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In Book 10 of The Confessions, Augustine famously describes memory as a "great field or a spacious palace, a storehouse for countless images of all kinds" (1961, 214).[1] Augustine here articulates the first premise of the mnemotechnic tradition: *memoria ex locis*.[2] Memory, in this tradition, is figured as a place—an "inner chamber, vast and unbounded"—into which images are "seized with marvelous speed and are put away as if into wondrous cells" (10.8.15, 10.9.16). For Augustine, however, this inner chamber is not simply a repository in which images of the past are preserved intact; the images "undergo change" in the process of placement (10.25.36) and, once within the chambers or memory, the images are gathered, reordered, and "placed ready at hand" (*ad manum posita*) (10.11.18). The spacious palace of memory, in other words, positions the past as it preserves the past; placement is a form of management.

The politics of placement set the stage for what Augustinian scholar Roland Teske (2001, 153) has argued is the central question of *The Confessions:* "How then do I seek you, O Lord?" (10.20.29). If this is the central question of *The Confessions,* the central answer is memory. The sheer facticity of Augustine's divine recollections assures him that God "abide[s] within" memory: "Truly, you dwell in my memory, since I have remembered you from the time I learned of you, and I find you there when I call you to mind." Yet the memory by which divinity is called to mind must not proceed *ex locis* (from places), for Augustine refuses to subject God to what I have called the politics of placement—the changing, positioning, and managing of the remembered object that, according to the mnemotechnic tradition, always accompanies its placement in the storehouses of memory. God is "unchangeable," Augustine writes, and resists the management that attends placement in memory (10.25.36).[3] His search for God thus ends with an emphatic double proclamation that there is no place for God: "There is no place, both backward do we go and forward, and there is no place" (*et nusquam locus, et recedimus et accedimus, et nusquam locus*) (10.26.37).

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This is not simply the theological insistence that God cannot be placed, it is also an indictment of the entire mnemotechnic tradition, for it was precisely the ability to move backward and forward through the places of memory that marked the pinnacle of the mnemotechnic art.[4] Yet even this ability to move bilaterally through the places of memory—even the mnemotechnic tradition at its best—is, Augustine insists, inadequate for remembering God. This inadequacy is underscored throughout *The Confessions.* Augustine writes, "I was intent on the things that are contained in places, but among them I found no place of rest" (7.7.11). Augustine, then, found the mnemotechnic tradition with its penchant for putting things in places profoundly dissatisfying: there could be no place for God and, consequently, the places of memory could never provide the satisfaction and "rest" that Augustine so ardently sought.[5] This, then, is Augustine's dilemma: God must be remembered but he cannot be placed, the *memoria Dei* requires a memorial practice in which the past is not preserved through placement in memory.[6] Augustine balks at the prospect of such a dis-placed memorial practice: "Am I to assert that what I remember is not in my memory?" Augustine queries. The notion, he writes, is "most absurd" (10.16.24).

In this essay I turn to Augustine's extended discussion of memory in *De Trinitate* to explain how Augustine remembers God without placing God. I contend that he does so through the rhetorical practice of confession. Confession, for Augustine, is a way of remembering that which cannot be placed in the storehouses of memory. Confession is a performative remembering in which the object of memory is not contained in the mind before it is disclosed through speech; rather, it is embodied in the speech act, actively ingredient in confession itself. Confession, then, *displaces* memory; it surpasses the palaces of the mind for which Augustine has become famous and refigures memory within the confessive expression itself. As such, confession renders Augustine's absurd solution tenable: it is a way of remembering that which cannot be placed in memory.

Thinking of confession as a memorial practice theoretically distinct from the mnemotechnic tradition promises to enrich our understanding of the complex relationship between the history of rhetoric and the development of the *ars memoria* in three particular ways. First, it calls into question an assumption common to Mary J. Carruthers (1990) and Richard Sorabji (1972) alike, namely, that the mnemotechnic "idea that the memory stores, sorts, and retrieves material through the use of some kind of mental image was not attacked until the eighteenth century" (Carruthers 1990, 17). As will become clear, Augustine by no means "attacks" this mnemotechnic understanding of memory. To the extent that he understands confession as a performative memorial

practice, however, Augustine is drawing on his rhetorical sensibilities to move beyond the theoretical resources of the mnemotechnic tradition and expose its conceptual limitations.

Second, understanding confession as a unique memorial practice challenges the marginal place of Augustine within what are perhaps, for rhetoricians, the two most important works on the history of mnemotechnics. Frances Yates's highly influential *The Art of Memory* (1966) has become a canonical text within memory studies. Yates traces the permutations of the mnemotechnic tradition from its origins in ancient Greek philosophy through the early Modern period. She argues that developments in the *ars memoria* indicate much wider cultural trends; that mnemotechics serve, as it were, as a sort of cultural index by which one may understand the society in which they are advanced. In her story, however, the significance of Augustine is merely exemplary. The transition from Cicero is "smoothly made," Yates tells us, and Augustine is recognized solely as an example of a mind "trained on the lines of the classical mnemonic" (1966, 48, 46).[7] More recently, Mary J. Carruthers retold the history of memory in her *Book of Memory* in order to refute the long-held thesis that the advent of literacy called into question the cultural significance of mnemotechnics: "The valuing of memory training depends more, I think, on the role which rhetoric has in a culture than on whether its texts are presented in oral or written forms" (1990, 11). Despite the fact that Carruthers identifies Augustine as a "teacher of rhetoric" and even "a great philosopher of memory," she nonetheless concludes that, insofar as mnemotechnics are concerned, Augustine has little to contribute (146). In Carruthers's telling, after Cicero's masterful espousal of the memorial arts in *De Oratore*, the art of memory entered a sustained period of decline and was considered "cumbersome and gimmicky" (122) until Aquinas revived the art in the thirteenth century. Augustine is classified by Carruthers with Quintilian and Julius Victor as thinkers who had little engagement with mnemotechnics and devalued the study of memory by approaching it as "craft" rather than an "art" (145).

