Augustine to an understanding of this earth, created out of this "nothing something." Yet his vision is always on what lies beyond this chaotic earth, on the wisdom that is only available in the unity of God. His real interest lies in "the heaven of heaven." For "The heaven of heaven belongs to the Lord, but the earth he has given to the sons of men." (Psalms 113.16) Although the language here seems to point to an ontological gap between the 'heaven of heaven' and 'the earth,' the real gap still must lie between the Creator and all else that is, inclusive of

this ‘heaven of heaven.’ For the “heaven of heaven” to be of God is not a relation of equivalence, but one of possession.

To preserve the creation ex nihilo, Augustine doubles the creation of heaven and earth of Genesis 1. Prior to the creation of this earth and this heaven, there was a prior creation of a first heaven and a first earth. The original “nothing something” is split into “two entities, one close to [God], the other close to being nothing; the one to which only [God is] superior, the other to which what is inferior is nothingness”(XII.7). The first entity, heaven, will become the “heaven of heaven,” while the second entity, earth, will become the “heaven and earth” of this world. Out of the chaotic abyss, the “nothing something” is drawn two worlds, the “heaven of heaven” and the “heaven and earth.” The chaos is converted from formless matter to two entities. The first entity “has become converted to that which cannot change either for the better or the for the worse,” while the second entity “remains... to be converted to [God} by whom it was made”(XIII.4-5).

Again, Augustine is here drawn into the difficult position of positing that the “heaven of heaven” is itself immutable. If this were the case, though, then it would be free from change and time, and therefore eternal, co-eternal with God. The Christian dogmatism of God’s preeminence will not allow this. For God is the one transcendent Creator. So the mutability of the “heaven of heaven” must remain in principle, even if in practice this mutability is checked. So in a moment, in the blink of an eye, “without any lapse to which its createdness makes it liable, by cleaving to [God], [the heaven of heaven] finds power to check its mutability”(XII.9). The fluidity of the primordial sea is frozen out of time. By the grace of God, a portion of the deep abyss is snatched from perdition into the static contemplation of God. Literally, by the grace of God, for the

“heaven of heaven” would have been dissimilar to [God] unless by [God’s] Word it had been converted to the same Word by whom it was made, so that, illuminated by Him, it became light and, though not in an equal measure, became conformed to a form equal to [God]”(XIII.3). So by the work of the Word, by the work of Christ, the “heaven of heaven” is drawn to God, and its “delight is exclusively in [God]. In an unfailing purity it satiates its thirst in [God]. It never at any point betrays its mutability”(XII.12). Cleaving to God, the “heaven of heaven” remains pure, which is the denial of its own fluidity. By the work of the Word, the “heaven of heaven” is in practice what it is not, and cannot be, in principle.

To this point it has been possible to follow Augustine following God’s creation. Before moving on to the history of that second entity, the first earth, it is necessary to pause here and reflect on this first entity, heaven. In the frozen confinement of its own fluidity, the “heaven of heaven” is now also the House of God(XII.12). As quickly as the “heaven of heaven” becomes the House of God this House is transformed into the New Jerusalem, Augustine’s “mother” who has above her God, “ruler, illuminator, father, tutor, husband, pure and strong”(XII.23). Inscribed in the very moment of creation, in the move from nothing to something, is this gendered conflation of purity and cleaving, chaos and order. “This passive, incoherent femininity ... is utterly dependent upon the masculine deity for its in/formation.... She abides forever the same, clinging to her husband, mirroring in her unfading beauty his omnipotence.”<sup>5</sup> So this “nothing something” is after all not entirely formless. It has, at its very inception, a gendered form. This chaotic, fluid deep is the feminine *tehom* that can only find its form, and its

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<sup>5</sup> Keller, *Face of the Deep*, 78.

purity, in cleaving to her man, her God. This is a strange purity, a purity that is achieved on the one hand by a cleaving that is also a being entered into, but which is also a purity that is a check on her own created nature. Prior to Eve, there is this primordial mother/woman who must deny her own un-fallen nature to find her purity next to God. Out of the chaos of the deep, a good portion, a good woman, is drawn out for an eternal admiration of God. This admiration is achieved in a purity that is itself achieved by a freezing penetration, an “in/formation.” So possession is penetration, and purity is frozen.

