

“Memoria” in Augustine’s *Trinity*; a Needed Clarification in the Context of Recent Research

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Augustine's Quest

With a restless heart, Saint Augustine constantly seeks the one, true, supreme God. This search leads Augustine through a deep analysis of the human psyche and the intellectual process of knowing. The importance of gaining a clear and distinct understanding of the components of the human mind is that with the eyes of faith the human intellect is a created analogue for the very nature of God. If the words of Genesis are read, taught, and believed, “God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion... God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them;”(1,26-27) then the unique and most amazing attribute of the human being, the intellect, most resembles the divine creator God. To prove this, Augustine references Wisdom 13:5; “For from the greatness and the beauty of created things their original author, by analogy, is seen.” It is the complexity of this analogy that Augustine uncovers in the last seven books in his treatise *The Trinity*. He says, “...if it is with reference to (the human soul's) capacity to use reason and understanding in order to understand and gaze upon God that it was made to the image of God, it follows that from the moment this great and wonderful nature begins to be, this image is always there, whether it is so worn away as to be almost nothing, or faint and distorted, or clear and beautiful.”¹ Therefore, the mind ought to be gazed upon so as to discover within it the image of God. It is a radical proposal that by exploring and discovering the beauty and power of the human intellect, humanity can actually glimpse the image of God. “The image of that nature than which no nature is better is to be sought and found in that part of us than which our nature also has nothing better... it cannot achieve so great a good except by being his image.”²

The point of this paper is not to do an exhaustive analysis of either Augustine's thesis on the human psyche or his development of Trinitarian doctrine. Both of these would be too extensive for the scope of this paper and have already been done by many scholars through the centuries since the time of Augustine. Rather, just one component named by Augustine within human mind, the memory, is the focus of this paper. Narrowing the scope even more, the point is not to show how the analogue between

¹ Augustine, *The Trinity*, Edmund Hill, O.P., trans., John E. Rotelle, O.S.A., ed., (New York: New City Press, 1991), XIV, 2, 6.

² Ibid.

the memory of the mind and the Father within the Holy Trinity either succeeds or fails. Rather, Augustine has a very unique idea about what the memory is and how it functions as an active agent in the whole knowing process. The goal of this paper is to discover what Augustine means by knowing and how the memory has a critical role in this mental process. One issue that must be confronted is the translations of the Latin words Augustine uses for “knowledge”. There are several Latin words, each with their nuanced meaning for knowledge, awareness, consciousness, attentiveness, or understanding. Deciphering which meaning of memory Augustine was intending will allow his understanding of memory to be used in subsequent research correctly. Fr. Robert Doran, S.J. is currently working on groundbreaking work on the Trinity in History. He references Augustine’s notion of memory early in his second volume as a created analogue to the Father. My hope is that this research and clear explanation of Augustine’s notion of the memory can be of help to Doran’s work. Lastly, the role and use of memory in the secular, scientific realm has also become a highly coveted topic for research and millions of dollars of grants. Due to the recent research using fMRI’s and other modern brain-scan imaging technology, neuroscientists are learning much about where in the physical brain memories are stored and how the brain accesses them when invoked. With veterans returning from war with Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI), they are found to have lost this access to major components of their memories and thus cannot function in their everyday lives. All of a sudden, Saint Augustine’s careful analysis and clear explorations of the role of memory can contribute to this cutting-edge research and modern dilemma with which humanity is confronted.

Translational Issues

The words that are used to describe these mental processes can have very specific and nuanced meanings. Therefore, the precision of the translation from Augustine’s original Latin becomes crucially important. Salvino Biolo did a comprehensive analysis of Augustine’s notion of the conscious in *The Trinity*. He discusses how the common error in grasping what Augustine means by memory comes down to interpreting Augustine in saying self-conscious or self-knowledge. Latin differentiates *nosse*, *notitia*, *gnosci*, *gnoscor*, which refers to awareness in an undeveloped way, a familiarity, in an implicit or

imbedded manner; from *scire*, *scio* or *intelligere* or *cognoscere*, *cognosco*, which has a more definitive connotation of understanding explicitly, with a full realization. Therefore, when Augustine says, “*Haec igitur omnia, et quae per se ipsum et quae per sensus sui corporis et quae testimoniis aliorum percepta scit animus humanus, thesauro memoriae condita tenet,*”³ he uses the word *scit*, a form of *scire*, to definitely know something when perceived through the mind based on the what the senses have brought in or has been taught. Alternatively, about that which comes forth from the memory, Augustine says “*Tunc enim est uerbum simillimum rei notae,*”⁴ using the verb *notae*, a form of *notus*, which is more aware of, familiar with, cognizant of. Thus, Augustine implies that the word or “knowledge” residing in and coming forth from the memory is not known explicitly and concretely, but is more implicit, what one is conscious of but not able to name or articulate. Definitively knowing (*scire*) something requires explicit knowledge so that the conscious attention can gaze upon and think about that which the memory has acquired from the senses or the teachings of others and then begotten or recalled as a mental word or image.