Third, and most important for readers of this journal, understanding confession as a unique memorial practice underscores the extent to which the art of memory is deeply imbricated with the history of rhetoric. Although memory was canonized by the *ad Herennium*, its place in the histories of rhetoric has been anything but assured. Ramist rhetorics attempted to completely "liquidate" the fifth canon (Ong 1958, 270). More recently, Augustinian scholar Brian Stock (1996, 209) has argued that Augustine's reflections on memory were written in the context of his search "for an appropriate place to take up the contemplative life." To Stock's mind, Augustine conceives of memory as fundamentally

anti-rhetorical: it allows the rememberer to escape from the world, which is, of course, the only realm in which speech operates. I argue precisely the opposite: on this reading, Augustine makes a case that the art of memory and the art of rhetoric are deeply interdependent: all memory is rhetorical and all speech is mnemonic. In advancing this thesis, I begin by contextualizing *De Trinitate* and foregrounding its contribution to memory studies.

De Trinitate and Memory

Although the ostensible aim of *De Trinitate* is to defend the Nicene Trinity, Hannah Arendt (1978, 2:85) notes that it "is at the same time the most profound and the most articulated development of [Augustine's] own very original philosophical position" and Jean Bethke Elshtain (1995, 52) has called it "one of the great works in the philosophy of the mind."[8] Arendt and Elshtain agree that the profundity of the text springs, at least in part, from the significance it accords to memory. For "nowhere," Arendt notes, "in our philosophical tradition does Memory again attain the same rank as Intellect and Will" (1978, 2:117). Indeed, even the mnemotechnic tradition itself fails to grant memory significance as a faculty of the mind.[9] It is not until Augustine that memory becomes more than an available means of persuasion to be deployed and displayed by capable orators.

The fundamental insight of *De Trinitate*, regarding memory, is that Memory is irreducibly trinitarian; it cannot be understood apart from the other members of Augustine's mental trinity: Love and Understanding.[10] For Augustine, Memory is so bound to both Understanding and Love that to remember an object is also to understand and love it. For Memory contains Understanding and Love as essential ingredients even as it is itself ingredient in both: "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" (1991, 299).[11] Teske (2001, 155) concludes that "memory, understanding, and will are one, and whatever is said of each of them is said of the three together in the singular."[12]

The irreducibly intertwined character of the faculties is important, for it is precisely the relations between the faculties that expose the limitations of the mnemotechnic art and suggest Augustine's own rhetorical understanding of memory. In what follows, then, I attend in detail to the relationships between the members of Augustine's mental trinity. I focus first on the relationship between

Love and Memory. This relationship is important because it foregrounds the ways in which Augustine conceptualized memory as a rhetorical practice not reducible to the mnemotechnic assumption that Memory is a storehouse that contains images. I focus second on the Love/Understanding relationship. This relationship builds on the Love/Memory relationship and emphasizes Augustine's complete rejection of correspondence-based notions of memory. More important, the Love/Understanding relationship makes clear how Augustine's rhetorical understanding of memory coexists with a mnemotechnic vocabulary—a vocabulary of storehouses, containers, and images that Augustine never completely abandons. Finally, I focus on the Understanding/Memory relationship. It is this relationship that decisively rhetoricizes the mnemotechnic tradition. Here Augustine suggests that it is precisely the ability to think of the "storehouse" of memory with a rhetorical sensibility that enables the recollection of the past. In concluding, I draw on the posthumous work of Jean-François Lyotard to argue that *confession,* because it captures the rhetorical sensibilities demanded by the Understanding/Memory relationship, is Augustine's memorial practice *par excellence.*

Love and Memory

The most important thing about Love is that it is the only active member of Augustine's mental trinity. Memory and Understanding are passive faculties, active only as they are acted upon by Love. Because the other faculties are passive, Augustine reasons that the trinitarian function of Love is to join and hold the other two members together in a trinity. Love, Augustine teaches us, is a "coupler." Recognizing the complexity of this trinitarian logic, Augustine formulates six lesser trinities "to give the reader practice" (1991, 398). He concedes that these practice trinities are not a "clear image" of the divine Trinity, or even of its mental image, but their value is that they "may perhaps be easier to discern" (2002, 11.1.1). One way to understand the trinity, then, is to attend to its composition history—to examine the developments within and between what Augustine refers to as "drafts" (1991, 286) of the trinity. It is particularly instructive, on this score, to note that Love was excepted from practice drafts; first the Attention and then the Will stand in for Love in early versions of the mental trinity. This suggests that we may understand the "coupling" function of Love by virtue of what it replaces.

Augustine will eventually argue that the Will is a stronger "coupler" than the Attention and Love a stronger coupler than the Will, but the logic of this joining is most transparent in the activity of the Attention. Augustine locates a "practice trinity" in the act of seeing: "First, the object which we see . . . secondly, the vision . . . thirdly, the power that fixes the sense of sight on the object that is seen as long as it is being seen, namely, the attention of the mind (*animi intentio*)" (2002, 11.2.2). The Attention thus unites the faculty of vision with the object of vision and it is precisely this coupling that produces what Augustine will call an "informed sense"—or, the faculty of sight in-formed by the object of sight (11.2.3). Significantly, if the Attention ceases to couple the faculty of vision with the object of vision the faculty is literally de-formed: "if [the Attention] is taken away, nothing more remains of the form which was in the sense while the thing that was seen was present" (11.2.3). The Attention is thus too impotent a coupler to stock the storehouses of memory; the images it produces in the faculty of sight wholly disappear when the Attention averts the gaze.[13]

Augustine suggests that, at times, the Will (*voluntas*) controls the Attention, which in turn couples the faculty of vision with the object of sight (11.2.5). 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. The Will, Augustine writes, "possesses such power in uniting these two that it moves the sense to be formed to that thing which is seen, and keeps it fixed on it when it has been formed" (11.2.5). In other words, the distinctiveness of the image produced by the Will is that the image not only in-forms 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: "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" (11.9.16). Arendt is thus right to suggest that, for Augustine, memory is a function of the will; she writes, "the Will, by virtue of *attention,* first unites our sense organs with the real world in a meaningful way, and then drags, as it were, this outside world into ourselves and prepares it for further mental operations: to be remembered, to be understood, to be asserted or denied" (1978, 2:100; emphasis original). By controlling the gaze or, more generally, the focus of the senses, the Will holds the powers of memory.

