

Augustine on Memory and the Ethics of Self-Deception

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Abstract:

The main objective of this paper is to argue that Augustine's analysis of the concept of memory in *Confessions*, Book X, would greatly benefit from the hierarchical argumentative and explanatory schema he himself employs in other works to discuss the relation between the senses, the inner sense, and reason in perception. A brief overview of Augustine's account of memory in the *Confessions* is presented, followed by a discussion of two argumentative and explanatory schemata Augustine often employs in order to explain mental phenomena; the first one has to do with finding analogies between the human mind and the Holy Trinity (for man is supposed to be created as an image of God), and the second one has to do with distinguishing normative levels between mental faculties. I then argue that both of these schemata can be fruitfully applied to the several functions of the mind that can be found in Augustine's account of memory and the ethics of self-deception.

Key words: Augustine - Memory -Ethics – Self-deception

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Introduction

The main objective of this paper is to argue that Augustine's analysis of the concept of memory and self-deception in *Confessions*, Book X, would greatly benefit from the hierarchical argumentative and explanatory schema he himself employs to discuss the relation between the senses, the inner sense, and reason in perception. First I present a brief overview of Augustine's account of memory in the *Confessions*. Then I discuss two argumentative and explanatory schemata Augustine often employs in order to explain mental phenomena; the first one has to do with finding analogies between the human mind and the Holy Trinity (for man is supposed to be created as an image of God), and the second one has to do with distinguishing normative levels between mental faculties. I then argue that both of these schemata can be fruitfully applied to the several functions of the mind that can be found in Augustine's account of memory; and while he does apply the first explanatory schema to the concept of memory in a later work (*On the Trinity*) he does not do the same with the second one. I argue also that Augustine's discussion of self-deception (also found in *Confessions X*) would benefit too from the distinction between different normative levels within the functions of memory. Finally, I answer two possible objections to the idea of applying the hierarchical normative-explanatory schema to the Augustinian analysis of memory and the ethics of self-deception.

I. Augustine's search for God in the memory

Augustine's inquiry on memory in *Confessions X*, is guided by a more fundamental question, one about the nature of the search for God. The question Augustine poses is: "What do I love when I love you [my God]?" (*Confessions X.6*) This question leads Augustine to think that if he *truly* loves God, as he believes he does, then he must be able to recognize within himself a *true* image of God.

Augustine describes the progress of his search for God. He writes he has searched for God throughout the (physical) world and has not been able to find him. He then starts

searching for God within himself. He reasons that the better part of himself is the inner part, his soul, in opposition to his body: “My inner self is the better of the two, for it was to the inner part of me that my bodily senses brought their messages” (*Confessions* X.7). Man, unlike the rest of the creation, is able to question nature, to judge it, and to “catch sight of God’s invisible nature through his creatures” (*ibid.*). All this is possible for man, through his inner self, if only man’s love for created things does not enslave him and distract him from loving God. “And yet”, he continues, “When I love Him, it is true that I love a light of a certain kind [...], but [...] of the kind that I love in my inner self.” (*Confessions* X.6)

Therefore, Augustine thinks, if he can reach God it must be through his own soul and not through his physical body. But not with just any part of his soul, for life and the perception of external bodies through the senses are a part of the soul, and beasts possess these qualities. He regards memory as the next stage of his soul, and so he proposes to engage himself in a study of memory.

Augustine metaphorically conceives memory in a spatial sense, as a place (“palace”, “storehouse”, and “sanctuary” are just some of the terms he uses for describing it) in which “images” (or memories) are kept. He clarifies that what is stored there is not the things that we perceive themselves, but the images of these things, and that these images are separated by categories according to the “special entrance” (i.e. each individual sense) from which they entered the memory (*Confessions* X.8). Other things can be stored in memory, according to him, and he cites as examples all the practical knowledge he possesses of the liberal arts (*Confessions* X.9) and of the laws of numbers and dimensions (*Confessions* X.12). In these cases, what is kept in memory is not the particular images perceived by the senses, but, he says, “the fact themselves”. Also contained in memory are, he writes, “all the events I can remember” (*Confessions* X.8), although in this case he does not specify if he thinks it is events themselves which are stored or merely the images of those events. Lastly, the emotions (understood, I believe, as emotional episodes) are also kept by memory; an interest aspect of this, noted by Augustine, is that we can remember having had an emotion in the past without necessarily experiencing it while remembering. As an example, he says that we can remember a past sorrow with joy because that sorrow is over. (*Confessions* X.14)

