

*Non-final version.*

*The final version of this paper appears in Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy*  
8:41-78 (2020)

# Perception in Augustine's *De Trinitate* 11

## A Non-Trinitarian Analysis

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### 1. Introduction

The latter half of Augustine's *De Trinitate* is as much a treatise in human cognitive psychology as it is a work in trinitarian theology. Augustine holds that our best (and perhaps only) prospect for understanding something of God's trinitarian nature is to study its reflection in the human mind.<sup>1</sup> For, on his view, the mind at its deepest (or highest) level possesses a trinitarian structure—one that is likewise manifested in its various episodic cognitive acts. And, while the most adequate representation of the divine trinity has its locus in the higher reaches of human rational activity, traces or quasi-images of the trinity can be found even in the soul's non-rational, sense-based activities.

In this paper, I explore Augustine's account of sense cognition in book 11 of *De Trinitate*. His discussion in this context focuses on two basic types of sensory state—what he himself refers to as “outer vision” and “inner vision,” respectively. His analysis of both types of state is designed to show that our lowest, outermost cognitive acts—i.e., those involving external and internal sense faculties—are susceptible of a

<sup>1</sup> In what follows, translations of *De Trinitate* are adapted (with occasional, slight modification) from the version of Edmund Hill. The editions and translations on which I rely for Augustine's other works are listed in the bibliography.

trinitarian analysis. In this respect, the theological significance of his discussion is perfectly straightforward. As a project in philosophical psychology, however, its significance is rather less obvious. Indeed, it is far from clear what sense-cognitive phenomena correspond to Augustine's notion of outer and inner vision, respectively.

One very natural (and fairly common) way to read *De Trin.* 11, however, is to interpret Augustine's analysis of "outer" vision as his account of sense perception (i.e., of perceptual acts of seeing, hearing, touching, etc.) and the analysis of "inner" vision as an account of occurrent acts of sensory memory and imagination.<sup>2</sup> On this reading, the division between outer and inner vision yields a mutually exclusive and exhaustive division of the main types of sensory state that occur in human beings such that *all* sense-based states turn out to be trinitarian in structure.

Although this reading has both an appealing tidiness as well as some *prima facie* textual support, it cannot, I claim, be correct. In what follows, therefore, I argue for an alternative reading of book 11. In particular, I advance two theses: one negative, one positive. The negative thesis is that what Augustine calls "outer vision" is not, in fact, sense perception—at least not in the ordinary or paradigmatic sense. In making this claim, I take for granted that, paradigmatically, sense perception is a kind of *conscious* perceptual awareness. To be sure, there are various forms of non-conscious sensory processing (blindsight; or other kinds of non-conscious, or sub-personal sensory events), but these are not paradigmatic cases of sense perception. Hence, insofar as we take perception to

<sup>2</sup> Although I know of no paper which advances such an interpretation as part of a focused, exegetical study of perception in *De Trin.* 11 (partly because there are very few such studies), nevertheless, there are treatments of book 11 that clearly do presuppose some such interpretation. Recent examples include: Scott MacDonald, "Augustine's Cognitive Voluntarism in *De Trinitate* 11," in E. Bermon and G. O'Daly (eds.), *Le De Trinitate de saint Augustin: exégèse, logique et noétique* (Paris: Vrin, 2012), 322–39 and Mark Calderon, "Trinitarian Perception," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp. vol. 91 (2017), 21–41. This reading also seems to be taken for granted by Peter King, "Augustine on Knowledge," in D. Meconi and E. Stump (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 142–65, Johannes Brachtendorf, *The Structure of the Human Mind according to Augustine: Self-Reflection and Knowledge of God in De Trinitate*, tr. A. Looney (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2000), 193–8, and Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's De Trinitate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 190–8.

be a phenomenally conscious mode of sensory awareness, my negative claim is that Augustine's analysis of outer vision is not an analysis of sense perception. Rather, I claim, in order for the deliverances of outer vision to reach the threshold of consciousness, outer vision must occur in conjunction with the activation of the faculties involved in inner vision. Hence my positive thesis: for Augustine, sense perception is a complex, hybrid state—one that involves the tandem operation of both outer and inner vision.<sup>3</sup> If I am right, the end result is a rather less tidy analysis of perception since, on my reading, acts of sense perception turn out not to be susceptible to trinitarian analysis. Even so, the account is interesting and nuanced for all that.

As will be clear, my argument presupposes not only that Augustine recognizes distinctions between different levels or types of awareness, but also that such distinctions are plausibly framed in terms of some notion of 'consciousness.' In order to prepare the way for my reading of book 11, therefore, I begin (§2), first, by clarifying what I mean in characterizing a given state as 'conscious' and, second, arguing for the claim that Augustine has a systematic way of marking the distinction between states that are conscious and non-conscious in this sense. In so doing, I also introduce the basic cognitive mechanisms Augustine relies on to explain such a distinction. Next (§3), I turn to Augustine's discussion of outer and inner vision in book 11 and, thereafter (§4), to the defense of my two central interpretive theses. I conclude (§5) with some brief observations about how my interpretation finds further support and motivation when situated vis-à-vis some of Augustine's broader philosophical and theo-logical commitments.

<sup>3</sup> Since beginning work on this paper, I discovered José Silva's excellent 2014 article on active perception in Augustine ("Augustine on Active Perception," in J. Silva and M Yrjönsuuri (eds.), *Active Perception in the History of Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 79–98). While Silva's focus is not on questions about consciousness, nor specifically on *De Trin.* 11, nevertheless, in the course of defending a thesis about the soul's activity in perception, he offers an account of perception similar to the one I defend here. Since its publication, there has been some criticism of Silva's interpretation—especially on the issue of whether it is consistent with what Augustine says in *De Trin.* 11. See Kalderon, "Trinitarian Perception" and Silva's reply in José Silva, "Perceptiveness," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp. vol. 91 (2017), 43–61. It will be clear, however, that my own account of *De Trin.* 11, in many ways, supports Silva's position.

## 2. Consciousness and Levels of Awareness in Augustine

Since there is both a wide range of psychological states that might be characterized as ‘conscious’ and no standard use of terminology for classifying various kinds of conscious phenomena, I need to say something about how I am using the relevant terminology, and how it applies to the various psychological phenomena Augustine recognizes and discusses. For my purposes, talk of ‘consciousness’ is simply a way of signaling phenomenality. Conscious states are those that register at the level of phenomenal awareness. To say that a given psychological act or state of awareness is conscious, then, is just to say that it is experienced by its subject; there is, as the familiar refrain goes, ‘something it is like’ for the subject to have or be in that state. Thus, conscious states, in the sense in which I am interested, are states a subject is aware of or *experiences herself as being in*.<sup>4</sup>

For clarity in what follows, it will be important to distinguish consciousness in the foregoing sense not only from cases of complete absence of awareness, but also from two other modes of psychological awareness: namely, what we might think of as non- or sub-conscious awareness, on the one hand, and introspective awareness on the other. In speaking of non-conscious awareness, I have in mind psychological states that we do not experience, but which nevertheless causally impact our conscious thinking and/or our behavior and actions. Thus, while the content of sub-conscious states does not feature in conscious experience, we do have a kind of unconscious, or functional access to it. Similarly,

<sup>4</sup> Nowadays, treatments of phenomenal consciousness are very often focused around qualia—that is, the purely qualitative features associated with phenomenally conscious states. Thus, philosophers often take *what-it’s-like* talk to refer to its qualitative character—say, the particular greenish way the tree appears in awareness. That said, it is also widely acknowledged that there may be more to phenomenal consciousness, more to our experience of our mental states, than qualitative character. Thus, philosophers from Franz Brentano to Uriah Kriegel have called attention to the self-conscious or subjective character of phenomenally conscious states. The core idea here is just that phenomenally conscious states are states one is aware of oneself as being in. For recent treatments of this aspect of phenomenal consciousness see: Uriah Kriegel, *Subjective Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) and “Consciousness and Self-Consciousness,” *The Monist* 87 (2004), 185–209; Colin McGinn, “Consciousness and Content,” in N. Block, O. Flanagan, and G. Güzeldere (eds.), *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 295–308; and Joseph Levine, *Purple Haze: The Puzzle of Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

consciousness as I am understanding it, is to be distinguished from introspective awareness. Introspection is a kind of deliberate, focal, attentive awareness of one's own occurrent conscious states. When we introspect, we not only experience our mental states, but we explicitly attend to that very experience. Such attention to our own states is, however, relatively rare; in the ordinary course of things, our conscious experience occurs without our being, at the same time, introspectively aware of it.