The Will is not only the condition of Memory, it also conditions Memory. The image produced by the Will, first in the in-formed vision and then in Memory, has a double referent; it is an image of not only the object-in-the-world, but also an image of the Will itself. Augustine writes, "The vision, therefore, is

produced by the visible thing, but not by it alone, but only if the one who sees is also present. Wherefore vision is produced both by the visible thing and the one who sees" (2002, 11.2.3). The image produced by the Will's coupling of the faculty of vision with the object of vision is, then, always an irreducible composite. This has important consequences for Memory, for the images placed therein are derived from both seen object and seeing subject. Because the image-in-memory is the result of an essential composite it follows that we cannot "distinguish the form of the body which we see and the form which arises from it in the sense of the one who sees" (11.2.3). Augustine is here recognizing that although human sensation cannot distinguish the object-in-the-world from its image-in-memory, the image does not *correspond* to the object-in-the-world. The essential ingrediency of the Will in the act of remembering thus precludes any pretense of correspondence between the image-in-memory and the object-in-the-world.

We are now in a position to understand the role of Love. The mental operations of Love cannot be understood in terms of the famous *caritas* versus *cupiditas* distinction that Augustine draws in *The City of God* (1984, XIV.7). In *De Trinitate*, Augustine abandons his favorite words for love—not only *caritas* and *cupiditas*, but also *dilectio* and *appetites*—and uses first *amor* and then *voluntas* (2002, 15.21.41).[14] Edmund Hill suggests that Augustine eventually settles on *voluntas* in order to emphasize the activeness of Love; he is seeking to identify Love as a more powerful, more enduring form of the Will. Moreover, Augustine has consistently explained the Will as a coupler; the Will joins the faculty of vision to the object of vision. This joining is always figured in terms of copulation and sexual metaphors. It is, then, not surprising, that Augustine would figure Love as a perfected Will. Arendt explains; "The Will—seen in its functional operative aspect as a coupling, binding agent—can also be defined as Love (*Voluntas: amor seu dilectio*) for Love is obviously the most successful coupling agent" (1978, 2:102).

Yet, Arendt insists, the difference between Love and the Will is not simply one of magnitude. Both the Will and Love join sense to object and thereby create an image to be placed in Memory, but Love does so in such a way that the image is always operative. The Attention produces an image that disappears with the shifting gaze, the Will produces an image that endures in the Memory, Love goes beyond both of these and produces an image that is always involved in all mental operations. Where the Will produces an image that can be recalled and thought about when the object is no longer present, Love creates an image that cannot not be thought about. The Love-effected image becomes literally part of the mind and thus just as the Will compromises objective recollection, Love

compromises all memorial acts. "Yet the force of love is so great," Augustine writes, "that the mind draws in with itself those things upon which it has long reflected with love, and to which it has become attached by its devoted care, even when it returns in some way to think of itself" (2002, 10.5.7). Love has fused images of sensed objects with the mind itself and thus ensured that these images will always be ingredient in every cognitive act. The loved object is so fused with the mind that thought has no possibility except as it is conditioned by the composite image of loved object and loving subject.

This transformation of the object-in-the-world into an image not wholly its own is what Arendt refers to as the "first transformation" of Love: through the agency of Love the object-in-the-world has become image. This transformation influences Augustinian Memory in two ways. First, the double referentiality of the image compromises objective recollection; the memorial image does not correspond to any object "out there." Second, the image, once placed in the Memory by Love, irreversibly conditions the very possibility of cognition and thus haunts all memorial acts. For Augustine, then, we do not simply remember anything; we always remember the past in terms provided by the objects of our Love. Once the human has loved, memory is never again innocent and objective recall is precluded. Augustine has here moved beyond the mnemotechnic tradition and offered us a rhetorical understanding of memory in which the object of remembrance cannot be divorced from the method of remembrance.

Love and Understanding

Insofar as Love influences not only Memory but also thought in general, the influence of Love on the Understanding has already begun to become clear. In this section I address the relationship directly and describe what Arendt refers to as the "second transformation" of Love: the metamorphosis of the image-in-memory to the image-in-thought. This second transformation further exposes the inadequacies of correspondence-based notions of memory and, perhaps more important, clarifies how Augustine's rhetorical understanding of memory coexists with a mnemotechnic vocabulary that he never abandons.

Understanding (*intellegentia*), for Augustine, is the mnemonic method by which the mind thinks: "But now I am referring to understanding (*intellegentiam*) as that whereby we understand (*intellegimus*) when actually thinking (*cogitantes*), 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"

(2002, 14.7.10). Understanding relates to what is "present in the mind" (Arendt 1978, 2:117); it *recalls* from the storehouse of memory selected images for thought. The Understanding is thus the faculty responsible for both thinking and remembering. From the perspective of the Understanding, then, the distinction between thought and memory blurs.

Augustine conceives of Understanding to be an internal sight, a way of focusing on a particular image-in-memory: "For in thought we look, so to say, into our own mind" (2002, 15.9.16). Moreover, just as Love creates an image-in-memory by joining the bodily faculty of sight to an external object, so Love creates a second image by coupling the Understanding with the image-in-memory.

> For the bodily form that is perceived produces the form that arises in the sense of the percipient; this latter gives rise to the form in the memory; finally, the form in the memory produces the form that arises in the gaze of thought. Hence, the will (*uoluntas*) unites three times over . . . first of all, 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; and this also thirdly, with that which is born from it in the gaze of thought. . . . There are two visions, one of perception, the other of thought (*una sentientis, altera cogitantis*). (11.9.16)

As an internal sensation, the "sight of thought" (Understanding) sees only internal objects—the images stored in memory.

It is important to remember, however, that the Understanding is a passive faculty. It "sees" only as it is coupled to the Memory by Love; and Augustine's Love is always violent. Just as the object-in-the-world was subjected to violence in its transformation into an image not wholly its own, so also the image-in-memory is subjected to violence as it is joined to the Understanding. This new coupling produces a new image, for what "'remains in the memory' . . . is different from the deliberately remembered object" (Arendt 1978, 1:77). Augustine writes, "what is hidden and retained in the memory is one thing, and what is impressed by it in the thought (*cogitatione*) of the rememberer is another thing, even though they appear to be one and the same thing when they are joined (*copulatio*) together" (2002, 11.8.13). Thus although reason cannot distinguish the image-in-thought from the image-in-memory—"they appear to be one and the same"—they are not the same. Recollection, Augustine argues, is an inventive process: "From [the image-in-memory] we *fabricate* images with which to think about things we have not seen" (1991, 276; emphasis mine). "Hence," Arendt writes, "the thought-object is different from the image, as the image is different from the visible sense-object whose mere representation it is" (1978, 1:77)—this is the second transformation.