Thinking and Knowing

In Book X of *The Trinity*, Augustine insists that we cannot love what we do not know. And yet, there are times that a person is driven by love, desire, or curiosity to venture into that which is unknown. There is the pursuit of the unknown that impels humans to ask questions, seek out answers, and remove the veil of ignorance within the mind about the world. Augustine asks the question, if the person does not know what is sought after by love, then why does the person seek this unknown? He wrestles with this dilemma by saying that “all of the love of a studious spirit, that is of one who wishes to know what he does not know, is not love for the thing he does not know but for something he knows, on account of which he wants to know what he does not know.”⁵ Augustine finds that man is in awe and love of his own rational nature and desires to live according to this nature. How can this love of self be present, if the mind (*mens*) does not know the self? Thus, the famous Delphic command to “Know thyself” is a task

³ Ibid., XV,4, 22

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., X, 1, 3.

that Augustine expects each person to take on if one is to love the self that naturally wants to know and then acquire knowledge of other things. “What is it then that the mind loves when it ardently seeks to know itself while still unknown to itself?”⁶ Augustine develops the argument that the mind knows that to which it is present and it is most present to itself. In a nearly Cartesian proof, Augustine says, “Nobody surely doubts, however, that he lives and remembers and understands and wills and thinks and knows and judges. At least, even if he doubts, he lives... remembers... understands... wills... thinks...judges.”⁷ Man cannot deny his own his own existence or acts of the mind. The mind knows these acts within itself and these acts are the very substance of the mind. These acts, Augustine says, *are* mind.

Augustine makes an important distinction between knowing the self and thinking about the self. *Se cogitare* holds the connotation of thinking about one’s self for the sake of coming to self-knowledge. *Cogitatio* is the verb that is derived from *cogo*, meaning to push or gather together. The thinking process, for Augustine, is about bringing together the many components and aspects that make up the self, that of living, remembering, understanding, willing, and judging. Knowing the self (*nosce teipsum*) is different. Even if the mind is thinking about other things, or even as the mind of an infant who has no explicit language is captivated by all of the new sensations, or even when the mind is looking to understand itself more, it still knows itself because it is present to its self immediately and non-representationally. Lonergan adds that knowing one’s self still takes time. “Man’s coming to know is a process, that the earlier stages of the process pertain to knowing without constituting it completely...(and so) maturity is comprehensive.”⁸ Therefore, because the mind is able to bring together and perform all of these functions in the act of thinking, even if there is not complete knowledge of self, the acts themselves bring about a love of self. Thus every human must have a basic knowledge, or consciousness of the self.

Knowing and Awareness

Augustine makes the distinction that knowledge of the self, is not the same as awareness of the self. Lonergan qualifies what Augustine calls knowledge of self as mere consciousness. “It is one thing

⁶ Ibid., X, 2, 5.

⁷ Ibid., X, 2, 14.

⁸ Bernard Lonergan, “The Dehellenization of Dogma,” in *A Second Collection*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), 28-29.

to be conscious, but it is quite another to know, through knowledge of the proper sense, that one is conscious.”⁹ Being aware of one’s own consciousness is a more profound level of knowing one’s self. Augustine describes awareness of the self by referencing the *Aeneid*. Ulysses is shown to have this greater sense of self-awareness even in the midst of great dangers. “Nor did the man of Ithaca forget himself in that momentous hazard,” meaning that he remembered himself, but in the sense that he was truly aware of himself in the midst of personal struggles and hardship. He was present to himself because he knew or recalled how he thought and functioned and what he could handle. This *conscientia sui* or self-awareness is often referred to as *memoria sui* by Augustine, as he shows how important memory is in conjunction with the thinking mind. Through intentional actions of introspection, self-reflection, meditation, or disciplined exercises of mindfulness, the person can grow in this self-awareness. This kind of awakening is what Augustine himself went through as demonstrated in the *Confessions*. In the midst of his conversion, Augustine noted how this self-presence is inescapable. “I remained to myself a place of unhappiness, in which I could not abide, yet from which I could not depart. From where was my heart to flee for refuge from my heart?”¹⁰ This awareness of one’s self through one’s memory may not always be likeable or easy to accept. The memory gathers and stores these aspects of the self, whether good or bad, so as to make them present when the self is tested. “So as regards something present, which is what the mind is to itself, one may talk without absurdity of memory as that by which the mind is available to itself, ready to be understood by its thought about itself, and for both to be conjoined by its love of itself.”¹¹ Thus, only with authentic self-awareness, often obtained after much training and many personal trials, can a person know one’s self in the sense of remembering one’s self.

The Mental Trinity

Augustine’s insight about the human mind that cannot help but search for a deeper knowledge

⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 12, translated by Michael G. Shields, edited by Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 315.

¹⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, F.J. Sheed, trans., Michael P. Foley, ed., (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2006), IV, 7, 13.

¹¹ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV, 3,14.

and awareness of its self leads him to question whether there is a trinity of mental powers that reveal the image of God already imprinted unto humanity. After all, to become aware of one's self, for Augustine, is to become ever more aware of God who is more truly within the person than the person is within himself. After discussing the divine Trinity for the first eight books, in Book Nine of *The Trinity*, Augustine first identifies a triune relationship within the intellectual process of human knowing. He shows how the mind, the knowledge it knows itself, and the love with which it loves itself and that loves and seeks after the knowledge that lies within, is together a definite triune relationship within the mind of each person. Making this analogy clearer and more aligned to the Trinity, Augustine names the memory, understanding, and will in Book X as the three most active aspects of the mind involved in the knowing process. He makes the claim that of all the components of the human intellect, these three most represent the image of God within the inner man. Why specifically these three? He says that these are what stand out the most in human character, how the intelligence of children is measured, and these three are judged when measuring the skills and capacities of a person. Digging deeper, Augustine also points out how these three mental components are equal in importance and work in perfect conjunction with each other. "In fact though they are not only each contained by each, they are all contained by each as well."¹² Because I can remember that I have a memory, understanding, and will, understand that I understand, will, and remember, will that I will, remember, and understand, there is a seamless integrity throughout these components. The point that Augustine makes with this triune relationship between the memory, understanding, and will is that "they are each and all and wholly contained by each, they are each and all equal to each and all, and each and all equal to all of them together, and these three are one, one life, one mind, one being."¹³ This total equality and integration throughout the three components of the mind is exactly what Augustine believes about the nature of the Holy Trinity, that it is three persons, but one, undivided God, a seamless tri-unity.