Although this sexual conquest has immediate consequences for the “heaven of heaven,” for those of us still part of the “salty sea-water” of humanity who are “deeply inquisitive, like a sea in a stormy swell, restlessly unstable” (and strangely flowing from the “loins” of Adam) (XIII.28) the consequences of our inability to be penetrated are still multiplying. For the nature of this second “heaven and earth” created out of the first earth, separated out of the original deep, is that of multiplicity and teeming forth. For Augustine, the productive waters of Genesis 1.20 are blessed in their very productivity. “These physical things have been produced to meet the needs of peoples estranged from [God’s] eternal truth”(XIII.27). These “physical things” which by their very nature are multiplying are the very things of the second earth and heaven. This second earth and heaven were created not only from the first earth, but also after the creation of time. “Out of this [first earth] were made a second heaven and a visible and ordered earth and beautiful waters and everything else mentioned in the creation narrative after days had come into existence. These things are such that they are subject to ordered changes of movement and form, and so are subject to the successiveness of time”(XII.15). Time,

because the measure of this second heaven and earth, and, after the fall, this time is out of control. “With sin, time *becomes* the number of a ‘violent’ motion, one that is forced and no longer natural, the movement of a will that moves away from God – and everything is as if carried away by the fleeting moment, and things flow like the rush of a torrent.”<sup>6</sup>

With this break of sin Alliez wishes to mark the creation of “existential time,” now divorced and separated from an original time of creation. Although he is correct to see in the fall the creation of an existential time of rot, Alliez misses the point that for Augustine, existential time is created on the second day of creation, with the creation of the second heaven and earth. Again, with the creation of “a second heaven and a visible ordered earth . . . things are such that they are subject to ordered changes of movement and form, and so are subject to the successiveness of time”(XII.15). It is only with the Fall that this existential time becomes a time of rot, hurtling towards death and nothingness. This time of rot is a time turned away from God.

There is then a continuum between these three times: the immutable time of the “heaven of heaven”; that natural, although nowhere now present, existential time prior to the Fall; and this existential time of rot. A first time frozen into a timeless presence, a time of controlled production, and an uncontrollable time of chaotic multiplication. The necessity occasioned by the Fall is the necessity for conversion, for Christ to order the existential time of rot to duplicate the frozen time of the “heaven of heaven.”

This final conversion of time is the climax of the *City of God*, when the erratic and distended time of existential rot is frozen into the presence of God. Before that end (of time, the existential time of chaotic rot is left, at least in theory, to its multiplication. On

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<sup>6</sup> Alliez, *Capital Times*, 100.

the one hand, then, in theory at least, is something that Augustine is willing to affirm. In confronting the multiplication of interpretations of Genesis, Augustine finds that there is no difficulty when “these words can be interpreted in various ways, provided only that the interpretations are true? What difficulty is it for me, I say, if I understand the text in a way different from someone else, who understands the scriptural author in another sense?”(XII.27) So too are the sacraments multiplied in time: “But while the truth of these things remain the same, their embodiments in the physical realm are both many and varied. One thing grows out of another, and so, by your blessing, God, things are multiplied”(XIII.27). Although later Pelagians, heretics and other barbarians standing against the Church may wish to contest this, in theory, at least, the multiplication of the times, even the time of existential rot, can be affirmed.

There is always the fear, for Augustine, that these multiplications will get out of hand. Even before the final time of collection, when the sea shall be more, Augustine finds God provisionally gathering together these chaotic times. Here, the original deep sea of the “nothing something” is reinstated in the second heaven and earth. When the Psalmist writes that “The sea is yours and you made it, and the dry land your hands have formed”(Psalm 94.5), Augustine argues that “in this text, ‘sea’ means not the bitterness of conflicting wills but the gathering together of waters. You restrain the evil desires of souls, and fix limits to prevent the waters advancing further”(XIII.20). God (or is it Augustine?) cannot wait for the final gathering that will end time, so there is this first gathering together of peoples into nations as a check on the natural multiplicity of this time. It is important to note, here, that this first, provisional gathering will come to disrupt the clean delineation of the *City of God*. “From the start, two orders around