I call attention to these various modes of awareness as a way of introducing some basic distinctions Augustine himself draws in *De Trin.* between different levels or types of awareness.<sup>5</sup>

I should say, however, that Augustine's clearest presentation of these distinctions, and of the cognitive mechanisms associated with them, occurs in contexts in which he is focusing on the mind's higher, and purely rational (i.e., intellectual) activities. And so it is on these texts that I shall, at least initially, be focusing. As will become clear, however, Augustine recognizes the same kinds of distinctions (and appeals to the same basic mechanisms) in book 11 when discussing inner and outer vision.

To get a start at some of the distinctions Augustine draws between levels of awareness, consider his observations in the following passage:

... in the recesses of the mind (*abdito mentis*), there are various awarenesses of various things (*quarundam rerum quasdam notitias*), and they come out somehow into the open and are set, as it were, more clearly in the mind's view (*in conspectu mentis*) when they are thought about (*cogitantur*); it is then that the mind discovers and remembers and understands and loves something which it was not thinking about while it was thinking about something else. And if it is something that we have not thought about for a long time and are unable to think about unless we are reminded of it, then in heaven knows what curious way it is something that we do not know that we know.

(*De Trin.* 14.9)

<sup>5</sup> Since, for Augustine, we come to knowledge of the divine only by first turning inward and coming to know the nature of our own minds and thoughts, it is no surprise that he gives careful attention to both the nature and the phenomenology of our various mental activities and states.

Here, the main distinction on which Augustine focuses is between what I am calling conscious and non-conscious modes of awareness. In his own terminology, the distinction is between cases in which a given content occurs within one's "mental field of view" (*in conspectus mentis*) and cases in which such content is present to (or present in) the mind, but not experienced as such. It is typical for Augustine to signal the former, conscious, mode of awareness by using variants of the verb 'cogitare.'<sup>6</sup> While this expression is almost always rendered into English as 'to think,' a translation that might suggest a specifically intellectual activity, it is worth noting at the outset that Augustine uses the expression more broadly to refer to acts of occurrent awareness involving either rational or non-rational contents.<sup>7</sup> Thus, for him, *cogitatio* involves the conscious processing of a given content (whether intellectual or sensory) in such a way that it is, as it were, before the mind's eye. Indeed, Augustine habitually appeals to visual metaphors not only to characterize the nature of acts of *cogitatio*, but also to describe the psychological mechanism responsible for conscious awareness. Thus, says Augustine, "thought is a kind of sight of the soul" (*De Trin.* 15.16) wherein "the mind's gaze" (*acies mentis, mentis aspectum*) is directed upon a given content in such a way that one experiences one's awareness of it.<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting, moreover, that conscious awareness in this sense is to be distinguished from introspection; for Augustine, introspection is a matter of having these very acts of thinking (or knowing or understanding)

<sup>6</sup> Augustine takes the verb, *cogito* ("I think") to be an iterative form of *cogo* ("I collect") and so an appropriate label for the soul's activity drawing or bringing together any range of content (whether sensory, or purely rational) before the mind's conscious awareness. See *De Trin.* 11.6 and *Confessions* 10.11.18.

<sup>7</sup> This will become clear when we turn, in section 3, to Augustine's discussion of sense cognition in book 11, where he speaks of conscious sensory awareness as '*cogitatio*.' This broad usage is also made explicit at *De Trin.* 15.16, where Augustine points out that "thought is a kind of gaze of the soul, whether things are present that are seen with bodily eyes or sensed with other senses... or whether they are things only taught by the disciplines of a liberal education, or whether the higher causes and ideas of all these things are being thought about in their unchanging nature." When Augustine is speaking of conscious thought involving purely intelligible contents, he will use 'understanding' (*intelligere*) to characterize the specific type of 'thinking' (*cogitare*) in question. In keeping with standard usage, I will continue to translate the Latin expressions '*cogitare*/'*cogitatio*' in the customary way (namely, as 'thinking'/'thought'), but the reader must bear in mind the broad meaning of these terms.

<sup>8</sup> As we will see, when referring to this gaze or view in connection with *perceptual* awareness Augustine speaks of it as the *acies animi* (soul's gaze) rather than *acies mentis* (mind's gaze).

in view. In his terms, then, introspective awareness involves seeing one's thinking (*videt . . . cogitationem*).<sup>9</sup>

Now, as Augustine frequently reminds us, the contents of the mind far outstrip what we presently have *in view*. In this way, we can be said to know (*nosse*) or have awareness (*notitia*) of far more than what we are presently (consciously) thinking of.<sup>10</sup> Augustine gives numerous examples, but one such illustration runs as follows:

It is like one who is expert in many disciplines: the things which he knows are contained in his memory, but nothing thereof is within the view of his mind except that which he thinks about. All the rest is stored up in a kind of secret awareness (*arcana quadam notitia*), which is called memory . . . . Thus, we say the man knows (*nosse*) letters even when he is thinking (*cogitat*) about other things, not letters. (*De Trin.* 14.8)<sup>11</sup>

Here as elsewhere, the mechanism to which Augustine appeals in speaking of any kind of non- or sub-conscious awareness is that of

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., *De Trin.* 15.16 where Augustine puzzles over how it is that we do not, in fact, see all of our acts of thinking, while at the same time apparently recognizing that we do not: "Who fails to see (*videt*) his own thoughts (*cogitationem*)? And on the other hand, who does see his own thoughts? . . . Who fails to see them, and who does see them? After all, thought is a kind of sight of the soul." Another context in which Augustine treats introspective awareness is his discussion at *De Trin.* 15.21 of whether we can know that we know, and know that we know that we know—and so on.

<sup>10</sup> While '*notitia*' is the nominal form of the verb '*nosse*' (meaning 'to know'), it would be a mistake to think that Augustine uses "*notitia*" in a technical sense for contents that are *known* in any strict, epistemic sense of that term. Indeed, in introducing book 11—which is narrowly concerned with non-rational awareness—he characterizes his subject matter as "*notitia* of bodily things" (*rerum corporearum notitia*) insofar as it is acquired through bodily senses (*sensu corporis*). See *De Trin.* 10.19. For this reason, I often translate '*notitia*' as "awareness" in order to capture this more neutral sense of the expression. Like the expression 'knowledge,' '*notitia*' can be used to refer as much to the contents of a cognitive act as to the act itself.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *De Trin.* 14.9: "This person whom you perceive disputing about geometry is also a perfect musician, for he both remembers music, and understands, and loves it; but although he both knows and loves it, he is not now thinking of it, since he is thinking of geometry, of which he is disputing. And hence we are warned that we have a kind of knowledge of certain things stored up in the recesses of the mind, and that this, when it is thought of, as it were, steps forth in public, and is placed as if openly in the sight of the mind; . . . But in the case of that of which we have not thought for a long time, and cannot think of it unless reminded; that, if the phrase is allowable, in some wonderful way (I know not how) we do not know that we know. In short, it is rightly said by him who reminds, to him whom he reminds, 'You know this, but you do not know that you know it; I will remind you, and you will find that you know what you had thought you did not know.' . . . "But he who cannot contemplate these things, even when reminded, is too deeply buried in the darkness of ignorance, through great blindness of heart and too wonderfully needs divine help, to be able to attain to true wisdom."