Despite this basic belief and understanding of God who is a Trinity of persons but still one, God is the greatest unknown and yet still loved by humanity. Because humanity is compelled by the process

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

of coming to know about the unknown, in the same way Augustine says that humanity loves itself even though it does not completely know itself, so humanity loves God, even though it knows even less about the divine. When contemplating the passage from Isaiah, 55,6, Augustine asks “Does the Lord have to be sought even when he has been found?...Why then look for something when you have comprehended the incomprehensibility of what you are looking for, if not because you should not give up the search as long as you are making progress in your inquiry into things incomprehensible, and because you become better and better by looking for so great a good which is both sought in order to be found and found in order to be sought?”¹⁴ This relationship of seeking the truth and finding the incomprehensible God, finding God and yet still continuing to seek for deeper understanding is the result of human faith that is constantly hungering for more and the human understanding which is ever in the process of finding. It is Lonergan who defines faith as “the knowledge born of religious love.”¹⁵ As much as this is a paper on Augustine’s explanation and use of memory, what cannot be denied is that Augustine only gives his explanation of memory, whether in his book *De Trinitate* or in *The Confessions*, when faithfully seeking an encounter with God. The mystery of the divine Trinity is ultimately grasped only through faith and it is Augustine’s faith, which he equates with belief, that motivates his understanding.

This quest for what is already attained yet still sought is strikingly similar to the “Paradox of Inquiry” in the *Meno*. Plato develops the conundrum by showing how virtue seemingly cannot be sought because all people have already known virtue since before birth. And yet, if a virtue is not sought here in this life, “one will not know how to aim one’s search properly, or how to recognize virtue, should one happen to stumble upon it.”¹⁶ This quest for virtue, which Plato says is already within all of humanity, emphasizes the need humanity has for making explicit what may already be present implicitly. Even though the Platonists never got to the point of encountering Christ as the Truth, this idea of faith seeking understanding, whether that be a greater understanding of one’s own mind, or for Augustine a greater understanding of God, it is a matter of making what is implicitly known, explicitly understood and able to

¹⁴ Ibid., XV, Prologue.

¹⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 115.

¹⁶ Gareth B. Matthews, ed., *Augustine On the Trinity*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xii.

be articulated. As will be developed in the proceeding sections of this paper, it is this process that Augustine says can only happen with the memory. Thus, the role of the memory is crucial in the faith-driven quest to know the incomprehensible God.

Memory

The role of the memory in the inner process of clear and ordered thinking does have Platonic origins. As comes out in Plato's *Meno*, "Then if the truth about reality is always in our soul, the soul would be immortal so that you should always confidently try to seek out and recollect what you do not know at present- that is, what you do not recollect?"¹⁷ Because of how prevalent the Platonic philosophical positions were in Augustine's time, he needed to address what Socrates calls recollection, so as to contrast what he means by memory in his explanation of the act of knowing. As Socrates does with Meno and many of his interlocutors, he brings out, through his questioning, knowledge about virtue or reality that seems to be already present in their minds. Humans are taught all knowledge not in this life, according to Socrates, but rather prior to the entrance of the soul into this human life. This Platonic hypothesis about being infused with knowledge in a previous life-time is ultimately rejected by Augustine. He makes the case that even if knowledge was learned prior to birth as Plato poses, not everyone would be endowed with the same types of knowledge. As he says, "it is unlikely that everybody was a geometer in a previous life, seeing that they are such a rarity in the human race that it is a job even to find one."¹⁸ However, where, for Augustine, do the forms of reality and truth that reside in the chambers of the memory, actually come from? Are they all only gained from outward experiences of the five bodily senses, what Augustine considers the lower-reality and the outer man? If not from the senses, how else can humans possible learn and retain knowledge? Augustine's response to these questions is "the nature of the intellectual mind has been so established by the disposition of its creator that it is subjoined to intelligible things in the order of nature, and so it sees such truths in a kind of non-bodily light that is *sui generis*, just as our eyes of flesh see all these things that lie around us in this bodily

¹⁷ Plato, "Meno", in *Plato Complete Works*, John M. Cooper, ed., (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 86, b.

¹⁸ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII, 4, 24.

light.”¹⁹ Because God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the source of all wisdom and knowledge, Augustine desires to ever know and love God more so as to acquire deeper wisdom. He is not a Platonist, and the tripartite nature of the human intellect that he explores and discusses extensively is where the image of the Triune God is made most visible.

Besides the memory, intellect, and will, Augustine finds many more tripartite relationships that comprise the whole human intellectual process, but in all of them, memory still plays an important role. These more minor trinities include external objects outside of the inner mind, the bodily senses, the inner “looks” or envisioning of ideas, and the recollection of past knowledge already acquired and stored in the memory. Describing how the mind processes the data gained by each of the five senses, for example, Augustine explains how human sight is a triune relationship in that there is the sense of sight within the human subject who has the ability to see, the object that is seen through the sense of sight, and the conscious intention to see what it can see and then hold that gaze as the subject looks. What intrigues Augustine about this process is that once the form of the external object is internalized through the senses, the mind retains an “impression” of the form of the external object even after that external object is no longer in sight or gazed upon. An image Augustine uses is like the impression a ring can make on the wax seal of an envelope. When the ring is impressed into the wax, the ring has, in a sense, the full and undivided attention of the wax. After pulling the ring out, the image of the ring left in the wax remains as the wax was shaped by the image held by the ring. This lasting likeness of the form of the external object is what Augustine associates with memory.