which are organized two cities: one turned toward the potentiality and enjoyment of things here below, the other toward the veritable goods through charity and grace. But very quickly Augustine’s temptation appears: that the absolute heterogeneity of the two domains, led to its ultimate consequences, will let only the City of God to subsist, the only one worthy of the name city.”<sup>7</sup> There is always the threat that the second heaven and earth, especially now in the time after the Fall, will dissolve into their own incoherence in the chaos of the sea. So these seas are again gathered together in a new city: “If, on the other hand, another definition than this is found for a ‘people,’ for example, if one should say, ‘A people is the association of a multitude of rational beings united by a common agreement on the objects of their love,’ then it follows that to observe the character of a particular people we must examine the objects of its love.... And, obviously, the better the objects of this agreement, the better the people; the worse the objects of this love, the worse the people”(XIX.24). Alliez continues: “As soon as [Augustine] is constrained to abandon any idea of identifying social peace with Christian peace, with the sole criterion of obedience to God under eternal law ... [he] de facto renounces the submission of the temporal order to the absolute order of eternal justice in the name of the higher ends of the celestial city; and he admits the separation between the political and the religious domains, between nature and grace. He ratifies the independence of the justice of law from the justice of faith.”<sup>8</sup> Unlike the first heaven, this second earth will never submit, until the end of time, to the freezing demand of form. In time, in our time, the sea will always remain to be controlled.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-84.

Here is the place to return to Taylor’s insistence on seeing in Augustine the importance of depth. Although the seas of nations can never be fully controlled, when the chaotic seas of this time are internalized, there is at least possible a closer approximation to the frozen calm of the “heaven of heaven.” In other words, what the social context of the *City of God* cannot accomplish, the radical reflexivity of the *Confessions* can. At least in part. Before this hesitation, it is necessary to see that the “nothing something” of the first creation is doubled in Augustine’s soul. Augustine’s soul is “crying from the depths,” to be heard by God. “For if [God’s] ears are not present also in the depth, where shall we go? To whom shall we cry?”(XI.3) His cry is that God may “speak to me so that I may hear. See the ears of my heart are before you, Lord. Open them and ‘say to my soul, I am your salvation’”(I.5). Lost in the chaos of the sea, Augustine longs to become a “nothing something” open to the power of God, to be seduced into cleaving to God. In the depth of the Augustine’s soul, the chaos of the “nothing something” is interiorized.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the “heaven of heaven,” which renounced her mutability in a moment before time, Augustine must struggle in time to become one, still in the presence of God.

For Augustine, this struggle has two dimensions. There is first, at least in the order of the narrative, a struggle to recollect himself. Recollection is, as Augustine tells us, “what is collected (that is, by force) in the mind”(X.18). Through a series of etymological moves, Augustine understands memory to be that act of bringing together the dispersed and disordered thoughts of his memory into a unity. In this light, the vexation of Book X of the *Confessions* is alleviated to the extent that it explains Books I-

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<sup>9</sup> Keller, *Face of the Deep*, 68.

IX. It is the, “somewhat awkward (even if brilliantly inspired) transition between the first nine and the last three books of the *Confessions*.”<sup>10</sup> Moving backwards through the *Confessions*, then, there is the moment when God creates and collects the creation into being. In Book X, Augustine attempts to explain the relation between God’s act of creating and collecting, and human recollection. This relationship is needed in order to explain the relation between Augustine’s own conversion, narrated in the first nine books of the *Confession*, and God’s creation and collection in the last three books. The *Confession* is Augustine’s writing himself to life, creating his own life as God created all that is.

This recollection, though, is never enough, nor even where Augustine properly begins. It is clear in the creation of the world that God is the sole creator. The entire movement of Books XI-XIII is to establish the creation ex nihilo. If there is a parallel established between God’s creation and Augustine’s recollection, it may be tempting to see Augustine also as his own creator. There is certainly warrant for understanding the development of the Augustinian tradition as entailing such a reading. It may be the case that one mark of the modern is this usurpation by the human author to role of divine author. For Augustine, though, this usurpation never occurs. “Yet the mind of man, the natural seat of his reason and understanding, is itself weakened by long-standing faults which darken it. It is too weak to cleave to that changeless light and enjoy it; it is too weak even to endure that light. It first must be renewed and healed day after day so as to become capable of such felicity” (*City of God*, XI.2). The mind cannot on its own

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<sup>10</sup> Bright, Pamela. “Book Ten: The Self Seeking the God Who Creates and Heals.” In *A Reader’s Companion to Augustine’s Confessions*. Ed. Kim Paffenroth & Robert P. Kennedy (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003): 155.