‘memory’ (*memoria*). As this passage makes clear, moreover, memory extends to any content which is retained in the mind, but is not within one’s current, conscious field of view. Indeed, for Augustine, memory functions broadly as the source or principle of all that we *can* access in occurrent, conscious awareness.<sup>12</sup> As he puts it elsewhere: memory constitutes “all that we know, even if we are not thinking of it” (*De Trin.* 15.40). Thus, the contents of memory are not restricted to past events or experiences, but rather include “the whole of a person’s knowledge together” (*De Trin.* 15.17). What exists in memory is present to the soul in such a way that it not only remains accessible for conscious consideration (in some cases, only with great effort), but may also actively structure conscious awareness and action.<sup>13</sup>

Now, as we have already noted, conscious awareness, on Augustine’s model, is a matter of directing the soul’s gaze so as to bring some content into view. Owing to our noetic limitations, however, the scope of our capacity for conscious awareness is highly restricted. Thus, of all that is psychologically present, known to us, and, thus, held in memory, what appears in conscious awareness does so only “bit by bit and one by one” and, as Augustine explains, only as a result of one’s

turning the [mind’s] view (*conspectu*) from here to there and there to here, and again from there or there to this and that, as though one could not see something unless one stopped seeing other things.

(*De Trin.* 15.23)<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Thus, importantly, for Augustine, memory is not a distinct faculty or power of the mind, but rather the mind itself insofar as it functions in different capacities. This extremely broad notion of memory characterizes Augustine’s account of memory not only in *De Trin.*, but in the *Confessions* (where Augustine claims that God is among the things in *memoria*) and in *De Genesi ad Litteram* (where, in book 12, memory plays an important role in occurrent sense perception). The literature on Augustine’s theory of memory is vast. A very brief, and helpful overview can be found in Roland Teske, “Augustine’s Philosophy of Memory,” in E. Stump and N. Kretzmann (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 148–58. See also John Mourant, *Saint Augustine on Memory* (Villanova, PA: Villanova University Press, 1980), and Gerard O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), chapter 5. Of particular relevance to memory in *De Trinitate* is Paige Hochschild, *Memory in Augustine’s Theological Anthropology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. the case discussed in n. 11 above. This is also the case, as we will see, for non-conscious sense-based awareness.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *De Trin.* 11.12: “But the gaze of the soul cannot look at everything contained in memory at one glance, and so trinitities of thoughts follow one another in succession, and one gets this innumerable numerous trinity.”



What we consciously experience is, therefore, to some degree, up to us. Indeed, Augustine thinks that, in many cases, what we know or become aware of is to be explained by appeal to the contribution (or failure thereof) of our will.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, it is this feature of Augustine's account of consciousness that secures his trinitarian analysis of it. For, as we shall see, on Augustine's analysis, every occurrent act of cognition involves not only an object, on the one hand, and an act of awareness of it, on the other, but also an action or volition on the part of the subject in directing her attention to the object thus cognized. Hence consciousness is itself a trinitarian structure: acts of conscious awareness involve (i) the soul's gaze (*acies*) being (ii) intentionally directed via the will (*voluntas*) to (iii) some object or content present to it.

As there will be occasion to return—at some length—to Augustine's trinitarian analysis of conscious awareness in connection with his account of sense-based cognition, the foregoing will suffice for the discussion to come. I now want to turn to book 11 and to Augustine's account of outer and inner vision.

### 3. Outer Vision and Inner Vision in *De Trin.* 11

As I have indicated already, the overarching thesis that drives Augustine's project in *De Trinitate* is the idea that the human mind is itself a likeness and image of the divine Trinity.<sup>16</sup> While, strictly speaking, this trinitarian image lies solely in the intellect, Augustine holds that traces of it redound even to the lowest—i.e., non-rational—operations of the soul. Thus, as a way of elucidating the image of the Trinity as it exists in the

<sup>15</sup> See *De Trin.* 9.18 and 10.4 for a discussion of the role of will in knowing. The role of will in sense cognizing will be explored in more detail below.

<sup>16</sup> Drawing on Genesis 1:26, Augustine takes it as given that humans are the *imago Dei*; we are, in other words, created in God's image and likeness. Given God's Trinitarian nature, moreover, Augustine likewise takes for granted that humans bear the image and likeness of the divine Trinity. Insofar as the locus of this image of the Trinity is the human mind, it is possible, Augustine thinks, to come to some understanding of the Trinity by turning inward and studying the nature of our own mind and thoughts. In this way, he thinks we come "somehow to see him by whom we were made by means of this image which we ourselves are, as through a mirror" (*De Trin.* 15.14). For an exploration of the question of how the discovery of such images aids knowledge of the divine see Peter King, "Augustine's Trinitarian Examples," *Medioevo* 37 (2012), 83–106.

soul at the highest level, Augustine proposes to begin by exploring models of the trinity as they are found in these lower—more familiar, more accessible—cognitive activities.<sup>17</sup> In this, Augustine pursues a characteristic ascent from exterior to interior and from inferior to superior. In book 11, therefore, he begins by examining the sensory-functions of “the outer human being”—that is, the human person with regard to its capacity for sense-based cognition of material bodies.<sup>18</sup> The project, as Augustine characterizes it, is “to look for some model of the trinity in this human who is decaying; for even if it is not a more accurate model, it may perhaps be easier to distinguish.” In this regard, book 11 is a remedial exercise: a way to begin preparing us for the ideas to come. In subsequent books, Augustine gradually ascends to images of the Trinity as they exist in ‘inner human being’—that is, in the human person with respect to its capacity for various kinds of rational activity.<sup>19</sup>

What all this means, then, is that, in book 11, Augustine is not merely focusing on sense-based cognitive states, but focusing on them in such a way as to wholly exclude the contributions of higher, rational or intellectual faculties in judging or interpreting sensory content. For, on Augustine’s view, what pertains to the outer human being is precisely those features of our mind (*animus*) that are shared in common with non-rational animals.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, the discussion in book 11 covers

<sup>17</sup> For reasons we will consider presently, the trinitarian structures involved in sense cognition so understood do not in fact constitute an *imago Dei*. Insofar as vestigial traces of the Trinity can be found in all created things, it is, nonetheless, possible to see a trinitarian likeness in the structure of perception.

<sup>18</sup> Augustine cites Paul (2 Corinthians 4:16) for the distinction between the inner and outer man, but the distinction has Platonic sources as well. For more on this see Kaldron, “Trinitarian Perception,” 25.

<sup>19</sup> Augustine’s trinitarian analysis of thought as well as the methodology of inward ascent have precedent in the Neoplatonic tradition. For discussion of such influences, see Christopher Tournau, “The Background of Augustine’s Triadic Epistemology in *De Trinitate* 11–15,” in E. Bermon and G. O’Daly (eds.), *Le De Trinitate de saint Augustin: exégèse, logique et noétique* (Paris: Vrin, 2012), 251–66.

<sup>20</sup> Augustine opens book 12 by explicitly delineating the boundary between the outer human being, with which he was concerned in book 11, and the inner human being to which he is turning in book 12. The dividing line, he tells us, is rationality. “Well now, let us see where we are to locate what you might call the border between the outer and the inner human being. Anything in our mind (*in animo*) that we have in common with animals is rightly said to be still part of the outer human being. It is not just the body alone that is to be reckoned as the outer human, but the body with its own kind of life attached, which quickens the body’s structure and all the senses it is equipped with in order to sense things outside. And when the images of things sensed that are fixed in the memory are looked over again in recollection, it is still something belonging to the outer human being that is being done. In all these things, the only way that we differ from animals is that we are upright, not horizontal, in posture” (De Trin. 12.1).

both acts of cognizing external, material bodies, and acts of memory and imagination, all of which involve sense-based representations.