A basic insight about the memory that Augustine points out is that the memory allows for the attention to be turned to other ideas and sensations but then return to the impression or form held in the memory when it wills. The will, then, works in close conjunction with the memory. It is the power within the mind that can direct the attention from external objects to impressions of objects left in the memory. “As a body in place, then, is to the senses of the body, so is the likeness of a body in the memory to the conscious attention; and as the sight of one looking at something is to that look of a body

¹⁹ Ibid.

which forms the sense, so is the inner sight of one thinking about something to the image of the body fixed in the memory which forms the conscious attention; and what the intention of the will is to the coupling of a body seen to the sight...²⁰ Thus, Augustine finds that the knowing process is likened to an inner looking. The consciousness is directed by the will to look into the memory, which holds implicit knowledge, and by the consciousness gazing on a certain memory, the knowledge becomes explicit and able to be articulated in a true word and in action.

The memory, then, is the treasury of images. The images of the outer world are absorbed through the senses of the body or the experiences of others that are shared or taught. Once retained in the memory, the inner knowing process can proceed. The description of the memory Augustine uses in *Confessions* is powerful. “The things themselves are not brought into the memory; it is only their images which are seized with such marvelous speed, and stored away marvelously as if in cabinets, and as marvelously brought fourth again when we remember.”²¹ Augustine says that as soon as the image is placed in the memory, a judgment or rational preference about the image can be made. “Thus when I call to mind the ramparts of Carthage which I have seen, and also form a picture of those of Alexandria which I have not seen, and prefer some of these forms in my imagination to others, I make a rational preference.”²² In a similar way, when a complete image of a person or object is not obtained, then impressions about a person or object can be formed by the mind and judgments can be formed about those impressions. Augustine gives an example that consists of hearing about another person who was tortured. Immediately, an image is formed within the mind about this tortured person, but based on very little evidence. A judgment could be made of repulsion based on this image that keeps the two people from ever meeting. So, stored in the memory, along with experiences or teachings, are impressions about the knowledge or feelings that have arisen because of the knowledge. It is because of both of these images and impressions that higher truths can be sought out through the use of the focus and attention of the consciousness on the recalled memories. “Our shaping the images of bodies in our consciousness or our

²⁰ Ibid., XI, 2, 7.

²¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, X, 9, 16.

²² Augustine, *The Trinity*, IX, 2, 10.

seeing bodies through the body is one thing; quite another is our grasping simple intelligence and proportions (ratios), the inexpressibly beautiful art of such shapes exiting above the apex of the mind.”²³

A second insight gleaned from Augustine’s writing about the memory is that it can lose the impression it once held by forgetting. The treasury of knowledge is not perfectly sealed. How vivid and lasting the image is in the memory depends on the fear or passion with which the external object was presented to the senses and then imprinted into the memory. If and when the memory loses the impression of the external object because of an act of forgetfulness, Augustine explains how the consciousness, with the pressure of the will, has the power to fabricate a new memory or even creatively imagine what has never been experienced before through the senses. Such a composition of mental images is brought about through the manipulation, alteration, adjustment, or combination of previously captured images, experiences, and sensations. Augustine uses the Latin verb *cogitate*, to describe this gathering of the scattered and unarranged ideas into one coherent thought. The danger with this imaginative power of the mind that Augustine warns the reader about is the deception of other people or one’s self that can come about. “When the will forsakes better things and avidly wallows in these it becomes unclean, and in this way such things can be thought about disastrously when they are present and even more disastrously when they are absent.”²⁴ Deception of one’s self or others comes about because of a disordered will. This sinfulness, which Augustine speaks about extensively in *Confessions*, is the will taking advantage of the powerful freedom it has to conjure up an assortment of images from the memory and manipulate them according to its own devices. The resultant deceptive knowledge is often developed from bodily sensations, what Augustine identifies as the lower things of the outer world. Rather than focusing on what Augustine considers higher and more inward things with the help of the retained images within the memory, too often a person with disordered affections becomes fixated on whatever physical object or worldly treasure catches the eye or randomly captures the imagination. The bodily trinity of the eyes, the external object, and the will to see is therefore judged by Augustine not to be in the image of God and lacking in the true inner word of knowledge. “It is produced in the soul

²³ Ibid., IX, 2, 11.

²⁴ Ibid., XI, 2, 8.

through the senses of the body out of the lowest level of creation, which is the bodily one, and the soul itself is higher than this.”²⁵ Thus, when the memory forgets what it once contained or cannot provide the conscious attention that which is sought, the will can be left to its own devices in fabricating its own deceptive and false notions of knowledge.