This second transformation vastly expands the functional scope of Memory in two ways. First, all cognition, for Augustine, is mnemonic. Memory is not concerned wholly with the past but is the very condition of present thought. Arendt summarizes, "thinking always implies remembrance; every thought is strictly speaking an after-thought" (1:78). Second, and more important, this second transformation guarantees that every image-in-memory is subject to the violent coupling of Love. Although Augustine conceives of the sensations as the primary "gateways to the mind," sensation does not exhaust the possibility of remembrance (1961, 221). Memories of facts, for example, precede sensation; he reasons that the possibility of *recognizing* truth in certain never-before-encountered facts suggests that the facts were themselves in memory prior to their perception. These facts entered the mind not through external sensations (they had never been encountered), but through the inner sight of the Understanding. Significantly, this is how the triune mind "remembers" the unchanging truths of God: "The memory has not received from without what it was to retain, nor has the understanding found without what it was to behold, as does the eye of the body, nor has the will joined these two from without" (2002, 14.8.11). On the contrary, "faith and other things of the kind . . . began to be wholly within the mind itself" (14.8.11).[15] Insofar as the storehouse of Memory holds the certain and unchanging truths of God (as Augustine is convinced it does), these memories do not come from the outside and are thus not subject to the original violence of the Will: "For we do not apprehend those truths by the bodily senses by which we are in contact with the world outside us" (1984, 459). The memory of God, then, is not troubled by the violence of the first transformation—that by which Love transforms the object-in-the-world into an image fit for placement in memory. By circumventing the sensations, the memory of God as well as the memory of never-before-encountered facts (both of these are memories-from-within) seemingly preserve the possibility of an objective memorial practice in which the image-in-memory "corresponds" with its external referent.

It is the work of the second transformation to render such correspondence impossible. For just as external vision depends on Love to couple the faculty of sight with the object-in-the-world, so the internal sight of the Understanding also depends on the violent but essential joining-capacities of Love. In this case, Love enables thought by joining the inner sight of the Understanding to the image-in-memory and, just as the object-in-the-world is done violence as it is joined to the faculty of sight, so the image-in-memory is done violence as it is joined to the inner sight of the Understanding. It follows, then, that although Memory may in some sense "possess" objective memories-from-within (such as the memory of God), these objective memories are inaccessible. The mere act

of thinking about them or remembering them subjects them to the violence of Love and compromises their objective character. Thus, although the storehouse is indeed capable of housing memories-from-within (objective in that they did not enter through the sensations), this capability is, humanly speaking, inconsequential. Augustine's reliance on a mnemotechnic vocabulary, then, is valuable only on a strictly theoretical level. Memories may in some sense be "contained" in a "storehouse," but the activity of remembering cannot be reduced to a logic of retrieval. More precisely, the act of retrieval shapes the past as it recalls the past; the past resides, in a very real sense, in the act of retrieval itself, rather than in the storehouse.

The fact that memories of God do not enter the mind through the sensations does not then alleviate the original tension between God's placement in memory and Augustine's refusal to subject God to the politics of placement. Even granting the validity of memories-from-within, the act of remembering these memories-from-within subjects them to change. As Augustine puts it, although certain memories are internal, he nevertheless has "to shepherd them out again from their old lairs" (1961, 218). This shepherding is always a process of "fabrication"; it transforms the memory-from-within into the memory-remembered.

Memory and Understanding

We have already seen the intractable relationship between Understanding and Memory. Recall that the Understanding is that faculty of the mind engaged in the processes of thought, and thought is always a memorial act. In this section I foreground the interactions between Understanding and Memory and argue that the Understanding accomplishes its memorial work linguistically.

Since Augustine equates Understanding with recollection, it seems that the mental image of the divine Trinity might better be thought of as Memory (the storehouse), remembering (recollection), and Love (which joins the power of recollection to the storehouse of memories). Augustine admits as much, but he nonetheless insists that the Understanding must be a part of the image, because it is the inclusion of the Understanding in the trinity that produces the "word":

> The image of that [divine] trinity will indeed be seen to belong to the memory alone; but because the word cannot be there without the thought (for we think everything we say, even if we speak by that interior word (*verbum mentis*) belonging to no nation's tongue). The image is rather to be recognized in these three things, namely, memory, understanding, and will. (2002, 14.7.10)

The Understanding not only fabricates an image-in-thought from the image-in-memory, it also creates a word-in-thought. More accurately, once the image-in-Memory is extracted from the Memory by the Understanding, it becomes not so much an image-in-thought as a word-in-thought. The faculty of Understanding, in other words, operates with words rather than images; more accurately, the Understanding treats images *as* words.[16] This mental word (*verbum mentis*) is "a mentally visible replica or image of the object of understanding latent in memory" (Hill 1991, 266).[17] The important news here is this: all thought and all remembrance—the two functions of the Understanding—are accomplished linguistically via a word-in-thought, a *verbum mentis.* We remember, for Augustine, through language; the Understanding draws on the resources of an inner language to access the storehouses of Memory.[18]

It is difficult to overstate the importance that Augustine accords this word. Augustinian scholar Edmund Hill suggests that "word" (*verbum*) is the key term for understanding the mental image of the divine trinity (266).[19] It is a central term because it is the function of the *verbum mentis* to reveal the secret folds of Memory. Hill writes, "memory is only activated into an act of remembering by generating a mental word in an act of understanding, and . . . *it is only through this mental word that we have access to memory*" (267; emphasis mine). The central question of *The Confessions* has seemingly been answered; if in *The Confessions* Augustine finds God in Memory, *De Trinitate* suggests that it is more accurate to say that Augustine finds God in the inner word that reveals memories-from-within.