Insofar as Augustine's project is merely to uncover the trinitarian structure of our non-rational, sense-based cognitive acts, his analysis is not (and is not intended as) a full-blown or exhaustive treatment of sense-based cognition. Rather, he focuses selectively on just those aspects of sense cognition relevant to his broader, theological pursuits. For the same reason, however, the precise cognitive application and implication of his analysis can be difficult to pin down. I begin, therefore, by simply tracing the details of his presentation of each of the two trinitaries of book 11, namely, that of outer and inner vision respectively. Not surprisingly, each type of vision shares the same basic structure. Both outer and inner vision consist in a kind cognitive union between (i) the cognized object, on the one hand, and (ii) the relevant sensory power on the other. This cognitive contact is facilitated by (iii) the will. Indeed, the act of 'seeing' or 'sight' (*visio*) (where this is just the actualization of the relevant cognitive power in receiving the form or *species* of the object cognized) is itself the culmination of the will's activity in directing awareness.

3.1 Outer Vision. In presenting the details of this picture, Augustine begins by focusing on outer sense cognition—that is, on cognition of external, material objects. In developing his account, he uses vision as the representative sense power (though the basic analysis is intended to apply to any sense modality).<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, the first trinitarian structure is a trinity of outer vision. Augustine presents it this way:

<sup>21</sup> As Augustine explains, "So then, the outer person is endowed with sensation, and with it senses bodies; and this sensation, as can be readily verified, is divided into five parts, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching. But it would be too much, and quite unnecessary to ask all these five senses about what we are looking for. What one tells us will go for the others. So let us use for preference the evidence of the eyes; this is the most excellent of the body's senses, and for all its difference in kind has the greatest affinity to mental vision" (*De Trin.* 11.1).

When we see some particular body, there are three things which we can very easily remark and distinguish from each other. First of all there is (i) the thing (*res*) we see, a stone or a flame or anything else that the eye can see, which of course could exist even before it was seen. Next there is (ii) the actual sight or vision (*visio*), which did not exist before we sensed the object presented to the sense. Thirdly, there is (iii) what holds the sense of the eyes on the thing being seen as long as it is being seen, namely the soul's intentional aim (*animi intentio*). These three are not only manifestly distinct, but also different natures.

(*De Trin.* 11.2)

Here, Augustine opens by simply calling our attention to the three constitutive elements of sensory seeing, namely: (i) the object or thing (*res*) that is seen, (ii) the seeing (*visio*) itself, and (iii) the soul's intentional aim (*animi intentio*) upon the object. As Augustine will go on to make clear, each of the three elements are not only distinct from one another, but also jointly necessary for the occurrence of outer, bodily vision.

The mutual distinctness of each item from the other can be shown, Augustine thinks, from the fact that (i) each has a different nature and (ii) each can exist without the other. On Augustine's view, "the visible body is of quite a different nature than the sense of the eyes." For, the visible object is entirely corporeal, whereas the body's sensory organs—insofar as they are animated by the soul—are an "admixture" of body and soul.<sup>22</sup> But the soul's intentional aim differs from both the visible body and the sensory organs since it is a power that "belongs just to the soul"—a fact which Augustine takes as evident given its active, volitional nature.<sup>23</sup> Again, each constituent can exist without the others. Not only can a visible object exist independently of being seen, but insofar as the form received in the eyes is distinct from the body itself, it is also possible

<sup>22</sup> On Augustine's view, it is only because the soul is somehow present at or in the physical organs that such organs are powers for sensory cognition. As he says: absent the soul (*exanimae*) there is no capacity for bodily sensing. See *De Trin.* 11.2.

<sup>23</sup> In fact, at points, he refers to this third element of sensory cognition as a "volition" of the soul. Cf. *De Trin.* 11.5. Although soul's "*intentio*" functions as the third member both in the trinities of outer and inner vision, Augustine tends to place more emphasis on the role of *will* (*voluntas*) as the source of the soul's intentional uniting with the objects stored in memory. See MacDonald, "Augustine's Cognitive Voluntarism," for a discussion and limited defense of Augustine's conception of sense perception as involving *volition*.

for the eyes to be informed (at least for a time) even when the body itself is no longer present.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the soul's intentional aiming persists even in the absence of a functioning sense organ or visible objects. After all, Augustine claims, the soul's "appetite for seeing (*videndi appetitus*) remains intact whether this happens to be possible or not."<sup>25</sup>

While the main point of all of this is to establish the distinctness of each of the members of this trinity from the others, Augustine's discussion also makes clear why he thinks all three components are jointly necessary for outer vision. Without the first member of the trinity, namely, (i) the visible object, nothing would be seen. In such a case, there would be no uniting of the sensory organ of vision to an external visible object. Again, if a visible object is present, but without the eye being actually informed from it, there is no (ii) *sight*. After all, vision requires that the sense faculty actually take in, or receive, information from the surrounding environment. But notice that this very event, namely, the eyes receiving such information, requires (iii), that the eyes are actually being directed at the relevant visible object. Seeing requires *looking*, as it were. In this regard, the cognitive contact that constitutes outer vision is, on Augustine's model, the consummation of a prior inclination or will for seeing (*voluntas videndi*).<sup>26</sup> Together these three things—the object, the aiming to see, and the sight—yield what Augustine characterizes as "a kind of unity," namely, the cognitive "joining" that constitutes bodily vision.<sup>27</sup>

According to Augustine, this analysis of outer vision yields a trinitarian image not merely because we have a case in which three distinct things yield a kind of unity (a single, unified cognitive event), but because the relations among the three reflect those that hold among the three persons of the Trinity. For example, the external object as the source of

<sup>24</sup> "It often happens that when we look at some lights for a little while and then close our eyes, certain luminous colors continue to revolve in our vision, changing their hues and gradually becoming less brilliant until they cease altogether. We can understand them as being the remnants of that form which was produced in the sense while we were looking at the luminous body . . ." (*De Trin.* 11.4).

<sup>25</sup> *De Trin.* 11.2. <sup>26</sup> See *De Trin.* 11.10.

<sup>27</sup> Here's Augustine: "Although these three differ in nature they are compounded in a kind of unity, that is to say, the form of the body which is seen, and its image imprinted on the sense which is sight, or formed sense, and the volition of the soul (*voluntas animi*) which applies the sense to the sensible thing and holds sight on it" (*De Trin.* 11.5).

bodily sight serves as the analogue to the first person of the Trinity, namely, God the Father. And because sight itself involves (i) a *species*—or likeness—of that object that is (ii) produced (or “begotten”) by that object, sight itself functions as the second person of the Trinity, namely, as God the Son. Augustine spells it out this way:

So it is that sight, that is the form which is produced in the sense of the beholder, has its quasi-parent (*quasi parens*) in the form of the body from which it is produced. But this is not a true parent, and so the former is not a true offspring; it is not wholly begotten by it since something else is presented to the visible body for sight to be formed out of it, namely the sense of the one who is seeing . . . So the will which joins them both together as quasi-parent and quasi-offspring is more spiritual than either of them . . . . It does not proceed from that quasi-parent, or for that matter from this quasi-offspring, [rather] . . . the will was already there before sight occurred and it applied the sense of the body to be formed from it by observing it. However it was not yet pleased; how could it be with something not yet seen? (*De Trin.* 11.9)

In Augustine’s terminology, the external object is “quasi-parent” (i.e., analogue to the Father), and the informed eye its image and, so, “quasi-offspring” (i.e., analogue to the Son). The will for seeing (*voluntas videndi*), being neither parent nor offspring (and, hence, analogue to the Holy Spirit), completes the trinity in its role as what “joins them both together.” This trinity is not, of course, anything like a proper image of God given that, among other things, it is comprised of entities of wholly different natures (body, soul, and an admixture thereof) and so lacks the requisite unity. It is merely a start. From here we are ready to move to more inward operations of the soul—albeit still just insofar as the soul is occupied with sensory representations. Hence, Augustine turns now to his second sensory trinity: namely, that of inner vision.