Image and Likeness Marred by Sin

As Augustine works more with this analogy of the triune relations of the human intellect and that of the Holy Trinity, he realizes there are some discrepancies. The problem, he says, is that “This Trinity of the mind is not really the image of God because the mind remembers, and understands, and loves itself,”²⁶ and this self-centered pursuit is considered brutish and disordered. However, if awakened to the light of Truth, the mind can focus on, remember, understand, and love the creator God. When the mind is engaged specifically in this activity of worshiping the uncreated God, the mind is truly wise, “and not just in its own light but by sharing in that supreme light, and it will reign in happiness where it reigns eternal.”²⁷ This sense of the person potentially possessing an image of the Trinity God or only possessing the image of God if actually thinking about God is where Augustine is confronted with a conundrum. Even if the fool is only remembering, understanding, and loving himself, rather than God, the fact is that he is using his memory, understanding, and will and thus still exercising and engaged in this divine, Trinitarian, intellectual likeness. “What, after all, is not in God, of whom it is divinely written, ‘For from him and through him and in him are all things’.”(Rom 11:36). So both foolish and wise people are living in God and portraying the divine image through their remembering, understanding, and loving, but, just as a person can completely forget that they knew a person, losing all recognition of the person, so too can the fool completely forget about God, turning away from him and thus be in a state of “unlikeness”. “By forgetting God, it was as if they had forgotten their own life, and so they are turned to death, that is to hell.”²⁸ Quoting from Psalm 39, Augustine shows how the fool can still be exhibiting the image of God but is lost and disordered due to carnal habits. “Although man walks in the image, yet he is troubled in

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., XIV, 4, 15.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., XIV, 4, 17.

vain; he treasures up and does not know for whom he gathers them.” The mind can be confused, turned upside-down, manipulated by the treasures of this world and deadened by possessions that do not bring happiness or lead to wisdom. The mind that has forgotten itself and therefore forgotten God, blots out God and makes all of the parts of the body brutish. Augustine speaks about such forgetfulness and loss from personal experience. He says in *Confessions*, “And I knew that I was far from Thee in the region of unlikeness.”²⁹

More definitive than this distinction of a mind directed to God and one turned away from God in sin, Augustine shows how one can act in likeness to God or bear the very image of God. The human intellect has the likeness to the creator God because it exists, it can create, by fabricating images and ideas through the imagination, and it has the potentiality to pursue goodness. This likeness however, is not the same as bearing the image of God. Only the highest and most rightly ordered act of the human intellect “receives his direct imprint which has no other nature interposed between him and itself.”³⁰ Book XV is where Augustine makes explicit his hope for the reader to yearn to reflect the perfect image of the Triune God. “In pursuance of our plan to train the reader, in the things that have been made (Rom 1:20), for getting to know him by whom they were made, we came eventually to his image. This is man insofar as he excels other animals, that is in his reason or understanding and whatever else can be said about the rational or intellectual soul...”³¹ Augustine is creating a mystagogue in that he is pushing the readers of his book into a more pure order for their thinking and directing them to become more aware of themselves and the Triune God. This treatise on the Trinity becomes a “spiritual exercises” of sorts to rightly order the mind so that each person may become a more perfect and clear image of the Trinity God. Only when remembering, understanding, and willing the presence, identity, and goodness of God can the human possess any true and real treasure and know an eternal life of happiness. Each person must train his will to be directed to the higher-level aspects of goodness, truth, and beauty; purify her thoughts to gaze on only on what is true and good, and direct all of his attention to the creator God if the Trinity God is to be

²⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, VII, 10, 16.

³⁰ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XI, 2, 8.

³¹ *Ibid.*, XV, 1.

known and the human person is to bear the very image of God.

The Pure and Perfect Knowing Process

As Augustine explores how the human intellect can bear the very image of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, he refers several times to a parent-offspring relationship between the distinct aspects within the intellect as if he is trying to develop a closer connection between the Triune God and the tripartite human mind. He uses this vocabulary to discuss how the knowing process takes place from the form of the external object, through the bodily senses, into the memory, recalled by the intellect, which gazes upon the inner form to create a responsible judgment of the truth gained. However, because the form produced in the sense of sight is only a likened image or offspring of the parent form, that of the external object itself, he has to qualify the terms saying that the form in the sense of sight is a “quasi-offspring” of the “quasi-parent” of the form of the external object. This language of the parent to offspring becomes most relevant to memory when the conscious attention focuses on an image from the memory. The memory, in a sense, holds the “parent” image or tacit knowledge held in the mind, and the attentive conscious receives the child-image or offspring of that original. Augustine does not need to stretch this analogy too far before he likens the memory with the Father and the knowledge with the begotten Word, or Son that is uttered forth from the memory.

It is true that man’s memory (and particularly the kind of memory which animals do not have, in which intelligible things are contained that have not come into it through the senses of the body) has in its own little way some sort of likeness in this image trinity to the Father, however immeasurably inadequate the likeness may be. Again it is true that man’s understanding, which is formed from memory by directing thought onto it when what is known is uttered, and which is an inner word of no particular language, has in its enormous inequality some kind of likeness to the Son;³²

The word that comes forth from the memory into the attentive conscious is not refined and perfectly articulated knowledge. Rather it is an implicit awareness, the knowledge that has been gathered from the senses and the teachings of others only to be stored within caverns of the memory, but not yet understood, the tacit idea that is yet to be manifest. Augustine elaborates on the word. “From (the memory) is begotten a true word when we utter what we know, but a word before any sound, before any thought of

³² Ibid., XV, 6, 43.

sound. For it is then that the word is most like the thing known, and most its image, because the seeing which is thought springs direct from the seeing which is knowledge.”³³ The term Augustine uses is *verbum mentis* or mental word. It is a sense of truth, a tacit understanding of rightness, almost like a hunch that this knowledge is indeed so. Before any language can be applied to this “word” of intelligibility so as to express it verbally or articulate the deeper insight, this mental word that is begotten by the memory is what can be developed into knowledge or manifested into greater understanding when focused and concentrated attention of the mind is applied to it. This word is the implicit or tacit intelligibility that is brought forth to be made explicit and fully understood.