For Augustine images are like treasures which are “entrusted to [memory] for safekeeping” until they are needed (*Confessions* X.8); however, images may undergo certain changes while being stored in memory, and thus memory is not always trustworthy. For example, memories can be swallowed up by forgetfulness, in which case they completely disappear and are no longer available in case they are needed. (*Confessions* X.8) Apart from forgetfulness, memory’s trustworthiness is compromised in another way: when a person is trying to recall a certain image, memories are often brought to mind immediately and in the right order, but in some cases there can be a delay, as if they had to be retrieved from a deeper and more concealed place. (*ibid.*) And sometimes other images, different from the one we are trying to remember, come to our minds, “thrusting themselves upon us when what we want is something quite different, as much as to say ‘Perhaps we are what you want to remember?’” (*ibid.*)

Memory, as conceived by Augustine, is a very broad faculty which includes, for example, imagination, planning, and wishing. He says: “even when I am in darkness and in silence, I can, if I wish, picture colors in my memory.” (*ibid.*) And then he extends these thoughts to planning: “From the same source I can picture to myself all kinds of different images based either upon my own experience or upon what I find credible because it tallies with my own experience. [...] From them I can make a surmise of actions and events and hopes for the future.” (*ibid.*) And then in some passages he describes how we can combine these powers, and how all this relates to wishing: “If I say to myself in the vast cache of my mind I shall do this or that, the picture of this or that particular thing comes into my mind at once. [...] Or I may say to myself ‘If only this or that would happen!’” (*ibid.*) Augustine’s conception of the mind is so far-reaching that at some point he says that memory is indeed nothing other than the mind (“the mind and the memory are one and the same”, (*Confessions* X.14), and supports this claim with common expressions from ordinary language such as “Bear this in mind”, and “It slipped out of my mind” (*ibid.*). In another passage he seems to identify his own memory not only with his mind, but with his own self: “I am investigating myself, my memory, my mind” (*Confessions* X.16).

At a certain point in the middle of Book X Augustine seems to despair about trying to understand how memory and the mind work, and to think that his query is impossible: “Who is to carry the research beyond this point? [...] I have become a problem to myself. [...] I must go beyond this force we call memory [...] for beasts and birds also have it. But where will the

search lead me?” (*Confessions* X.16) And here he finds an interesting puzzle: if God is not in Augustine’s memory, how would he be able to recognize God even supposing he could find Him? He says: “If I find you beyond my memory, it means that I have no memory of you. How, then, am I to find you, if I have no memory of you?” (*Confessions* X.17) So, even though he seemed to be resigned to continue his search elsewhere, thinking about this puzzle makes him return to the topic of memory and its relation to God. He tries a new strategy, which consists in thinking about happiness and how it seems that, since everyone appears to desire happiness, it must be that every person has in their memory an image of happiness. And in the course of this discussion he brings up the conception of God he had previously developed in *Confessions* VII: a conception of God as the truth in a *literal* sense. He writes: “True happiness is to rejoice in the truth, for to rejoice in the truth is to rejoice in you, O God, who are the Truth, you, my God, my true Light, to whom I look for salvation.” (*Confessions* VII.10)

Armed with such conception of God, he returns at that point in Book X to the topic of his search for God, and realizes that all through the investigation God, the truth, has been with him, guiding him. It is worth quoting him at length on this:

“You have walked everywhere at my side, O Truth, teaching me what to seek and what to avoid. [...] I surveyed the whole world about me, the life which my body has from me and my senses themselves. Next I probed the depths of my memory [...] and stood back in awe, for without you I could see none of them. [...] But when I was doing this [exploring my mind] I was not myself the truth; that is, the power by which I did it was not the truth; for you, the Truth, are the unfailing Light from which I sought counsel upon all these things, asking whether they are, what they were, and how they were to be valued.” (*Confessions* X.40)

In that way Augustine makes clear that his search for God, which started in the external world, and continued through the several parts of his own mind, reaches its end when at last he realizes that God *is* the truth. His investigation, even though it does not completely clarify the way the human mind works, generates the result that the God Augustine loves is the truth, the truth that he is able to see when he turns himself, as Roland Teske explains, “from the exterior to the interior and from the inferior to the superior”. (Teske 2001, p. 151)

II. Trinities and normative levels in the mind

Other important elements in Augustine's study of memory and the mind are not found in Book X of the *Confessions*. I believe it will prove to be fruitful to combine two other important elements in Augustine's philosophy of mind with his treatment of memory. The first one is the idea of the trinities in the mind, and the second one is the normative levels that can be found within the parts or functions of the mind.

Regarding the first one, just like Augustine engages in the study of memory in the course of his investigation about the possibility of his love for God, so in a similar manner, while trying to understand the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, he proposes, as a way of introduction to this topic, the study of the human mind as an imperfect image of the Trinity. Since man was created in God's image, Augustine reasons, by studying the human mind we might be able to find resemblances that could help us understand God. At the beginning of his analysis of the soul in *On the Trinity* he says: "We are not yet speaking of heavenly things, not yet of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but of this imperfect image, which is an image nevertheless, that is, of man. For the weakness of our mind perhaps gazes upon the image more familiarly and more easily." (*On the Trinity* IX.2) The human mind presents us with a "more attainable, humble plane, a 'resemblance' among God's creation". (Olsen and Hall 2002, p. 48)

According to Augustine, not one but several trinities may be found in the mind. One among these is superior to all the others, and actually the other minor trinities are offered only "to give the reader practice". (Tell 2006, p. 237) In these minor trinities that Augustine presents, different operations of the mind are described in terms of two objects and a relation between them, being each of these objects the first two elements of the trinity, and the relation between them being the third element. Each one of these elements must possess distinct properties. Thus, for example, for love to exist there must be three elements: a lover, a loved one, and the love between them. Something similar happens in perception: there is a perceiving subject, a perceived object, and a relation between these, which is perception. These and other minor trinities, however, are called by Augustine the trinities of the 'outer man', and for similar reasons to the ones that led him in his search for God to focus in himself rather than on external bodies, he decides to focus on the trinities of the

‘inner man’. In the *Confessions*, thinking about which part of himself is most apt for finding God, he says: “Which of these ought I have asked to help me find my God? [...] My inner self is the better of the two, for it was to [it] that my bodily senses brought their messages. They delivered to their arbiter and judge the replies. [...] I, the soul, know them through the senses of my body.” (*Confessions* X.6)

The most important trinity identified by Augustine in the human mind is the one constituted by memory, will, and understanding. Dave Tell believes the fundamental insight of Augustine in *On the Trinity* is that “memory is irreducibly trinitarian; it cannot be understood apart from the other members of Augustine’s mental trinity [...] Since any of the three contains any of the other two, or all of them, they must be equal to any of the others, or to all of them, each to all and all to each—yet these three are one life, one mind, one substance” (Tell 2006, p. 299). Teske similarly concludes that, for Augustine, “memory, understanding, and will are one, and whatever is said of each of them is said of the three together in the singular”. (Teske 2001, p. 155)

On the other hand, in *Confessions* VII, as well as in other places of Augustine’s works (for example, *The Free Choice of the Will* II), Augustine argues that there are ‘stages’ of the faculties of the mind which can be seen in a hierarchical perspective, in a way such that a superior faculty is a ‘judge’ or ‘arbiter’ of the faculties inferior to it, and consequently in a position to pass judgment on them. So just like the inner man is the judge of the sensations that the outer man provides, the different faculties of the mind can be hierarchically organized so that each stage is a judge of the inferior stage.