3.2. Inner Vision. Augustine begins his discussion of this second trinity by pointing out that when the *species* of an external object is received in a corporeal sense

organ, it is (typically) also transmitted to memory. Thus, even when the object itself is no longer present it is possible, nevertheless, to recall it in an occurrent act of awareness.

Even when the *species* of a body sensed by corporeal senses is taken away, there remains a likeness of it in memory to which the will can again turn its gaze to be formed by it from within just as the sense was formed from without by the sensible body presented to it.

(*De Trin.* 11.6)

In this way, when stored sensory forms or *species* are utilized in occurrent acts of sensory awareness, we get a second sensory trinity: a trinity of 'inner vision.' Thus, Augustine continues:

And so one gets another trinity out of the memory and internal sight and the will which couples them together; and when these three are co-agitated (*coguntur*) into a unity the result is called *cogitation* or thought (*cogitare*), from the very act of co-agitation (*coactu*). Nor among these is there a difference in substance . . . Instead of the *species* of the body which was sensed outside, there now appears memory retaining (i) that *species* which the soul (*anima*) drank in through the sense, and instead of that external sight of the sense being formed from the sensible body, we now have a similar (ii) internal sight when the soul's gaze (*acies animi*) is formed from what the memory retains, and absent bodies are thought about (*cogitantur*); and (iii) the same will that, in the first case, applied the sense for formation to body presented to it outside and kept it joined to it once formed, now turns the gaze of the soul of the one recollecting to the memory in an act of recollection for it to be formed from what the memory has retained, and there is produced in thought something like sight. (*De Trin.* 11.6)

As in the case of outer vision, Augustine characterizes inner vision as a cognitive event in which a cognitive power is joined or united to its object. In this case, however, the object in question is not an external body, which, Augustine stipulates, is no longer present. Rather, the object is a sensory representation of an external body—a *species* in memory; and what is informed from it is not a corporeal eye, but the soul's inner, incorporeal gaze (*acies animi*). Nevertheless, it is "the same will that in

the first case applied the sense for formation to the body presented to it outside and kept it joined to it once formed, [that] now turns the soul's gaze to the memory."<sup>28</sup>

The uniting of the soul's gaze (*acies animi*) to the *species* in memory yields an occurrent, conscious act of sense-based awareness—or what Augustine, in his usual way, refers to as 'thought' (*cogitatio*). Although the etymological connection between the Latin verb '*cogere*' (to collect together or join) and the verb '*cogitare*' (to think or cogitate) does not translate in English, it is precisely this connection that Augustine means to signal in using the term 'thought' (*cogitatio*) in this context. For, the actualization of the *acies* consists in its being conjoined to, and so informed by, a sense-representation present in memory—a conjunction that yields an act of conscious remembering. In cases where retained images are recombined in various ways (often in ways that do not correspond to reality), the sense-based thought in question constitutes an act of imagination.<sup>29</sup> Either way, each type of act is an instance of inner vision: that is, a kind of interior awareness which, while not involving a bodily eye, nevertheless, yields "something like sight"—namely, an inward *seeing* and, hence awareness, of a given sensory content.<sup>30</sup>

Now, as Augustine's discussion makes clear, acts of inner, sense-based thinking, namely, acts of remembering or imagination, are structurally isomorphic to acts of outer vision. In this case, the three members of the trinity are: (i) the inner object, namely, the *species* in the memory, (ii) the inner seeing—i.e., the soul's gaze (*acies animi*) being informed by the *species* from memory; and (iii) the intentional directedness of the soul or will (*intentio voluntas*) upon the inner object. Having identified the three constituents of this second trinity, Augustine goes on, as he did

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *De Trin.* 11.7.

<sup>29</sup> E.g., at *De Trin.* 11.17, Augustine notes that the will can act not only to unify conscious attention and the contents of memory, but also to creatively recombine such contents present in memory.

<sup>30</sup> It is only when inner vision occurs in the *absence of* (or absent attention to) corresponding external objects that it constitutes an act of memory or imagination. In such cases, what one is aware of is not anything in external reality, but something in memory or imagination. As will be clear, however, on my view, when inner vision occurs (i) as part of a unified process that includes outer vision, and (ii) has external bodies (not inner images) as object, the awareness is perceptual. (See section 4 below.)



in the case of outer vision, to argue for the distinctness of each member; and he likewise calls attention to their unity in the production of inner vision. There is no need to survey the details of his discussion here except to note that, in this case, we get a unity that is much greater than that among the three constituents of outer vision. As Augustine observes: the three members of the trinity of inner vision “are not now differentiated by a diversity of nature but are of one and the same substance, since all of this is inside and it is all one soul” (*De Trin.* 11.7). For the same reason, the members of this trinity are likewise a better (though still far from proper) image of the relations among the first, second, and third persons of the divine Trinity.

Toward the very end of his discussion in book 11, Augustine sums up his results by considering the triune components of both outer and inner vision in the context of a broader, ordered series of sense-cognitive events. As this passage will be of particular significance for the discussion to come, it is worth quoting at length:

So it is that in this series which begins with the *species* of the body and ends with the *species* which is produced in the thinking gaze (*contuitu cogitantis*), four *species* are brought to light, born as it were step by step one from the other; the second from the first, the third from the second, the fourth from the third. From (i) the *species* of the body that is seen arises (ii) the *species* that is produced in the sense of one seeing, and from this (iii) the one produced in the memory, and from this (iv) the one that is produced in the gaze of the one thinking (*acie cogitantis*). So the will couples quasi-parent with its offspring three times: first the *species* of the body with the one it begets in the sense of the body; next, this one with the one that is produced from it in the memory; and then a third time this with the one that is brought forth from it in the gaze of thought (*cogitantis intuitu*) . . . And, in this series, there are two visions: one of sensation, the other of thought. It is to make possible the sight of thought that there is produced from the sight of sensation something similar in the memory, which the gaze of the soul can turn to in thought just as the gaze of the eyes turns to a body in observing it. That is why I have wished to propose two trinities of this kind, one when the sensation of sight is formed from the external body,

the other when the vision of thought is formed from internal memory. But I did not wish to propose a middle trinity in between because it is not usually called a vision when the form that is produced in the sense of the observer is committed to memory. In every instance, however, the will only appears as coupling quasi-parent with its offspring. And for this reason, wherever it proceeds from, it cannot itself be called parent or offspring. (*De Trin.* 11.16)

Here, Augustine shows how the trinities of outer and inner vision form part of a series involving the transmission of sensory information from the external world all the way to inner awareness. Indeed, because the process starts with the external visible object, the sensible form of that object is counted among the ‘*species*’ included in the series itself. Considered in this way, the process as a whole includes: “four *species* . . . born, as it were, step by step”; a three-fold coupling of “quasi-parent with its quasi-offspring” by the will; and “two visions—one of sensation, one of thought.” Represented in diagram fashion, we get something like Figure 1.