The *verbum mentis* forms a ubiquitous and notoriously complex component of Augustinian philosophy and theology.[20] Markus suggests that the *verbum mentis* be thought of in opposition to the "sign," which, in *de Doctrina Christiana,* Augustine equates with speech.[21] Unlike speech, which depends on conventions, the *verbum mentis* is intrinsically meaningful: "The [inner] 'word,' in so far as it is anything at all, is meaningful" (1957, 81). However, it is here significant to note that, despite the epistemic security of this inner language in comparison with speech, Augustine is nonetheless insistent that the *verbum mentis* cannot reveal God in Memory. It is here that we need to remember the relationship between Love and Understanding and the second transformation of the sense-object, for it is this transformation that compromises the capacities of the *verbum mentis*. The second transformation, recall, entails that knowledge (*scientia*) is compromised by thought (*cogitatio*). Although the Memory contains memories-from-within, these memories are compromised as the mental word brings them forward from the Memory to the Understanding. The Understanding, recall, proceeds by a violent love that "prints off" a thought-image that differs

from the image lodged in the storehouse of Memory. It follows, then, that as the *verbum mentis* brings forward the knowledge of God from the Memory to the Understanding, it subjects the *imago Dei* to the violence of Love. Augustine concedes as much, "There can be an eternal knowledge (*scientia sempiterna*) in the mind, and yet the thought (*cogitatio*) of this same knowledge cannot be eternal" (2002, 15.15.25).[22] This means, Stock explains, that "the individual's memory is incapable of displaying everything that it contains" (1996, 211). The central question of *The Confessions* has not yet been answered, for despite its otherwise prodigious powers, the *verbum mentis* does not enable the remembrance of God.

Another way to emphasize the limitations of the *verbum mentis* is to note the limits of the parallels between the divine Trinity and its mental image.[23] The Nicene Creed holds that Jesus, the divine *logos*,[24] is born of the Father, and by assuming flesh reveals the Father publicly to the world. A similar logic holds for the image; in every act of recollection a mental word is born and reveals the Memory to the rememberer. The key difference is this. The Nicene Creed teaches that Jesus was born of a virgin and, according to Augustine's logic, it is precisely the virgin birth that enables the divine *logos* to perfectly reveal the Father to the world. The production of the divine *logos*, in other words, does not require the violent joining-capacity of Love. The *verbum mentis*, on the other hand, is born of the copulative union between the Understanding and the Memory effected by Love. The *verbum mentis*, then, is a composite and by definition must reveal both its parents. It will not perfectly reveal the Memory simply because it is a product of the Memory's union with the Understanding. Augustine concludes, then, that the *verbum mentis* cannot reveal memory "just exactly as it is" (1991, 410). Augustine is sure of this. He is exceedingly careful to note that the *verbum mentis* provides access to memories-from-within only "through an enigma" and that it provides only "some kind of likeness to [God]." He concludes that even the internal word is fundamentally ill-suited to reveal the unchangeable truths of God or to find God in memory.

Although the mental word is incapable of faithfully revealing memories-from-within—our language "begins to stagger," Augustine writes—the *verbum mentis* is the only option for seeing images stored in Memory. It is "this fashion of seeing which is allowed us in this life, namely through a mirror in an enigma, we have a struggle to see at all" (407). Despite the inadequacy of the method, Augustine makes no attempt to circumvent it; he writes, "in this mortal life" it is only "by means of corporal and temporal things we may comprehend the eternal and spiritual" (1958, 10). Yet the gulf between the corporeal (the *verbum mentis*) and eternal (memories-from-within) is unbridgeable; Augustine wonders

"who can explain how great its unlikeness is" (2002, 15.11.21). The Understanding, then, that human faculty that both thinks and remembers, is exclusively serviced by a medium (the *verbum mentis*) that provides word-images that are rather "unlike" those in the Memory it purports to reveal. This has significant consequences. If the only method of knowing is inadequate, then there must be firm limits to human understanding. And, indeed, the finitude of the human capacities for knowing and remembering are a hallmark of the later Augustine.[25] By the end of *The City of God,* only a short time before his death, Augustine was arguing that true knowledge must recognize the "feeble reasoning powers of mortal minds" (1984, XXI, 5).[26]

Given the limitations of the *verbum mentis,* is it still capable of revealing God in memory, of answering the central question of *The Confessions*? Augustine answers with a carefully qualified "yes." The key to finding God in memory, Augustine suggests, is a paradoxical acceptance of the *verbum mentis* and the self-conscious awareness of its limitations:

> But they who see through this mirror and in this enigma, as it is permitted to see in this life, are not they who see those things which we have explained and commended in their mind, *but they who look upon their mind as an image,* so that they are able . . . to see by *conjecturing* that which they now see through the image by beholding. (2002, 15.23.44; emphasis mine)

Those who find God in memory, in other words, are the *conjecturers,* those who reflect on the *verbum mentis* while recognizing that it is only an imperfect image of the memory-from-within. Augustinian wisdom (*sapientia*), then, demands introspection—those who see must "observe . . . their own minds"—but it also demands the recognition that the inner word revealed by introspection will never be sufficient. In other words, remembering God does not require immediate access to the storehouses of Memory, but rather the recognition that the medium that purports to reveal God-in-Memory is itself bound to failure.

In the language of contemporary phenomenology, the *verbum mentis* is a translucent medium and it is its very translucency—as against transparency—that enables God to be found in Memory. The translucency of the *verbum mentis* assures it will be phenomenally experienced as a medium and not mistaken for that of which it is an image. Memory operates, Edward Casey writes, "not despite the translucency—whose dimness is problematic only if we take the limpidity of recollection as paradigmatic—but *by its very means*" (1987, 220; emphasis original). In Augustine's language, the *verbum mentis* reveals Memory because it also reveals itself: a "word indicates something and also indicates itself, but does not indicate itself as a word unless it indicates itself indicating something"

(2002, 8.8.12). The *verbum mentis* refuses to provide unmediated access to the cloisters of memory; entrance is earned via the awareness of linguistic mediation. The necessity of this awareness suggests that the memory Augustine seeks is not placed in the palaces of memory, nor is it placed at all; it resides in the translucent thickness of the transitory medium itself: the *verbum mentis* is the memory. This is a rhetoricizing of the mnemotechnic tradition. Or, at the least, it is the insistence that the mnemotechnic tradition only works on the condition that is approached with a rhetorical sensibility, an awareness that the character of the past is formed by the language that gives it expression.

