

Apr 25th, 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

# Knowing Oneself Through God: Psychoanalyzing the Conversion of St. Augustine

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Hague, Connor, "Knowing Oneself Through God: Psychoanalyzing the Conversion of St. Augustine" (2019). *Carroll College Student Undergraduate Research Festival*. 54.

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# Knowing Oneself Through God: Psychoanalyzing the Conversion of St. Augustine

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## Question

*Is it most important to know God or oneself?*

## Introduction

St. Augustine's conversion, detailed in *Confessions*, includes elements similar to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis as described in *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. This paper explores the outcomes of Augustine's search for truth and God and the outcomes of psychotherapy for Freud's patients.

## Summary

- Applying psychoanalysis to Augustine's confessions
  - Emotional attachment to past
  - "Talking cure" with audience
  - Subconscious repression of strong emotions due to societal pressures
  - Outcomes: sublimation and validation
- Relationship between religion and introspection



"They have, indeed, driven it out of consciousness... apparently saved themselves a great deal of psychic pain, but in the unconscious the suppressed wish still exists, only waiting for its chance to become active..." *Sigmund Freud*

"For see, thou wast within and I was without, and I sought thee out there.... Thou didst touch me, and I burned for thy peace." *St. Augustine of Hippo*



## Conclusions

- St. Augustine's conversions fits Freud's psychoanalytic model in symptoms, treatment, and resolution
- Attempts to "know God" as Augustine does are conduits for knowing oneself, accomplishing what Freud does through psychoanalysis
- Through knowing oneself, one comes to know God, and vice versa

## Acknowledgments

- Rachel Bechtel, Samantha Trudeau, and Clare Fogarty for editing
- Dr. Roncalli and Dr. Ries for offering advice and expertise
- Dr. Parsons for putting up with me

## References

1. "Books I, II, V." *Confessions*, by St. Augustine, Oxford University Press, 1991.
2. "First, Second, Fifth Lectures." *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, by Sigmund Freud, BN Publishing, 2008.