Interestingly, the chain of transmission Augustine presents here includes an intermediate (and hitherto unmentioned) stage, namely, one at which the *species* in the animated sense organ is transmitted (via yet another conjunctive application of will) to memory. We will have reason to return to this part of his discussion presently. For the moment, it suffices just to call attention to the fact that, in his account of sensory cognition, Augustine includes not merely an analysis of inner and outer vision respectively, but also of their serial occurrence. And, he does so

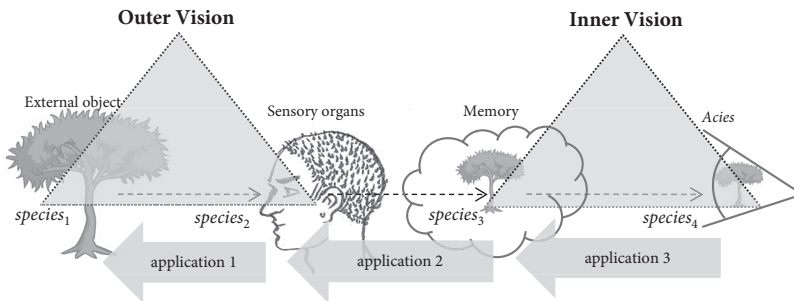


Figure 1 Trinities of outer vision

even though the middle stage in the series presents something of a complication for him. For in this middle stage, there is an object, an informing of a cognitive power, and a conjunctive application of will uniting them, yet the occurrence of the three do not constitute a trinity. (And, apparently, this is because the information received in memory does not register in any distinct act of occurrent awareness and, so, does not constitute “vision of any sort.”)

#### **4. Limits of the Trinitarian Analysis: Locating Perception in *De Trin.* 11**

Having established the main elements of Augustine’s account of both outer and inner vision, the natural question to consider is this: to which—and what range of—sense-cognitive states does the trinitarian analysis apply? One might very naturally suppose that Augustine intends his analysis as having fairly wide application; that is, we might think that he intends it to apply in a general way to *all* sense-based cognition. After all, Augustine tells us that his account of outer vision applies equally to any of the five outer, sensory faculties; and he is also explicit about the fact that his analysis of inner vision is applied both to acts of memory and imagination. Hence, on the face of it, it could appear that the analysis covers not only all modes of sense perception, but also occurrent states of sensory memory and imagination. Indeed, we could even take the unheralded, middle, pseudo-trinity of informed memory, as giving us an account of dispositional sensory memory.

This is not, however, what I think Augustine has in mind. Rather, as I read book 11, the trinitarian analyses Augustine develops have a rather narrower range of application. In particular, the two trinitarian images he develops do not apply to what we might think of as *the* central case of sensory cognition: namely, ordinary sense perception. In order to establish this, I begin with my negative thesis: namely, that what Augustine calls ‘outer vision’ is not plausibly identified with what we (or he) would think of as ordinary, paradigmatic cases of sense perception. And this is because, unlike ordinary cases of perceptual experience, the sensory states that Augustine classifies as instances of ‘outer vision’ are not

phenomenally conscious states. From here, it is a relatively short step to my positive thesis: namely, that insofar as perceptual awareness involves both the deliverances of the “outer” sense faculties, as well as the involvement of “inner” faculties of both memory and the *acies animi*, sense perception turns out to be a kind of hybrid state—one involving the joint occurrence of both outer bodily sensing and inner conscious awareness.

4.1 Negative Thesis: Outer Vision Is Not Perception. In support of my negative thesis, I offer two kinds of evidence. The first comes from a close reading of a single, telling passage in book 11—one that I think sheds a good deal of light on the phenomenology Augustine associates with outer and inner vision respectively. The second sort of evidence comes from systematic considerations, having to do with Augustine’s broader views about conscious awareness. I begin with the latter, systematic considerations. It will be useful to have these considerations in mind before we turn to the key text.

For starters, recall Augustine’s systematic identification of conscious awareness—at both the intellectual and sensory level—with acts of cogitation or *thought (cogitatio)*. As we have now seen, thought consists in the activation of the *acies animi*—i.e., the activation of the soul’s power for occurrent, conscious awareness. Thus, when the soul’s gaze is informed by a given content, that content is present within one’s conscious field of view (*contuitu cogitantis*).<sup>31</sup> In this way, the *acies animi* serves consistently, for Augustine, as the psychological mechanism for conscious awareness. Add to this the fact that, as Augustine points out in the following passage, the *acies animi* is always informed from memory.

We very frequently believe people when they tell us true things which they have themselves perceived with their senses . . . . It does not seem in this case as if our attention is being bent back to our memory to

<sup>31</sup> Indeed, it would appear that, for Augustine, the activation of the soul’s gaze in an act of *cogitatio* is not only sufficient for conscious awareness, but also necessary. Cf. *De Trin.* 14.8: “Nothing can be in the mind’s view except what is being thought about.”

produce sights; after all, we are not thinking about them because we are recalling them, but because someone else is telling us them . . . . However, if we look at the matter a little more closely, not even in this case do we depart from the limits set by memory. I could not even begin to understand what he was telling me if I was hearing all the things he said and what they added up to for the first time, and did not have a general memory of each of them . . . . So the limits of thinking are set by the memory just as the limits of sensing are set by bodies. The senses receive the *species* of a thing from the body we sense, the memory receives it from the senses, and the gaze of the one thinking from the memory. (*De Trin.* 11.14)

As Augustine puts it here: “memory is the limit of thought.” You cannot, in other words, have an act of *cogitatio* involving some content if that content is not first in your memory. In this particular context, Augustine is considering an example in which you are picturing an event narrated to you by your friend. In the circumstance, it would seem that you are thinking about something that is not, in fact, in *your* memory since the story involves an event that did not happen to you. Thus, on the face of it, the case appears to be a counterexample to the principle that the gaze of thought is always informed by a content derived from one’s own memory. But, in response, Augustine simply denies that this is the case, insisting instead that “if we look at the matter a little more closely, not even in this case do we depart from the limits set by memory.” The point, of course, is that our ability to understand the import of our friend’s story owes to the fact we have concepts and experiences within our own mind—*memoria*—to draw on. Thus, even in such a case, our conscious thinking about the events in our friend’s story is informed by what is present in our own memory. Augustine reinforces the point by reiterating, at the end of the passage, the process by which sensory information reaches conscious awareness: “The senses receive the *species* of a thing from the body we sense, the memory receives it from the senses, and the gaze of the one thinking from the memory.”

The significance of all of this, for our purposes, is that this discussion signals a general principle about the connection between conscious awareness and memory: namely, the *acies animi* is always informed

from, and hence posterior to, memory. In other words, conscious sensory awareness, insofar as it requires the activation of the *acies animi* also necessarily requires the involvement of memory. Of course, insofar as conscious attention is selective and active, such awareness also involves a contribution from the will. Thus, the will's contribution, as Augustine describes it, involves its activity in making some (but not others) of the representations that are present in memory salient in one's conscious awareness. As Augustine says: "the will turns the gaze (*acies*) here and there and back again to be formed and once formed it keeps it joined to the image *in memory*" (*De Trin.* 11.7).

If all this is right—that is, if the *acies* is always informed from memory, and is directed by the will—we can expect that where there is both a failure of memory (i.e., some content fails to be taken up in memory) and a failure of will (i.e., absence of attention) there will be no conscious awareness. And, this, in fact, is precisely what Augustine says in a key passage.

The passage I have in mind comes toward the end of book 11. In it, Augustine is exploring the nature of will's contribution to sense cognition. He pursues the matter, however, by considering what happens, *cognitively speaking*, when will is absent from one or more of the various stages of sense cognition. While Augustine typically lays emphasis on the will's positive, unitive contribution to the formation and constitution of sensory states, in this text he calls attention to the fact that will's activity can also be cited in explaining the non-occurrence of such states. Thus, in the opening lines, he points out that the will may act not only to *apply* one's attention to some object, but also to avert it. He says: "Just as it is the will that fastens sense to body, so it is the will that fastens memory to sense and the gaze of the one thinking to the memory. And what fastens them together and assembles them also unfastens and separates them, namely the will again" (*De Trin.* 11.15). Augustine immediately goes on to specify particular ways in which the will can separate (rather than unify) a cognitive power and its object, and then to explain the cognitive outcome of such cases. What he has to say is illuminating.