The condition of remembering God, then, is the recognition that the means by which he is found are insufficient. In this precise sense, remembering depends on the conspicuous failure of the *verbum mentis* to attain the Enlightenment standard of transparency. The inadequate word is the condition of remembering God, and it is the only means of "seeing" truth in this mortal life. Although it bears a likeness to the memory-from-within, it is "a likeness that is obscure and difficult to perceive" (15.9.16). Augustine writes that the *verbum mentis* is "useful for understanding God with, as far as this is possible," but it is at the same time useless—"who could fail to see what a vast dissimilarity there is here to that Word of God" (1991, 407).

Conclusion: Confession as a Memorial Practice

Perhaps the most telling evidence of Augustine's convictions regarding the inadequacies of the *verbum mentis* is the fact of *The Confessions* themselves. Augustine believed that his search for God could not be successfully accomplished without speech. He notes that although the inner language of the *verbum mentis* allows him to recount his sins before God—he confesses without "bodily words and sounds but with words uttered by the soul and with outcry of thought, of which your ear has knowledge" (10.2.2)—the *verbum mentis* is apparently of little use in Augustine's quest for God: "I shall know you, my knower, I shall know you. . . . This is my hope. *Therefore I speak out*" (10.1.1; emphasis mine). Augustine is insistent on this: his search for God in memory depends on the spokeness of his confessions. Stock (1996, 213) notes that Augustine believed that his confessions must be "made in human words that are potentially speakable." Although a spoken confession clearly lacks the surety of an inner language, Augustine nonetheless concludes that his confessions must be spoken: "I too, O Lord, will confess to you in such a manner that men may hear, although I cannot prove to them that I confess truly" (10.3.3).[27]

The connection between the limitations of confession and confession's memorial power is excellently illustrated in Jean-François Lyotard's posthumously published *The Confession of Augustine*. Lyotard starts from the Augustinian assumption that God is in Memory as a memory-from-within, then notes that the only way such memories-from-within can be remembered is rhetorically—the insufficiencies of symbolism in general and confession in particular accomplish the memorial work. Lyotard accounts for Augustine's memories-from-within by suggesting that the divine presence scars the human mind upon entry. He writes, "A wound, an ecchymosis, a scar attests to the fact that a blow has been received, they are its mechanical effect. Signs all the more trustworthy since they do not issue from any intention or arbitrary inscription" (2000, 6–7). God's unchangeable truths scar the believer and effect an extra-symbolic memorial practice: memory via mechanics—unquestionable because "the inner human attests *ab intestat* [without will]" (8).

Between the mechanics of memory and the semiotics of confession, however, there exists an "uncrossable divide," a *differend*, or a fissure (43). Confession cannot disclose these memories-from-within; the rhetorical act can never adequately express the truths that scar the confessor. "I found that no adequate expression followed whatever understanding I came to," Augustine writes. Every attempt ended in "more effort than result" (Augustine 1991, 430). Despite the futility of the symbolic enterprise, Augustine refuses to cede the effort: "I pant after you," he prays, "I have tasted you, and now hunger and thirst after you" (10.27.38). Wounded by the possession of Truth, confession single-mindedly pursues complete disclosure: "the soul can think of nothing but returning to its crimes" (Lyotard 2000, 52–53).

Confession is thus immanently repetitive; it cannot disclose Truth, it cannot not try. Augustine acknowledges as much: "Is [God] perhaps still to be sought even when He is found? For so ought we to seek incomprehensible things" (2002, 15.2.2). Thus at the end of *The Confessions,* after thirteen long books of confession, "the penitent finds himself on the threshold of your door, still stuck in the pall of affairs" (Lyotard 2000, 14). The lesson, Lyotard suggests, is that confession is bound to futility: "Confessive writing bears the fissure along with it" (49). Like Augustine's internal word, confession achieves its end precisely because it draws attention to not only the storehouses of memory, but also to the limits of its own capacity to disclose the contents of the storehouses.

In a very real sense, then, the work of memory is accomplished not in the disclosure of images hidden away in Memory, but in the confessive expression that strives endlessly after such disclosure. Memory is displaced. It is as if the inadequacy of the confessive expression forces on the would-be rememberer the

asymptotic nature of memory work—it is a work that succeeds on the condition that it never is finished; God must be sought after he has already been found. This Augustinian lesson on memory has found recent endorsement. Memory theorist James Young (1993, 21) notes that "the surest engagement with memory lies in its perpetual irresolution." Lyotard concurs; it is precisely the conspicuous inadequacy of the confessive form that marks it as his memorial practice *par excellence*. To Lyotard's mind, complete disclosure is the condition of oblivion. This is the haunting lesson of the Holocaust: totalitarianism effects effacement; inscription on the "tables of memory" prefigures forgetfulness. Thus the memorial power of confession arises from its own immanent incapacities: it cannot attain totality and thus it is a rhetorical means of "preserving the remainder"—of insisting that the memorial work is never finished, of demanding that God must be sought after he has already been found (Lyotard 1990, 26). It is precisely the virtue of the fissure-laden confessive form that it prevents the rememberer from the delusion that memorial work can ever be completed.

We are now in a position to answer the "central question" of Augustine's *Confessions:* "How then do I seek you, O Lord?" The answer is confession: a rhetorical and memorial practice through which Augustine remembers God without placing God. It is only through the work of confession that Augustine can believe that God "dwell[s] in memory" while simultaneously arguing that "there is no place" for God in memory, for confession provides him with a memorial practice that does not proceed *ex locis*. Rather, confession *displaces* memory and refigures it within the confessive expression itself: Augustine meets God not in the palatial storehouses of memory, but in confession. "Am I to say that what I remember is not in my memory?" Augustine queries. As it turns out, the notion is not absurd.

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Notes

1. English quotations of *The Confessions of St. Augustine* are taken mostly from John K. Ryan's 1960 translation. Recent Augustinian scholarship within Communication Studies generally uses this translation. See, for example, Troup (1999). I cite the Ryan translation with the standard (book. chapter.paragraph). I also occasionally cite R. S. Pine-Coffin's 1961 translation: *Confessions*. Pine-Coffin omits the paragraph numbers and so I cite this translation using pagination of the Penguin edition. All Latin quotations are taken from the Loeb edition. Unless specified as from the 1961 translation, all references are to the 1960 translation.