Thus, at the lowest level or stage of the mind, the senses perceive the external bodies. At the next level is what Augustine calls the ‘inner sense’ which enables us to become aware that the information we receive from our various senses come from a common external source, and which also lets us know when one of our senses is not working properly. According to Michael Mendelson, “[i]n both of these respects, the inner sense bears an organizational and criterial relation to the senses, not only combining the information of the senses, but passing judgment on the results of this synthesis.” (Mendelson 2000, section 6). Above the inner sense there is reason, understood as the capability for deductive knowledge, which allows the mind to recognize necessary truths. On this Mendelson writes: “Understood in this austere sense, i.e. in terms of the mind’s ability to recognize logical necessity, reason is not merely one instrument among many; instead, it becomes

the means whereby the human soul comes into contact with truths that are devoid of the mutability afflicting the objects of the senses.” (*ibid.*)

Reason is not, however, the highest level in Augustine’s proposed hierarchy, since it must comport with a higher normative standard. This ultimate standard is truth (*Confessions* VII.17), and, as mentioned earlier, Augustine identifies God with truth. Thus Augustine’s theory of mind adequately accommodates the idea that God is the judge to which man must respond, since that is only another way of saying that truth is the normative standard to which reason must aspire.

III. Three functions of memory

Returning to the topic of memory, I think three faculties or functions of the mind can be distinguished in Augustine’s analysis of memory in Book X. Recall what was said earlier about memory being for Augustine a storehouse in which images are kept until they are needed (when a person tries to remember something). So the first faculty is the ability to keep images ‘in storage’, so to speak, when they are not present to the mind. A second faculty would be the ability to inscribe these mental images, and to retrieve them from the storehouse of memory when the person tries to recall them (a process which, as was mentioned before, on occasions is not immediate but takes some time). And a third faculty would be the one that judges or recognizes that a certain image corresponds to that which the person was seeking. I will call these three functions, respectively, memory as storage, memory as an inscriber-retriever, and memory as a judge. We can note how the first of these functions seems to play a rather passive role, while the last two seem to be much more active.

Even though all the elements necessary to distinguish these two different aspects of memory (active and passive) are present in Augustine’s discussion of memory in the *Confessions* X, he does not make there these distinctions. However, in *On the Trinity*, while proposing the main trinity of the mind (the one consisting of memory, will, and understanding) he does explain with more detail the different functions of memory, and attributes to understanding and will very specific functions, actually the same functions I

characterized as the active aspect of memory. Thus, Augustine says that within this trinity, the will plays the role of a “coupler” or “unifier” (*On the Trinity* 11.9; Tell 2006, p. 239), while the understanding plays the role of an “internal sight” which allows us to ‘see’ once again with our minds the mental images which had been stored. (By the way, I believe it is plausible to think that what Augustine calls here ‘understanding’ might be just another word for what he calls ‘reason’ in *Confessions* VII, when talking about the different stages of the human mind. After all, he repeatedly characterizes both of them as an ‘internal sight’ and as the ‘eye of the mind’.)

To better understand Augustine’s idea of the will as a coupler, it is convenient to return to one of the ‘practice’ trinities proposed by him, the one having to do with perception. Its three elements are the object seen, the sense of sight, and the ‘attention’ of the person focusing itself on the object. Attention is in this case the coupler between the object and the sense of sight: it is what helps fix the object in the mind. This is not sufficient to have the object entering the memory, since we can sometimes perceive objects without later being able to remember them. In order for us to be able to remember an object, we must make use of a similar trinity, where the will replaces attention (Augustine seems to suggest that in these cases the will controls attention), so that the three objects of this trinity are: external body, sense of sight, and will. The will is the one responsible for causing the image to be registered or inscribed in memory. About this point, Tell writes:

“Augustine suggests that, at times, the Will (*voluntas*) controls the Attention, which in turn couples the faculty of vision with the object of sight. [...] The difference seems to be one of intensity. While the image produced by the Attention disappears with the shifting gaze, the image produced by the Will endures. [...] In other words, the distinctiveness of the image produced by the Will is that the image not only informs the sense of sight temporarily, but also remains in Memory even after the Will has ceased to couple the sense of sight with the object of vision. It is the Will, then, that stocks the storehouses of Memory.” (Tell 2006, p. 241)

Understanding, in turn, is for Augustine the faculty which enables the mind to ‘see’ the content of the mental images. Augustine says: “I am referring to understanding as that whereby we understand when actually thinking, that is, when our thought is formed after the finding of those things which had been present in our memory, but of which we were not thinking.” (*On the Trinity* 14.7) Based on this passage, Tell concludes that the understanding “recalls from the

storehouse of memory selected images for thought [and] is thus the faculty responsible for both thinking and remembering” (Tell 2006, p. 241). I disagree with Tell on this point, for I believe that here the will is again functioning as a coupler between memory and understanding, in charge of presenting the images stored in memory to the understanding. Augustine’s words on this respect, I believe, are conclusive: “the will unites [...] the bodily form with that which it begets in the sense of the body, and this again with that which arises from it in the memory” (*On the Trinity*, 11.9.16). He also says:

“There are two visions, one of perception, the other of thought. [...] I have therefore chosen to mention two trinities of this kind; one, when the vision of thought is formed by the body, the other, when the vision of thought is formed by the memory. [...] But the will appears everywhere only as the unifier, so to speak, of the parent and the offspring. And for this reason it cannot be called either the parent or the offspring.” (*ibid.*)

The will can therefore be identified with the function of the mind which I earlier called ‘memory as an inscriber-retriever’, and is at least partly responsible for the operation of recollecting an image.

The understanding, presented with these mental images, is now in charge of judging whether they are the ‘right’ images, the ones the person was trying to remember, or not. The process of recollection is complete only when the understanding assents to a mental image presented to it. Remembering is a factive term, so an additional condition is that the image to which the understanding assents is actually the right image. I believe that, in this context, when the assent of the understanding is either not given or given incorrectly, it could be said that what has happened is not an act of recollection but rather, perhaps, one of mere imagination.

Now we have found in the main mental trinity the three faculties of the mind which I suggested were included in Augustine’s analysis of memory in *Confessions* X: the memory (in a strict sense) functions as a storehouse, the will functions as the inscriber-retriever, and the understanding functions as the judge. The three of them together constitute memory in a broad sense.

Given that Augustine does distinguish in *On the Trinity* the different faculties of memory which I suggested were present on his analysis of this topic in the *Confessions*,

and given that these different faculties are parallel to the ones he distinguishes in his explanation of perception (the senses, inner sense, and reason), I believe it is reasonable to propose that the hierarchical explanatory scheme that he uses to explain perception and how the different elements of perception are related should be applied also to memory. The part of memory that judges whether a certain image corresponds (or not) with the image the person was looking for while trying to remember something is in a position to pass judgment on whether the other two parts of memory (that is, memory as a inscriber-retriever and memory as storage) are performing their jobs correctly, and is therefore normatively superior to them. Further, the faculty in charge of fixing the images in memory as a storehouse and later presenting them to the understanding (memory as inscriber-retriever) is normatively superior to the faculty of memory as a storehouse, since it must make sure that the image the person is trying to remember still exists (that it has not disappeared swallowed by complete oblivion) and that it is the correct one (remember how Augustine describes that sometimes other images “thrust themselves upon us” as if saying “Perhaps we are what you want to remember?”). In addition, this application of his own explanatory scheme to the subject of memory would also benefit Augustine’s explanation of self-deception, to which we now turn.