This inner mental word that Augustine says arises from the memory exhibits the rational principle that characterizes humanity and that shows forth the likeness humanity has to God. More than this, Augustine is indicating in this description of the inner word arising out of the memory how important a role memory plays in this rational process. It is the storehouse of the implicit intelligibility. The distinction that Augustine makes is that the mental word is uttered from the memory, but is still distinct from the memory. This word is the definition or affirmation of the knowledge of the object being known, that which is “begotten” from the storehouse of implicit knowledge. As Augustine says, “the word is most like the thing known, and most its image... a true word from a true thing, having nothing from itself, but everything from that knowledge from which it is born.”³⁴ Lonergan helps to make unambiguously clear this distinction that Augustine makes between the rational principle augmented by memory and that of the definition or interior affirmation of the inner word in *The Triune God: Doctrines*. Here Lonergan differentiates the inner word, what Augustine explains as coming forth from the memory, from an outer word, that which is articulated and manifested to other people. Lonergan shows how the Gospels use both of these expressions in that the outer word is that which is proclaimed and the inner is that truth that remains in the heart, which can still bear much fruit in faith. He points out the images such as the seeds that were sown on different types of soil or the word that Mary held sacredly in her heart (Luke 2:51). Lonergan also brings up the Stoics who developed the distinction between *verbum insitum* and *verbum*

³³ Ibid., XV,4, 22.

³⁴ Ibid.

prolatum, concept and speech, the rational principle within the human mind and the outward expression or articulation of that idea.³⁵ Augustine does not dwell as much on the expression of an outer word. For him, once the attentive conscious grabs hold of the inner word and affirms it, making the implicit explicit, the abstract concrete, that which had no language to that which can be articulated, then this inner knowledge can be outwardly expressed easily. Rather, Augustine's over-all goal is to show how the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity manifests itself in the thinking and knowing process of humanity in the three components of the mind; memory, knowledge, and will. As he says in *Confessions*, "These three are very far different from the Trinity, but I mention them that men may exercise their minds and test and realize how far different they are."³⁶ Thus, the memory, which he makes as a weak analogy to the Father, begets this inner word of implicit knowledge, which has a poor likeness to the Son, which, when known, bears much fruit.

The Issue of Knowing

As has been shown, while Augustine urges his readers to come to a closer union with God, he also gains understanding into the inner movement of human cognition. Taking a good look at a physical object is not having full knowledge of the object for Augustine. The subject simply sensing an external object through the bodily senses is considered a lower and inferior form of knowing. Rather, the conscious attention focuses on what the memory already possesses, the image of an external object. The memory then can hold this image even when the person is not directly thinking about that object. Augustine finds that "when we think about the look retained in the memory, this other look is "printed off" in the attention of our thoughts and formed in the act of remembering, and this is a quasi-offspring of the one held in the memory."³⁷ This "print-off", (translated from *exprimitur* by Edmund Hill, O.P.) as Augustine says, is still not a true offspring from the memory because that would imply that the conscious attention itself is formed from the act of seeing an external, physical object that then jogs the memory and creates, in a sense, the conscious attention of that memory. Rather, the attentive focus on the image from

³⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Doctrines*, CWL 11, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1988), 661, n. 85.

³⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, XIII, 11, 12.

³⁷ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XI, 3, 11.

the memory that comes about through the process of remembering is present within the human mind all along, even before the external, physical object is seen that then jogs the memory. Augustine makes three clear distinctions in describing the knowledge of the form of the external object. There is the form of the object within the memory, the “print-off” or better, “expression” of the form of the object, and the focused conscious attention that can grasp the expressed form. Conscious attention is not an offspring nor does it come about from memory, but works in conjunction with memory by holding the expressed form in its attentive gaze. By attentively holding this form, the conscious attention allows for the inner understanding of the true forms of all that exists.

These three components are able to work together only through the act of the will, which is the driving force behind the knowing process for Augustine. The specific role of the will along with the memory and the conscious attention must be carefully sorted out. Augustine says, that there are really two series of trinitarian events happening in the thinking process and driven by the will. There is the outer trinity of sensation and the inner trinity of thought. The outer trinitarian process begins with the external object and ends with the memory holding the form of the object within its chambers. The inner trinitarian process begins from that form residing in the memory and ends with the conscious attention gazing at the form of the object. The memory, then, is the central pivot between the external and internal processes in the entire act of knowing for Augustine. Within these two trinitarian processes, Augustine explains how there are four “looks” (*acies*) or images. The first look is that of the external object that is being seen. This image causes the second look produced in the sensation of seeing which receives the data from the external object that presents itself to the person. The memory receives this data from the senses if the will allows for this connection and then holds the third look. With this data, the memory creates a “printed off” (*exprimitur*) form or image that the conscious attention receives and upon which it gazes. The conscious attention, can gain understanding as it gazes or creatively manipulate it, alter it, or adjust it depending on the desires of the will. The conscious attention, however, can only start with what has first been experienced and this is retained by the memory.

The role of the will throughout these two processions is three-fold. In other words, the will

