

Lecture 4: Augustine on Mind, Human and Divine

CAU 2023 — Scott MacDonald, Cornell University

Soliloquies 1.12 [tr. Watson, modified]

For reason . . . promises that she will display God as clearly to your mind as the sun appears to the eyes. For minds are, as it were, souls' senses. The most certain truths arrived at by the sciences are like the objects which are
5 illuminated by the sun — such as the earth and all the things on the earth — so that they can be seen. Now it is God Himself who illuminates, and reason [is] to minds what the power to see is to eyes. Now to have eyes is not the same thing as to have the power to see, and to have the power to see is not the same thing as to see.

10 *Confessions* 10.12 [tr. M. Boulding, modified]

So then, I will leave behind that power of my nature [i.e., sense perception], and ascend by stages toward him who made me. Now I arrive in the fields and vast mansions of memory, where are treasured innumerable images brought in there from objects of every conceivable kind perceived by the senses. There
15 too are hidden away the modified images we produce when by our thinking we magnify or diminish or in any way alter the things our senses have touched. There too is everything else that has been consigned and stowed away, and not yet engulfed and buried in oblivion.

Conf. 10.13

20 The huge repository of the memory, with its secret and unimaginable caverns, receives and keeps all these things, to be recalled and brought out for use when needed; and as all of them have their particular ways into it, so all are put back again in their proper places. The things themselves do not find their way in, however; it is the images of things perceived by the senses that are available
25 there to the person who recalls them.

Conf. 10.14

[I recall these images] within myself in the immense court of my memory; for there sky and earth and sea are readily available to me, together with everything that I have ever been able to perceive in them, apart from what I
30 have forgotten. And there I come to meet myself. I recall myself, what I did, when and where I acted in a certain way, and how I felt about so acting. Everything is there which I remember having experienced for myself or believed on the assertion of others. Moreover, I can draw on this abundant store to form imaginary pictures which resemble the things I have myself
35 experienced, or believed because my own experience confirmed them, and weave these together with images from the past, and so evoke future actions,

occurrences or hopes; and on all these as well I can meditate as though they were present to me.

Conf. 10.15

40 Great is this power of memory, O my God, exceedingly great, a vast, infinite recess. Who can plumb its depth? This is a power of my mind, belonging to my nature, yet I cannot myself comprehend all that I am. Is the mind, then, too narrow to grasp itself, forcing us to ask where that part of it is which it is incapable of grasping? Is it outside the mind, not inside? How can the mind
45 not compass it?

Conf. 10.16

The immense spaces of my memory harbor even more than these, however. Here too are all those things which I received through training in the liberal arts and have not yet forgotten; they are stored away in some remote inner
50 place, which yet is not really a place at all. However, in this case it is not images of the realities that I harbor, but the realities themselves (*res ipsas*); for what literature is, what skill in debate is, how many kinds of questions there are — indeed whatever of these sorts of things I know, it is in my memory but not in such a way that I leave the thing outside once the image has been
55 grasped. . . .

Conf. 10.26

Great is the power of memory, an awesome a mystery, O my God, a profound, infinite complexity! It is the mind, and this is nothing other than my very self. What am I, then, O my God? What is my nature? It is teeming life of every
60 conceivable kind, and exceedingly vast. See, in the measureless plains and vaults and caves of my memory, immeasurably full of countless kinds of things which are there either through their images (as is the case for all bodies), or by being themselves present (as is the case for what belongs to the liberal arts), or by registering themselves and making their mark in some
65 indefinable way (as with emotional states which the memory retains even when the mind is not actually undergoing them, although whatever is in the memory must be in the mind too).

Trinity 9.1 [tr. McKenna/Matthews, Cambridge Univ. Press (2002)]

70 With regard to the question at hand, therefore, let us believe that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one God, the Creator, and the ruler of all creation; that the Father is not the Son, nor is the Holy Spirit the Father or the

Son, but that there is a trinity of inter-related persons, and the unity of an equal substance. But let us seek to understand this, imploring the help of Him whom we wish to understand; and in the measure that He shall grant, desiring to explain what we understand. . . .