IV. Self-deception and its relation to ethics

A thorough analysis of the topic of self-deception in Augustine is, in my opinion, missing in contemporary philosophical literature. But given that he deals with this topic in the same book in which he deals with memory (in *Confessions X*), it is plausible to think that, for him, these two concepts are closely related. The topic of self-deception arises there in the context of the discussion of the universal desire for happiness which Augustine identifies as parallel to the question about what he loves when he loves God: it seems to be a fact that everyone desires happiness, but exactly what is it that people desire when they desire happiness? In the course of this discussion, Augustine argues that everyone would prefer truth over falsity as a foundation of their happiness. But sometimes it happens that truth engenders hatred, as when, Augustine says, he preaches the truth to men. He explains:

“It can only be that man’s love of truth is such that when he loves something which is not the truth, he pretends to himself that what he loves is the truth, and because he hates to be proved wrong, he will not allow himself to be convinced that he is deceiving himself. [...] So he hates the real truth for the sake of what he takes to his heart in its place. Men love the truth when it bathes them in its light: they hate it when it proves them wrong.” (*Confessions* X.23)

So it remains true that people love always what they consider to be true, but a peculiar feature of this love is that people tend to consider everything they believe as true, even in those occasions in which, in a way, they have reasons to think that what they believe is false.

It is interesting to compare Augustine’s account of self-deception with his conception of sin, as laid forth in Book II of the *Confessions*. For him, sinning does not consist in seeking things that are completely wrong or bad. Rather, it consists in seeking things that, even if good, distract the attention of a person from the source of all goodness, which is God. Sinning, or committing any evil action, can therefore be characterized as acting out of love in an inappropriate way (e.g. loving a created good instead of God). By loving a created good instead of God, one claims for oneself the power—which one does not have and could never have, for only God can do this—of *deciding* the value of things, whatever their true value may be. In this sense it can be said that any evil action is, for Augustine, a perverse imitation of God. Scott MacDonald elaborates on this idea. According to him, sinning represents a form of self-assertion, a lack of humility or pride which can be found in the base of every sin. (MacDonald 2006, pp. 62)

Returning to self-deception, we can now focus on the parallelism between Augustine’s treatment of this phenomenon and his account of sin. Self-deception can be characterized as believing in an inappropriate way (i.e. choosing to believe what is false when one has the opportunity of believing what is true). By choosing to believe what is false in this way, one claims for oneself the power—which one does not have and could never have—of deciding the truth or falsity of beliefs, regardless of their objective truth value. In this sense it can be said that self-deception is a perverse imitation of truth. And this also represents a kind of self-assertion or pride, since what motivates the self-deception is the already mentioned fact that “men hate the truth when it proves them wrong”.

As is easily noted, the similarities between these explanations are many, and given that, according to Augustine's account of sin, when a man sins he goes against what he really believes (for men are able to realize that it is God and not them who determines the objective value of things), it can also be said that at the base of every sin there is not only pride, but a type of self-deception as well, which causes the (false) belief that one can decide the value of things.

V. A development of Augustine's analysis of self-deception

With this conception of self-deception in mind, I contend that the application of the hierarchical-normative scheme to the functions of memory would provide benefits for Augustine's account of self-deception. For now one we are in a position to argue that, just like reason can be sometimes enslaved by its subordinate faculties (the senses and the inner sense, which submit to it the perception of lovely objects), the judging part of memory, the understanding, can also be sometimes enslaved by its subordinate faculties in memory (the will and the memory in a strict sense).

The three functions of memory that have been distinguished enable us to identify, in turn, two different senses of what it means to forget something. In the first sense, an instance of forgetting a memory means that the memory in question has been completely swallowed up by forgetfulness; the image is then no longer contained in the storehouse. In the second sense, however, the memory is still present in the storehouse; the problem is that the will is not able to retrieve it. In these cases, it may be that the memory is so deeply hidden that it is simply impossible for the will to retrieve it. However, there is also the possibility that the will, although capable of retrieving that memory, does not do it, perhaps because the person's desire to remember is outweighed by other desires. This can happen when the memory the person is trying to recall is unpleasant or painful. The will then directs the understanding towards something other than the truth.