couples a quasi-parent to offspring relationship in three separate occasions. The “look” (*acies*) of the body gives rise to the look in the senses, but only if the will directs to the senses to receive the look from the external body. The look in the senses causes the offspring of the form in the memory, but only if the will chooses to have the memory absorb this data and retain it. The will can then direct the conscious attention to receive an offspring from the form in the memory so as to gain understanding, but only if the will directs the conscious attention. “The will to remember proceeds from things contained in the memory, together with things which are “printed-off” from them through recollection in the act of observing.”³⁸ Thus, the will is the inner conduit that completes the one event of human intellectual knowing. The will fastens sense to body, memory to sense, and the thinking attention to memory. Since the conscious attention cannot fathom all of the forms that reside in the memory in one glance, because it can only hold one form at a time, the trinitarian cognitional process involving the memory, conscious attention, and will must take place every time a new object is seen with the eyes or other sensations. The will is what determines what the conscious attention focuses on and what is simply sensed but not drawn forth into the memory. For example, a person can be out for a walk, but deep in thought. There could be strong wind, dogs barking, and a beautiful rainbow in the sky. The senses are feeling the wind, hearing the barking, and seeing the colors of the rainbow. But, since the will is causing the conscious attention to be focused on other thoughts, the memory has not been applied to the senses of the body. These external events are experienced but forgotten immediately and never presented to the conscious attention. Therefore, whatever the will directs the memory to receive is what will eventually be retained as implicit knowledge. The memory retains what is directed to it by the will from the experiences of sensation. Then, the conscious attention can only pull from that which the memory holds. The will constantly directs the conscious attention of thought. The will is the animator of the thinking process and ultimately what Augustine likens to The Holy Spirit, albeit a poor analogy. This whole process will only proceed as ideally as has been said if the will has pure intentions and is rightly ordered, which Augustine knows personally, does not happen all of the time.

³⁸ Ibid., XI, 3, 12.

Pureness of Thought

In Book Ten of Augustine's *Confessions*, he elaborates on this idea of the desire to pull out stored bits of knowledge from the chambers of the memory in an act of *cogitation* or collecting from the dispersion of the vast array of stored memories. He explains with poetic detail the way the will directs the conscious attention toward the memory in search of an answer to a question, a sought out image of a past experience, or for the words of a memorized prayer or song. In this cogitation process, the memory may or may not produce the desired thought. It may take a period of time for the memory to manifest the desired thought. While pulling out the desired inner word from the memory bank, other un-wanted images, feelings, experiences, and memories may come flowing out with this word, causing the conscious attention to be diverted, distracted, or overwhelmed. No matter what, the memory is more than a storage tank of all of the bodily sensations that have been experienced. Rather, the thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and attitudes are also preserved. "In my memory too I meet myself- I recall myself, what I have done, when and where and in what state of mind I was when I did it...From the same store I can weave into the past endless new likenesses of things either experienced by me or believed on the strength of things experienced."³⁹ Tastes, smells, sounds, sights, feelings, the reactions from all of these sensations, as well as joyous pleasures and immense pains are all contained within the memory, but not actually experienced when called forth, only remembered. The memory is truly a great and fascinating power of the mind.

Because of the memory's vast and immense powers to work with implicit intelligibility, there is a spiritual dimension that brings about both forgetfulness and recollection. The memory can bring to one's attention what had been in reality but is no longer, which can lead to great pain, sadness, and want. Recalling a loved one who has died creates this emptiness and ache in the soul to be with this person again, leaving an impossible to satisfy longing in the heart. On the other hand, the memories of home when one is far away or at war can evoke an abundant joy in the midst of hardship and great strength for perseverance or survival to eventually re-obtain what has physically been lost but always retained in the

³⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, X, 8, 13.

memory. What Augustine finds most fascinating is that the memory can remember moments of forgetting. Even though forgetting is essentially an absence of memory, there are still memories of what is presently lost. Much like Augustine's notion of evil recognized as the absence of the good, so in the same way, forgetfulness (*oblivio*) can also be recognized as the absence or effacement of what the mind remembers.

Augustine's insights about the memory must be pushed with further questions especially around this notion of forgetfulness. As was discovered especially through the work of Freud, the memory is imprinted with extremely difficult moments in life that one chooses to forget or represses. These moments are still present in the memory, just filed so deeply into the recesses of the memory that the conscious attention cannot easily access them. Or, there is the reference that Christ makes in John 16, 21 about the woman in labor who "is in anguish because her hour has arrived; but when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the pain because of her joy that a child has been born into the world." When moments of extreme pain or lasting hardship eventually come to an end that is filled with great joy, then the pain and challenge is definitely forgotten, or at least recalled as not so bad after-all. The memory seems to have a judgment mechanism that deciphers the severity of the pain in those moments of extreme challenge. Such memories can then be intentionally forgotten by the will so as to avoid prolonged feelings of pain, fear, or sadness.

When the will becomes disordered, centered on its own satisfactions and blinded from the true good due to temptations for false goods, the conscious attention can be manipulated to conjure up false and destructive images from the memory which are merely absorbed in all of the forms and experiences of the senses and thoughts. Augustine explains how the will can use the conscious attention to pull snippets from several true and complete memory forms from within the storerooms of the memory and end up with a confusing, false conglomeration of forms. The conscious attention, though it will be lead into error, will always follow the rule of the will. This freedom of will is what brings about error, false thoughts, and eventually sin itself. Augustine's reflections in *Confessions* is his process of purifying or redirecting his own will, recognizing the many ways that he had turned from the one true living God who

intimately knows the thoughts of humanity and imprints the divine Triune image into humanity. By reflecting on the amazing powers and capacity of the memory, Augustine is drawn up in awe and adoration of the God who is powerful far beyond the powers of the human intellect. “You who abide above me, I shall mount up beyond that power of mine called memory, longing to attain to touch You at the point where that contact is possible and to cleave to you at the point where it is possible to cleave.”⁴⁰ Through Augustine’s own confessions, reflections, and insights, he hopes to direct his readers’ wills toward God so that the truths contained in each person’s memory may not be used for destruction, evil, or selfish pursuits. The human memory is such a powerful force, capable of such good but also such evil. And yet, Augustine realizes that every animal has a memory too. How else would birds be able to come back to their nests or carry out the habits and patterns of their lives without memory? Therefore, Augustine wants to somehow separate himself as a human with a soul from the mere mortal beasts. So he says, “I shall pass beyond memory to find you, O truly good and certain Loveliness, and where shall I find you? If I find You beyond my memory, then shall I be without memory of You. And how shall I find You if I am without memory of You?”⁴¹ Therefore, this memory is both what confines humanity to its animalistic existence as well as what lifts humanity to see and love the God of all existence.