2. *Memoria ex locis* (memory from places) is literally the first premise of the mnemotechnic tradition; it forms the first part of the famous and often repeated definition of artificial memory given in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*: *Constat igitur artificiosa memoria ex locis et imaginibus* (III, xvi, 29). Harry Caplan, in the Loeb edition, translates this as "The artificial memory includes backgrounds and images" (1964, 209). Frances Yates, however, translates the passage differently,

and better captures the dependency of mnemotechnics on the notion of place: "The artificial memory is established from places and images" (1966, 6).

3. To Augustine's mind, unchangeableness might be the most important attribute of divinity. It is emphasized repeatedly throughout both *The Confessions* and *The City of God*. For example, Augustine writes in Book 4 of *The Confessions* that in God "there is not change or shadow of variation" (4.15.25) and in Book 9 that "You [God] are surpassingly the selfsame, you . . . change not" (9.4.11). Other similar affirmations in *The Confessions* can be found at 3.6.10, 4.11.16, 7.4.6, 7.15.21, 7.20.26, 8.3.6, and 10.5.7. In Book VII of *The City of God*, after Augustine describes humanity as "subject to change," he immediately adds: "This cannot be true of God" (1984, VII.27). See also in *The City of God*: XI.21, XII.1, and XII.3.

4. The *ad Herennium* (1964, III.xvi.30) teaches that the places of memory must be placed in a "series" so that the orator can move within in the series in either direction: "I likewise think that it obligatory to have these backgrounds in a series, so that we may never by confusion in their order be prevented from following the images—proceeding from any background (*locos*) we wish, whatsoever its place in the series, and whether we go forwards or backwards (*ab superiore vel ab inferiore parte*)." Yates (1966, 16) suggests that it was precisely the ability to move backward and forward through the places of memory that, in antiquity, earned the veneration of mnemotechnic practitioners. Mary J. Carruthers concurs: "One accomplishment which seems always to have been greatly admired by both ancient and medieval writers was the ability to recite a text backwards as well as forwards, or to skip around in it in a systematic way, without becoming lost or confused" (1990, 18). For example, the elder Seneca "could repeat two thousand names in the order in which they had been given; and when a class of two hundred students or more spoke each in turn a line of poetry, he could recite all the lines in the reverse order, beginning with the last one said and going right back to the first" (Yates 1966, 16). Augustine, similarly, boasts of Simplicius, who could recite Virgil backwards (see Carruthers 1990, 19).

5. "Rest" is a central motif of *The Confessions*. The now-famous second sentence of the text reads: "You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you" (1.1.1). For other important invocations of rest in *The Confessions* see: 2.2.2, 3.6.10, 4.7.12, 4.9.15, 5.1.1, 6.6.9, 10.38.63, 11.29.39, and 13.9.10.

6. Augustinian scholar Brian Stock (1996, 216) has also noted Augustine's dissatisfaction with the traditional mnemotechnic understanding of memory: "Augustine agrees with the ancient theory of places in the mind. . . . However, as his analysis proceeds, the metaphor of static containment is increasingly at variance with his understanding of the dynamics of recollection. . . . The problem arises from the notion of memory as a container." In Stock's account, however, Augustine never moves beyond the problematic conceptions of memory inherited from the ancients. It is perhaps because Stock understands Augustine's treatments of memory in *The Confessions* and *De Trinitate* as functionally equivalent (208) that he fails to see Augustine move beyond the problems he identifies.

7. Augustine's relation to the mnemotechnic tradition is the subject of scholarly debate. Although there is no indication that Augustine ever read the *Rhetorica ad Herenium*—the crucial text in the mnemotechnic tradition—and he never referred to the portion of *de Oratore* in which mnemotechnics are discussed, his evocations of memory in *The Confessions* so reflect mnemotechnic assumptions few would doubt Francis Yates's conclusion that Augustine was, at the least, influenced by the tradition. Even those who doubt Augustine's familiarity with the tradition concede the similarities: "The most that may be said is that he drew on a store of imagery congruent with the technique" (O'Donnell 1992, 3:177). See also Stock (1996, 12, 195n188): Stock suggests that Augustine's descriptions of memory in *The Confessions* suggest that he was at least familiar with the mnemotechnic tradition.

8. See also Gareth B. Mathews (2002, ix); he argues that books 8–15 of *De Trinitate* should be thought of as Augustine's "remarkably original" philosophy of mind.

9. The *ad Herennium* is bereft of any philosophical consideration of the memory. Indeed, the author of the *ad Herennium* assumes that the only relevant considerations are the "art and method" by which the memory is trained (1964, III.xvi.28). Likewise in *de Oratore*, although Cicero (1986, II.lxxxvi) speculates that the memory is a "part of the understanding," he nonetheless is concerned exclusively with the training and application of memory. It is not until Augustine that memory is appreciated on its own terms rather than being treated as an available means of persuasion to be trained and deployed.

10. Here and throughout, I follow Arendt in capitalizing Memory, Understanding, Love, Will, and Attention when I am referring to particular faculties of the human mind, as understood by Augustine. Arendt's *Life of the Mind* (although not her *Love and Saint Augustine*) might be the best reading, from a philosophical standpoint, of Augustine's *De Trinitate* that exists. From a rhetorical standpoint, however, one cannot be satisfied with Arendt's work. She makes no mention of the relationship between the mental word (*verbum mentis*) that plays so large a role in *De Trinitate* and speech (*loquax*), which plays so large a role in *The Confessions*. Near the end of this essay I will focus on precisely this relationship in order to demonstrate, for rhetoricians, the significance of *De Trinitate.*

11. English quotations from *De Trinitate* are taken from two sources. Stephen McKenna's 2002 translation of books 8–15 of *De Trinitate* entitled *On The Trinity* is the best available. I also quote from the most recent translation of the entire work, Edmund Hill's 1991 translation, *The Trinity*. When citing McKenna I follow the standard practice in Augustinian scholarship, (book.chapter. paragraph). In 1991 Hill modified the standard chapter divisions, so I use page numbers to cite his translation. The Latin within quotations is taken from *Corpvs Christianorvm Series Latina*.