It could be argued, then, that such thing is what happens when a person tries to recall a certain image, feeling, or piece of knowledge, but what reaches her mind (her understanding) is not the right image, but an image which was fabricated or distorted by the

will, and which was retrieved perhaps only because it was more pleasurable or less painful than what the correct image would have been. Augustine at some point remarks that “[the will] directs the gaze of the thought that is to be formed just as it pleases through the hidden stores of the memory, and in order to conceive things which we do not remember, impels it to take from those that we do remember one thing from here and another thing from there; and so when these are all brought together into one vision, they result in something that is called false.” (*On the Trinity* 11.10)

This seems to correspond with a large number of cases of everyday self-deception, in which a person holds a false belief in spite of arguably possessing in her memory the all information needed to realize that her belief is false. The fault here lies not in the memory in a strict sense, but in either the will (for failing to produce the right image and instead presenting the ‘gaze of the thought’ with another one) or the understanding (for failing to judge the image presented to it by the will correctly), or both.

VI. Why did not Augustine apply the normative scheme to memory?

We might wonder why Augustine did not apply his own normative scheme to his account of memory in *Confessions* X. Of course, it is possible that the idea simply did not occur to him. But this is highly dubious, especially if we take into account the fact that only three books before (in *Confessions* VII.17) he applies the hierarchical normative scheme to perception; and that three books later (in *Confessions* XIII.11), speaking of the Holy Trinity, he argues that, in a person, existence, knowledge, and will constitute three distinguishable but inseparable aspects, i.e. the principle of the trinity. Moreover, supposing he did not realize this while writing the *Confessions*, he might well have done it while writing *On the Trinity*, which was written several years later. Gerard O’Daly, discussing this later work, says that

“(…) in answering [the question about what happens when we remember or recollect past experiences], Augustine applies once again the analogy with sense-perception. [...] Our will directs our senses to external objects, which we then perceive; in like manner, the will directs the mind towards the memory’s contents, and recollection occurs. [...] This description is *tantamount to saying*

that recollecting is perceiving memory-images." (O'Daly 1987, p. 133, emphasis added)

I now conclude by answering two possible objections to the idea of applying the hierarchical normative-explanatory scheme to the different parts of memory. First, it seems that, from Augustine's perspective, the image of God should be contained in the best part of the mind; however, the hierarchical analysis yields as a result that the understanding, or reason, is the superior part of the mind, and Augustine apparently argues that the image of God must be found in memory as storehouse. Second, it seems to be impossible that within a trinity (such as the one constituted by the memory, the will and the understanding) there should be one element superior to the others. It would be like claiming that the Father is superior to the Son or the Holy Spirit.

About the first objection, I believe it can be tackled by answering that Augustine himself realizes that he cannot fully understand the relation between God and his own soul, but that what is clear to him is that God (as the truth) directs with his light Augustine's soul. This way, the main relation between God and the mind is not that God is contained somewhere in the mind, but rather that God guides the mind. And the part of the mind which God guides is the "eye of the mind", the understanding (or reason), which is the normatively superior part of the mind.

Regarding the second objection, Augustine recognizes that using the concept of the Trinity to explain the human mind is only an analogy, and as such it is limited in its application. It is relevant to point out here that Augustine explicitly refrains from identifying any one part of the mental trinity with any of the persons of the Holy Trinity, contrary to what some Augustinian scholars have claimed (e.g. Teske 2001, p. 157). Augustine, in one of his *Sermons*, declares:

"Let no one say to me [...] 'Which then of these three [...] answers to the Father, [...] the Son, [...] and the Holy Ghost?' I cannot say—I cannot explain this. Let us leave somewhat to meditation and to silence. [...] It is enough, then, that I have shown that there are some three things which are exhibited separately, whose operation is yet inseparable. [...] I do not say that memory is the Father, the understanding the Son and will the Spirit. [...] Let us reserve the greater truths for those who are capable of them." (*Sermon I*, LII. Benedictine Edition)

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