In summary of Augustine’s formulation of memory, this power of the mind is one of three essential capacities identified in the thinking process. Along with the will and the attentive consciousness, the memory is that which uncritically and without bias absorbs the data of forms received by the bodily sensations and approved by the will, stores them in a diverse array throughout its chambers, and is able to recall the forms when prompted from the active intellect and driven by the will. The recollection of these memories, or the begetting of the inner word, is the process of making the implicit explicit, the unarticulated into identifiable language, and the latent fully present. This human cognitional process is what Augustine uses to make the bold claim that humanity glimpses the nature of the Triune God of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If the will is rightly ordered to seek the True, the Good, and the Beautiful and commits to this pursuit despite the many temptations and distractions, then the active

⁴⁰ Ibid., X, XVII, 26.

⁴¹ Ibid.

intellect can be directed to call from the memory those thoughts, images, laws, lessons, and experiences which are Truly Good and Beautiful so as to gaze upon them and through this loving gaze, see and adore God Himself. While there are times when the memory can and does forget the data that has been once collected and stored, the memory can still remember those times of forgetfulness or recall, generally, what it is that was forgotten.

Implications

While so much can be drawn out from what Augustine's notion of memory and the implications that it has, I simply name two. First, there is Doran's most recent research as he develops the notion of the visible and invisible missions of the Word. If Augustine's poor analog of the created memory for the eternal Father in the Holy Trinity is extended, the insights gained from Augustine can shed light on the ideas Doran is proposing. As has been established, the memory holds tacit knowledge, an implicit intelligibility, the inner word that has no language, that which is present but not able to be articulated. Is this what Doran means by the invisible mission of the Word? Doran describes this invisible mission by saying, "The universal gift of God's love establishes invisible missions of the Word and the Holy Spirit: the Father (not 'God') sends the Word in whom human beings participate through divinely originated insights and judgments of fact and value that in acknowledging the gift reflect the faith that is knowledge born of God's love..."⁴² These insights and judgments of fact and value done by faithful believers acknowledging a faith in the Father are real and true, but are implicit actions or shadows of the real and true presence of God in the world. This falls in line with what Augustine is saying about the role of the knowledge that comes forth from the memory, that of an inner word with no language to articulate it explicitly. Doran then says, "The Father (not 'God') sends the Son in Jesus, in the 'fullness of time' that itself is established by the effective history of the invisible missions, in order to *reveal* the work that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit together conceive as one work to be executed first in the invisible missions of the Son and the Spirit and then in the visible, revealing mission of the Son."⁴³ If this same

⁴² Robert Doran, "The Trinity in History: First Steps beyond Volume I", Paper presented at The Lonergan Workshop, Boston College, June 2014, 2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3.

proposal is equated with the analogous trinity of the mind (*mens*) and the process of knowing that Augustine developed, there is a strong similarity. The memory begets the word when sought out by the intention of the will in order to reveal the knowledge and love possessed in the memory and manifest, through the work of knowing, the form of the reality of the external world so that full understanding can be achieved. Thus, a clear understanding of Augustine's description of memory is in agreement with and helps shed light on Doran's development of the invisible mission of the Son.

Second, and this implication requires more thought and development, Augustine discussed the dangerous possibilities that arise when the memory forgets the impressions that it once held. He explained how the lack of memories allowed the will and active intellect to freely create manipulated and fabricated understandings of reality. What modern science is finding by using modern brain scans on patients, especially war-veterans suffering from Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI's), is that they have "an impaired ability to retrieve memories formed prior to injury and a reduced capacity to form or retain new memories following injury."⁴⁴ The goal of a recent government funded research project is to create what will be called wireless, fully implantable neural-interface medical devices to stimulate certain neural circuits that will restore memory function. As much as this state-of-the-art technology sounds beneficial for those who have suffered TBI, what exactly will be restored, if Augustine's understanding of the role of the memory in the active process of thinking and knowing is taken into account? Rather than retrieving past memories, is the will, which for Augustine is the agent that deciphers which memories to recall, actually what this implantable chip will be replicating? The will is what Augustine says chooses which memories to recall and which to bypass or repress. After experiencing exceptionally gruesome aspects of war, the will's deliberate forgetfulness may be the mind's natural response in preventing dangerous and painful images from overwhelming the person. And, rather than the memory being the target of all this research, it could be the case that the memory of the patient with a TBI is holding all of these latent experiences but the will has been so shaken that it has lost its capacity to recall or pull forth

⁴⁴ Justin Sanchez, "Restoring Active Memory (RAM)" in the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) Biological Technologies Office, website: http://www.darpa.mil/Our_Work/BTO/Programs/Restoring_Active_Memory_RAM.aspx, accessed July 20, 2014.

the inner words of a very challenging past history. Augustine's careful analysis of the mental trinity can contribute important considerations in this cutting-edge research on the quest for restoring active memory (RAM).

There are many more avenues for how Augustine's understanding of the workings of the memory in the mental process of thinking can be applied to recent and needed research both on the divine Trinity as well as the human mind. However, what cannot be forgotten in any of these applications is that Augustine was ultimately engaged in the quest to seek, find, and love God. This goal for greater knowledge and love of the Trinity God must be the desire for all faith-directed research and questioning.

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