Trinity 10.18 [tr. E. Hill, New City Press, 2011]

These three then, memory, understanding, and will, are not three lives but one life, nor three minds but one mind. So it follows of course that they are not three substances but one substance. When memory is called life, and mind, and substance, it is called so with reference to itself; but when it is called memory it is called so with reference to another. I can say the same about understanding and will; both understanding and will are so called with reference to another. But each of them is life and mind and being with reference to itself. For this reason these three are one in that they are one life, one mind, one being.

Trinity 11.6

. . . When the form of the body is taken away which was perceived by the bodily senses, there remains a likeness of it in the memory, to which the will can again turn the gaze (aciem) to be formed by it from within, just as the sense was formed from without by the sensible body presented to it. And so one gets another trinity, out of the memory and internal sight and the will which couples them together . . . But instead of the form of the body which was sensed outside, there now appears memory retaining that form (speciem) which the soul drank in through the sense of the body; and instead of that sight (visio) which was outside when the sense was being formed from the sensible body, we now have a similar sight within when the mind's gaze (acies animi) is formed from what the memory retains, and absent bodies are thought about.

Trin. 11.7

The will, then turns the [mind's] gaze here and there and back again to be formed, and once formed keeps it joined to the image in the memory . . . As a body in a place, then, is to the senses of the body, so is the likeness of a body in the memory to the mind's gaze; and as the sight of one looking at something is to that form of a body which forms the sense, so is the sight of one thinking about something to the image of a body fixed in the memory which forms the mind's gaze.

Trin. 11.14

The reason why no one can think about anything bodily unless he has sensed it is that no one remembers anything bodily unless he has sensed it. So the limits of thinking are set by the memory just as the limits of sensing are set by

bodies. The senses receive the form (species) of a thing from the body we sense, the memory receives it from the senses, and the gaze of the one who is thinking (acies cogitantis) from the memory.

Trin. 12.23-24 [tr. S. MacDonald]

[23] [Intelligibles] . . . abide, however, not as though they were fixed in spatial locations, in the way bodies abide but, [fixed] in incorporeal nature, they are present (praesto sunt) to the mind's gaze (mentis aspectibus) in just the way things that are visible or tangible are [present] to the bodily senses in their places.

. . . Few are able to attain to these things by their mind's gaze (mentis acie), and when one does attain to them as far as that is possible, one does not remain among them but it is as if the mind's gaze is shocked and rebuffed and is left with a transitory thought (cogitatio) of something that is not transitory.

This transient thought, however, is committed to memory by the sorts of training by which the mind is trained. As a result, there is something to which [the thought] that is forced back can return. But if thought does not return to memory and find there what it had committed to memory (as happens with the untrained), it can be led to it just as it was led before and find it where it first found it, in the incorporeal truth where once again a sort of impression can be recorded in memory (quasi descriptum in memoria figeretur). . . .

[24] Thus, the noble philosopher Plato tried to persuade us that the souls of human beings had lived here before they took on these bodies and therefore that things which are learned are things previously cognized being remembered rather than things being newly cognized. He tells about a certain boy who when asked all sorts of questions about geometry responded as if he were well trained in the discipline. As he was questioned gradually and strategically, he saw what was to be seen and he reported what he saw. But if this recollection were of things he had cognized before, then not everyone or hardly anyone could do this when questioned in that way, for it is not the case that everyone was a geometer in a prior life (for geometers are so rare among human kind that one can scarcely find a single one).

Instead, one should believe that the nature of the intellectual mind was created in such a way that it is in contact (subiuncta) with intelligible things by virtue of the natural arrangement the creator instituted. As a result, it sees these things in a certain incorporeal light of its own kind, in the sort of way the eye of the flesh sees things in its vicinity in this corporeal light, a light the eye was created with a capacity and suitability for.