Here's the text in its entirety:

[**STAGE-1 FAILURE:**] It is by movements of the body that it separates the senses of the body from the bodies to be sensed, either to avoid

sensing or to stop sensing something; as when we shut our eyes or turn them away from something we do not want to see . . . Thus it is by moving the body that the will avoids coupling the senses of the body to sensible things. And it does it as far as it can. When it suffers difficulty in this respect because of our condition of servile mortality, the result is torment, and nothing is left to the will but endurance.

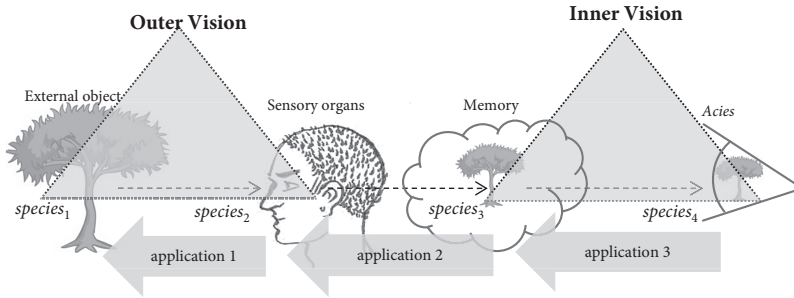
[STAGE-2 FAILURE:] Memory is averted from sense by the will when, intent on something else, it does not allow present things to adhere to it. This is easy to observe when, as often happens, we are with someone talking to us and appear not to have heard what they are saying, because we are thinking of something else. It is not true, though; we have heard, but we do not remember the sounds slipping that very instant through our ears, because the will has been disinclined to give the permission which is needed as a rule to fix them in the memory. So it would be truer to say “We do not remember” than “We did not hear” when something like that happens. It also happens to people reading, extremely often at any rate to me, that I find I have read a page or a letter and have not the slightest idea what I have read, and have to repeat it. The will’s interest has been intent on something else and so the memory has not been applied to the sense of the body as that sense has been applied to the letters. So too, you go for a walk with your will intent on something else and so you do not know what path you have taken. If you actually had not seen, you would either not have gone for the walk or you would have walked by feeling your way with great attention, especially if you were going along a way you did not know. But you walked quite easily, so of course you did see . . .

[STAGE-3 FAILURE:] Finally, the way the will averts the gaze of the soul from what is in the memory is simply by not thinking about it.

*(De Trin. 11.15)*

The cases Augustine identifies here fall into three groups, each corresponding, respectively, to a failure at one of the three stages of will’s application depicted in Figure 1, which, for convenience, I reproduce here.

Before considering the precise significance of this passage vis-à-vis my negative thesis, it will be useful to begin by first reviewing the basic details of each of the three types of case Augustine considers.



**Figure 1** Trinities of outer vision

The first set of cases Augustine considers (those labeled as ‘stage-1 failures’ in the text) are cases in which there is a failure of the will’s application at the very first stage of sense cognition. Here, the failure of application of the sense organs to the external object consists in the will positively acting so as to separate the “senses of the body” from “bodies that are to be sensed.” It does so, for example, by simply averting the relevant sensory organ—say, by willing to shut or avert the eyes, cover one’s ears or nose, etc. In these cases, will’s role is characterized in terms of resistance. As the examples make clear, where will succeeds in separating, it prevents or terminates outer vision.<sup>32</sup> And where there is no outer vision, there is, of course, no awareness *whatsoever* of the surrounding physical environment.<sup>33</sup> Stage-1 failures thus represent absence of any outer, bodily sensing.

<sup>32</sup> Augustine does allow, however, that even if one wills against the application of senses to corporeal objects, outer vision may, nevertheless, persist. In such cases, he describes the subject as “unwillingly enduring” an act of outer vision. Here the famous scene from *Clockwork Orange* comes to mind in which the central character, Alex, has his eyes wired open and is forced to watch violent films. But perhaps Augustine himself had Plato’s case of Leontius and the corpses in mind (*Republic* IV, 439e–40a).

<sup>33</sup> Outer vision fails not only in cases where the will actively resists application of the senses to external bodies, but also when the senses of body are inert for some reason (as in sleep, or as in cases of physical defect say, blindness/deafness), or, more rarely, in cases in which the soul’s “intentional aim” (*animi intentio*) is “fixed by a kind of necessity on some inner image” (as in cases of madness, divination, or spiritual ecstasy). Augustine offers a fuller description of cases of the latter sort elsewhere in *De Trin.* 11 and there he characterizes them as cases in which the will “concentrates its whole energy on the inner image (*interiorem phantasiam*), and withdraws the gaze of the soul altogether from the presence of the bodies that surround the senses, and from the senses of the body themselves, and directs it utterly on the image that is seen within” (*De Trin.* 11.7). Thus, while the eyes might even be open (or other senses equally at the ready), the subject, nonetheless, senses nothing—there is no awareness of perceptible objects. Augustine considers similar cases in *De Genesi ad litteram*; see for example *Gen. Litt.* 12.25 and 12.27.



In the second set of cases (namely, those labeled ‘stage-2 failures’), there is a failure in the application of memory to information present in sense organs. Outer vision exists, but its input is not recorded in memory. In these cases, the failure owes not to active resistance on the part of the will, but to distraction. When one’s attention is sufficiently focused elsewhere (because, say, will is “intent on something else”), the data received by the outer senses is neither registered nor processed in memory. Where there is a stage-2 failure, information in bodily senses simply does not penetrate further than the outer senses.

The final type of case (namely, ‘stage-3 failures’) represents the selective nature of occurrent, sense-based thought. Since there is more present in memory than is (or can be) entertained in any occurrent act of awareness (be it an act of memory, imagination, etc.), the will functions to separate the soul’s gaze from any range of sensory contents by simply failing to bring or “apply” the *acies* to them (or, presumably, by actively resisting doing so).<sup>34</sup> What stage-3 failures show, then, is just that consciousness of a given (non-rational) content does not occur without the soul’s gaze being applied-to or informed-from memory. This, of course, fits the general model outlined above.

With these details in mind, we are now better positioned to consider the import of the passage for the thesis that outer vision is not—by itself—sufficient for perception. Indeed, what is particularly valuable about Augustine’s presentation of these cases—especially the cases of failure at stage 2—is the way in which it allows us to isolate the occurrence of outer, physiological sensing from more inward psychological processing. Doing so allows us to identify not only what sort of state, and what kind of phenomenal experience, outer vision yields when it occurs on its own, but also what states correspond to its conjunction and coordination with inner awareness.

For starters, what Augustine’s discussion shows is that outer vision can, in principle, occur without the informing of memory, or the

<sup>34</sup> Likely, Augustine would allow, as he does for outer vision, that inner seeing can occur against (or without) one’s willing it. Consider, e.g., nightmares, or cases in which you are unable to get a song out of your mind, or in which someone is haunted by the vivid memory of a traumatic event.

subsequent informing of the soul's gaze. This alone—given what we have already seen of Augustine's systematic account of the psychological mechanisms associated with consciousness—suggests that outer vision is a non-conscious or sub-conscious mode of awareness. Not only that, but the three examples Augustine offers to illustrate the nature of isolated outer vision support precisely this conclusion. Each involves some failure of awareness. His first example is a case in which someone in your vicinity is talking—say, giving a lecture in your department—but, having gotten distracted by thoughts about an upcoming appointment, you discover that you have not been hearing anything. In the second case you are reading (perhaps this very paper) but then you realize that, although your eyes have been scanning the words and your hands turning the pages, you “have not the slightest idea what [you] have just read.” The final example is Augustine's analogue to David Armstrong's famous example of the long-distance truck-driver.<sup>35</sup> In Augustine's version, however, “you go for a walk with your will intent on something else and so you do not know what path you have taken.” Unlike cases in which outer vision fails, in each of these examples there is clearly *some* level of sensory awareness. Indeed, as Augustine points out in the walking case, you manage to reach your destination safely and without feeling your way, so, “you did see.” On the other hand, he is also keen to emphasize that in each case you also fail to experience any sensory awareness. Thus, it appears *to you* that you have not heard, not read, nor observed the path by which you walked.