12. As I explain below, the Will is, for Augustine, a weaker form of Love.

13. This is not inconsistent with Augustine's meditation on the relationship between the Attention and Memory in Book 11 of *The Confessions.* There he suggests that the object of the Attention cannot be the object of Memory. The Attention is a faculty wholly concerned with the present, although objects "move through" it to the Memory, it is the passage of time rather than the power of the Attention that secures objects for the Memory. Reading *The Confessions* and *De Trinitate* together, we might suggest that it is the fact that the Attention is wholly consumed with the present that renders it too impotent a faculty to stock the storehouses of memory. This subjection of the Attention is reinforced in *The City of God* where Augustine describes the Attention as a purely human characteristic: "Nor does [God's] attention pass from one thing to another; all things which he knows are present at the same time to his incorporeal vision" (1984, XI.22).

14. Edmund Hill (1991, 267) is helpful on the difficulties and uniqueness of translating Love in *De Trinitate*. See also Arendt (1996). Although: note the discrepancies between Arendt's (1996, 17-20) definitions of *caritas* and *cupiditas* and Augustine's (1984, XIV.7).

15. See also Augustine (1991, 345): "And although faith comes to us by hearing (Rom 10:17), it does not belong to that sense of the body that is called hearing, because it is not a sound . . . because it has nothing material about it . . . because it is a thing of the heart not the body; nor is it outside us but deep inside us."

16. Augustine (2002, XV.10.18): "When these [speech and sight] take place outwardly through the body, the speech is one thing and sight another thing; but when we think inwardly, then both are one."

17. To Augustine's mind, he is not mixing his metaphors by describing the Understanding in both oral and visual terms. In the previous section, the Understanding was a sort of internal seeing, the "sight of thought." Now, the Understanding is a sort of internal saying, for "he who thinks certainly speaks." This cannot be a case in which Augustine changed his mind on the best metaphor, for he alternates between them and seems to consistently assert the validity of each. It springs rather from Augustine's conviction that in a prelapsarian world, thoughts—and the words that signify thoughts—would be visible: "The cause of the physical utterance of these words is the abyss of this world and the blindness of our flesh. Because of them, thoughts cannot be seen, so that there is need for sound to strike our ears" (13.23.34). Even in the fallen world, gestures and flags "are like so many visible words" (1958, II.III.4). That Augustine describes the *verbum mentis* as visible word, underscores the importance he attaches to this inner word: it is a word whose function is more secure for, like words before the fall, it is visible as well as audible. Thus Markus (1957, 77–78) notes that, unlike speech, which depends on conventions, the inner word is self-sufficient: "In general, [Augustine] thinks of the word within as a complete entity or event, prior to any utterance in language, and embodied in language solely for the purpose of communication."

18. From his earliest writings forward, Augustine consistently describes speech and language as central to the activity of remembering: "Even when a person merely strains his mind toward something, although we utter no sound, yet because we ponder the words themselves, we do speak within our own minds. So, too, *speech serves us only to remind,* since the memory in which the words inhere, by recalling them, brings to mind the realities themselves, of which the words are signs" (1950b, 1.2; emphasis mine).

19. Markus (1957, 76) agrees; he argues that "word" is a "key-concept" for understanding Augustine's mental trinity.

20. See Markus (1957, 76) for an account of why the notion of the *verbum mentis* is so complex.

21. "For words have come to be predominant among men for signifying whatever the mind conceives if they wish to communicate it to anyone" (Augustine 1958, II.III.4). Stock (1996, 7) writes that the sign is "normally a word."

22. Throughout Augustine's writings, "eternity" is equated with rest, changelessness, and the City of God, and opposed to change, motion, and temporality. Indeed, Augustine's most consistent description of the City of Man is its proclivity for change: "If Adam had not fallen away from you, from his reins there would not have flowed that salt sea water, the human race, so deeply active, so swelling in storms, and so restlessly flowing" (13.20.28; see also 1984, XX.16, XV.26). In the sharpest possible contrast to this restless and swelling City of Man, stands the serene Eternity of the City of God, the *quietem ex tempore*—"the rest that comes after time" (13.17.52).
When Augustine claims that the "thought" (*cogitatio*) of "knowledge" (*scieintia*) cannot be eternal, then, he seems primarily to mean this: the human faculty of Understanding (which is the faculty that does the thinking and remembering) lacks the permanence or steady focus required for thinking about "knowledge," i.e., for thinking about those memories-from-within that objectively correspond to the external world because they did not enter the Memory through the sensations. In short, the temporality of the Understanding renders the Memory's capacity for "knowledge" irrelevant—such memories can be neither thought about nor remembered.

23. Augustine himself seems to justify this comparison: "For just as our word in some way becomes a bodily sound by assuming that in which it may be manifested to the senses of men, so the Word of God was made flesh by assuming that in which He might also be manifested to the senses of men" (2002, 15.11.20).

24. Hill argues that Augustine did some "justifiable violence" to the Latin *verbum* in order to fashion it after the Greek *logos* (1991, 266).

25. Augustine's progressive embrace of human finitude and its consequences for both knowledge and memory is excellently described both by Peter Brown (2000) and especially R. A. Markus (1988). Based on the work of these two scholars, there is now a virtual consensus among Augustinian scholars that, by the end of his career, Augustine had all but completely abandoned the neo-Platonism of his youth. Two important exceptions are Stock (1996) and the highly respectable Father O'Connell (1996), who has made a career arguing that Augustine was, till his dying day, a disciple of Plotinus.

26. Elshtain (1995, 8) refers to this embrace of the epistemological consequences of finitude as the "noetic effects of sin." She devotes an entire chapter, "Against the Pridefulness of Philosophy" (49–67), to argue for the centrality of Augustine's insistence upon epistemic finitude.

27. It may be objected that Augustine's confessions are not so much spoken as they are written. Unlike Plato, however, and pace Stock (1996, 3), Augustine did not *sharply* distinguish between speaking and writing. Although Stock is correct that Augustine did favor his own reading practices over the loquacious speech of the Manicheans, the far more decisive division for Augustine was between inner speech (*verbum mentis*) and outer speech (*verbum vocis*) (Markus 1957). Both speech and writing were both understandable as the latter.

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