Trin. 14.8

. . . But such is the power of thought that the mind itself is not able to place itself, so to speak, in its own sight (conspectus) except when it thinks itself.
 150 And this is because nothing is in the mind's sight except when it is thought, with the result that the mind itself (by which anything that is thought is thought) cannot be in its own sight in any other way than by thinking itself. . . .
 It remains, therefore, that its sight is something belonging to its nature, and the mind is recalled to it when it thinks itself, not as it were by a movement in
 155 space, but by an incorporeal conversion. But when it is not thinking itself, it is indeed not in its own sight, nor is its gaze formed from it; nevertheless, it knows itself, as if it were a memory of itself for itself. It is like someone versed in many sciences: what he knows is contained in his memory, nor is anything from there in his mind's sight except when he thinks it. All the rest is
 160 stored away in a kind of hidden knowledge which is called memory.

Trin. 14.9

We learn from this that in the hidden recesses of the mind there is a certain knowledge of certain things, and that when we think of them, they then proceed, as it were, to the center and are placed, so to speak, more clearly in
 165 the sight of the mind, for then mind itself discovers that it remembers, understands, and loves those things of which it was not even thinking when it was thinking of something else.

Trin. 14.10

But because a word cannot be there without thought . . . this image is
 170 recognized more clearly in these three things, namely, memory, understanding, and will — and I am talking now about the understanding by which we understand when we are thinking, that is, when our thought is formed after finding those things which were present in our memory, but which we were not thinking, and I am talking about the will, love, or dilection which unites
 175 this offspring with its parent, and is in some way common to both.

Trin. 14.13

. . . from the moment that [the mind] began to be, it has certainly never ceased to remember itself, never ceased to understand itself, and never ceased to love itself, as we have already shown. And, therefore, when it is turned to itself in

180 thought, a trinity comes to be in which a word, too, can now be understood. It is formed indeed from thought itself with the will uniting both. Here, then, we may recognize more clearly the image which we are seeking.

Trin. 15.25

What is that which can be a word and, for that reason, is already worthy of the name “word”? What, I say, is this word, formable and not yet formed, except
 185 something of our own mind which we cast this way and that in a kind of revolving motion, when now this and now that is thought by us, just as it was found, or as it occurred? And then a true word comes to be when that which we cast in a revolving motion (as I have said), lands on that which we know
 190 and is formed by it, taking on its complete likeness in such a way that just as any thing is known, so it is also thought, that is, without vocalization, without the thought of vocalization which, of course, belongs to some language — this is the way it is expressed in the heart.

Nicene Creed (325 CE)

195 I believed in one God, the Father, almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. “God from God, light from light, true God from true God,” begotten, not made, of one being with the Father, through whom all things were made. . . .

200 Doctrine of Trinity

Three persons in one substance: Father is God, Son is God, HS is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God

- Each person is not any of the other persons (the three persons)
- Each person is spoken of in relation to the others
- 205 • Each in itself is fully God (the one substance)

Gospel of John 1:1-3,14 (RSV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. . . .

210 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

		A	B	C
		Structure '→' = 'makes direct cognitive contact with' '⇓' = 'makes indirect cognitive contact with'	"Where" is the direct object of cognitive contact?	Relation of mind to the intentional object of cognition
1	Sense perception (ideal, analogical base)	sense → sensible (body)	in a place	direct (with body)
2	Sensory thought	mind's gaze → image ⇓ sensible (body)	in memory	indirect (with body)
3.1	Intellectual perception	mind's gaze → intelligible	Intelligible realm (above mind)	direct (with intelligible)
3.2	Intellectual thought	mind's gaze → representation ⇓ Intelligible	in memory	indirect (with intelligible)

	Sensory thought	Intellectual thought	Self-thought	Trinity
Memoria	Image	Intelligible	Mind (<i>mens</i>)	Father
Understanding	Gaze informed by an image	Gaze informed by an intelligible	Gaze informed by mind itself	Son/Word
Will	Binding gaze to the image	Binding gaze to the intelligible	Binding gaze to mind	Holy Spirit