achieve that place of rest and purity of cleaving to God that the ‘heaven of heaven’ maintains. It should be remembered here, though, that the ‘heaven of heaven’ was only drawn up to God through and in the Word. It did not attain to its ‘felicity’ by its own power. So maybe the imitation parallel is closer than originally thought. Neither Augustine nor the ‘heaven of heaven’ begin nor end their recollection alone. Just as the ‘heaven of heaven’ only achieves its rest in God through the Word, so too, it is only after he has already been turned toward God that Augustine can begin to create himself. Imitation here verges on participation, to the extent that imitation is only possible through participation. “‘Grant me Lord to know and understand’ which comes first – to call upon [God] or to praise [God], and whether knowing precedes calling upon [God]. But who calls upon [God] when he does not know [God]?”(I.1) As Michael Hanby has recently argued, the aporia signaled at the beginning of the *Confession* is only ever understood in Augustine in relation to the nature and function of Christ. On Hanby’s reading of Augustine, the nature and function of Christ as love are expressed in his beauty. Captivated by the beauty of Christ, we are drawn into this love, “and slowly cleansed to contemplate the truth which is this love itself.”<sup>11</sup> Much more must be said here, but it will suffice to note that for Augustine, life in and through this participation in Christ must always already be given to him before he can begin the work of recollecting himself.

Here, in the most unexpected places, an androgynous Augustine appears.

Remember that the fluid, chaotic seas, in the first creation, were also read as the feminine, New Jerusalem, to be stilled in the erotic cleaving to God the Father, Father of law and order. When this stormy sea is transposed into Augustine he now has also

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 2003. 62.

become this fluid, chaotic women, being swept off his feet by the beauty of Christ. But as quickly as this androgynous Augustine appears, s/he is overcome by the rational, self-controlling Augustine. Although he must first be subdued by the Father, just as quickly he must in turn order the seas of his own life. This self-ordering is itself a cutting off, an objectification of the seas of temporality, of history, and of sociality. "The autobiographical Christian self excels in its capacity to transcend its bodily, social and ecological context."<sup>12</sup> Augustine saves himself from drowning by instantiating a double foreclosure: first, by supplementing the divine love of his Father, and then, by objectifying outside of himself the chaotic waters which he finds himself drowning in.

At the end of all this struggle, what are we to make of this 'felicity' and 'purity' that is achieved? On the one hand, this purity is achieved at the price of the denial of temporality and change. The rest that Augustine desires to achieve in God, resting in the house of God, is a frozen rest achieved by overcoming the fluidity of his life. Augustine begins his confession amidst the turbulent seas of confusion, "crying from the depths" of his lost and tormented soul. "Woe to you, torrent of human custom! 'Who can stand against you?' When will you run dry? How long will your flowing current carry the sons of Eve into the great and fearful ocean which can be crossed, with difficulty, only by those who have embarked on the Wood of the cross?"(I.25) His rest is achieved through that movement where the disparity and difference of his own life, 'distended in time,' is converted into a simple and pure unity that can find rest in God's simplicity. It is only in this simplicity that Augustine can find his peace.

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<sup>12</sup> Keller, *Face of the Deep*, 68.

On the other hand, this peace cannot be achieved in this life. In this life, Augustine will always be marked by time, distended and different from himself. There will always remain in him a bit of that turbulent, chaotic sea. Although Augustine would wish to achieve the rest of the 'heaven of heaven,' here, in this life, he can only achieve that first creation, which is still split between a heaven that is close to God, and an earth that is close to nothingness. Even with his formation into the image of God through Christ, even after the recollection of his life, a depth of becoming that he can never fully know or control will always trouble him. His conversion is never complete, and, even more troubling, rather than bringing a final peace, his conversion will only produce more depth. Augustine's conversion must take place in time, and so it must be a continual conversion. A new demand will be placed on the Christian self: to constantly be recollecting himself into a purity. But this recollection will always produce a remainder of 'earth,' a remainder that must itself be converted. In his quest for purity and simplicity, Augustine will be continually producing more torrid seas. His desire to calm the seas of this life will never be completed.

Is it possible to see, within this interiorization of the drama of creation and conversion, the first signs of the modern world? Will it be possible to understand the modern precisely as that moment when science and technology allow for the calming of the seas following through this Augustinian logic of conversion? Within this logic of conversion the modern will also believe that the chaos of difference is something, maybe even a "nothing something" that can be converted into a simple unity. This conversion will also be tied more strongly to the mind's power to recollect. Yet the modern mind, no less than Augustine's, will be unable to complete this task of conversion. The West will

always understand its supposed unity and peace to be challenged by an unruly, chaotic, and fluid ‘earth’ that it must control. The soul of the modern world will always be split, troubled by a depth that it can never know, and an ‘earth’ that it can never fully control. Might our Augustinian inheritance finally be the belief in a soul that can be converted, and a chaos that can be converted, producing a religion, a science, an economics, and a politics? A logic of conversion that finally finds its technology?