<sup>35</sup> See David Armstrong, “The Nature of Mind,” in *The Nature of Mind and Other Essays* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 1–15. Armstrong's case, which has become quite familiar in the current literature on consciousness, runs as follows: “If you have driven for a very long distance without a break, you may have had experience of a curious state of automatism, which can occur in these conditions. One can suddenly ‘come to’ and realize that one has driven for long distances without being aware of what one was doing, or, indeed, without being aware of anything. One has kept the car on the road, used the brake and the clutch perhaps, yet all without any awareness of what one was doing” (“The Nature of Mind,” 12). Armstrong claims that in such a case “something mental is lacking” and he goes on to argue that what's lacking on the part of the driver is awareness of his perception of the road. “The driver in a state of automatism perceives, or is aware of, the road. If he was not, the car would be in a ditch. But he is not currently aware of his awareness of the road. He perceives the road, but he does not perceive his perceiving, or anything else that is going on in his mind. He is not, as we normally are, conscious of what is going on in his mind . . . . The driver in the automatic state is one whose ‘inner eye’ is shut: who is not currently aware of what is going on in his own mind” (“The Nature of Mind,” 14).

The reason you seem not to have heard or seen anything is that, in such cases, you do not have any awareness or *experience* of outer acts of bodily sensing. For when outer vision occurs without simultaneously engaging memory and the soul's gaze, its deliverances fail to register at the level of *conscious* awareness. What stage-2 failures show, then, is that outer vision alone is not sufficient for perceptual awareness. It is, rather, a sub- or non-conscious mode of awareness.

Admittedly, in describing such cases, Augustine places particular emphasis on them being instances of a failure of memory. For example, in the case where we are inattentive to someone who is speaking, he says: "we have heard, but we do not remember the sounds . . . . So, it would be truer to say 'we do not remember' than 'we did not hear.'" Likewise, in the case of inattentive walking. As I have just noted, Augustine insists: "you walked quite easily, so you did see." One might think, therefore, that what stage-2 failures represent is not a failure of conscious perceptual awareness, but merely a failure *to recall* its (perhaps fleeting) occurrence.<sup>36</sup>

Although this alternative reading of stage-2 failure has some initial plausibility, it is here that reflection on the broader, systematic considerations just canvassed can serve to guide our interpretation. It goes without saying that stage-2 failures are rightly characterized chiefly as a failure of memory: after all, they are cases in which the will has not applied the memory to the external sense organs. Thus, information present in the senses has not been taken up or processed by memory. What this means, however, is that such information is also not received in the *acies animi*. For, what we have now seen is that, on Augustine's view, the *acies* is always informed from memory. Thus, where there is no uptake of sensory content in memory there is no possibility for its uptake in one's conscious field of view. Hence such cases cannot represent failure to recall conscious perceptual experiences. No such experience has (yet) occurred.

When, therefore, Augustine insists that "you did see" or "you did hear," he is merely highlighting the occurrence of outer, *bodily* vision and outer, bodily hearing. After all, it is precisely the fact that outer seeing (and hearing) does occur in such cases that distinguishes them

<sup>36</sup> I am grateful to Scott MacDonald for calling my attention to (and pressing) this alternative reading of the passage.

from instances of stage-1 failure—namely, cases where outer vision also fails. But such seeing and hearing is nothing more than the actualization of the external sense organs in receiving the *species* of external bodies. And this, as I have been arguing, is not sufficient for perceptual experience. For *that* we need the informing of the soul's gaze.

So much for the defense of my negative thesis: namely, that outer vision is not the equivalent of sense perception. It is, I think, a fairly short step from the negative thesis to my second, positive thesis—namely, that perception is a hybrid state requiring not only the occurrence of outer vision, but the simultaneous contributions of memory and inner vision. It is, therefore, to the defense of this thesis that I now turn.

4.2 Positive Thesis: Perception Is a Hybrid State. If outer vision (taken by itself) is a *non-conscious* mode of sensory processing, and inner vision (again, taken by itself), while conscious, is not a form of *perceptual* awareness, we might be tempted to conclude that the trinitaries of sense cognition Augustine identifies in book 11 are not relevant to or even intended as part of an analysis of ordinary conscious perception. If Augustine's project in book 11 is simply to focus on those sensory states susceptible of a trinitarian analysis, perhaps it is a mistake to expect an analysis that applies to all or even the paradigmatic cases of sense-based cognition. Indeed, it may be that Augustine's discussion in book 11 omits conscious perceptual states altogether in order to focus singularly on sensory states that fit the trinitarian model he seeks to illuminate.

In fact, however, I think this is not the case. As we have seen, Augustine's discussion in *De Trin.* 11 includes not only an individual analysis of outer and inner vision, respectively, but also consideration of them together as an ordered series. Although no single stage in this series—taken by itself—constitutes ordinary conscious perception, it is plausible to think that Augustine intends the *whole series together* to provide us with an account of just this phenomenon. Indeed, it seems no accident that, immediately after discussing the separation cases, Augustine turns directly to consider “the series which begins with the

*species* of a body and ends with the *species* which is produced in the thinking gaze.”

I have already made the case for thinking that outer vision, by itself, does not constitute perception. It is quite clear, moreover, that just the first two stages alone (i.e., outer vision, plus the informing of memory) are likewise insufficient for conscious perceptual awareness. As Augustine himself points out, there isn't anything rightly “called vision when the form that is produced in the sense of the observer is committed to memory.” Rather, conscious awareness requires the activation of the soul's gaze. It is likewise clear, moreover, that the third stage (i.e., the activation of inner vision) depends on the second as it is not possible for the soul's gaze to be informed directly from the outer senses: *acies* is always informed from *memoria*. Hence, consciousness of a given content does not occur without the soul's gaze being applied to and, thereby, informed from memory.

Hence, conscious sense perception appears to require all three members of the series: namely, (i) actualization of the sense organs by *species* received from external objects, (ii) memory's reception of this sensory information, and (iii) the immediate activation of inner gaze by the sensory information thus received by memory from the senses. Without the first component, namely, the actualization of the sense organs, there is no outer vision—no awareness of external bodies. Without the second component, namely, memory's reception of information from the senses, there is no content available to inform the soul's conscious gaze. And lacking the third component, there is no conscious awareness of information present to the senses. Hence, my positive thesis: conscious perception is a hybrid state requiring the tandem activation of the mechanisms involved in both outer *and* inner vision.

If this is right, however, it turns out that perception is not itself any kind of trinity. After all, the ordered series that constitutes an occurrent perceptual state includes four *species*, two visions, and three applications of the will. Still, perceptual awareness is comprised from such trinities: namely, trinities of outer and inner vision. Indeed, taken together (or, rather, in various combinations), the mechanisms required for both outer vision, inner vision, and memory appear to supply the basic cognitive ingredients (or sub-structure) for a broad (perhaps even

exhaustive) range of sensory cognitive states. In this regard, then, whatever the limits of the range of states included under inner and outer vision taken singly, the analysis of sense cognition offered in *De Trin.* 11, can be seen as having a fairly broad application.

## 5. Memory and the Trinitarian Mind

I have been arguing that, taken singly, neither of two sensory trinitities Augustine discusses in *De Trin.* 11 yields an analysis of sense perception. My argument rests both on the assumption that sense-perceptual awareness is, paradigmatically, conscious as well as on the contention that conscious awareness requires the activation of the *acies animi*. That such awareness requires the informing of the soul's gaze is, I believe, beyond dispute: not only does Augustine explicitly identify conscious awareness with episodic acts of thinking (*cogitatio*), but also explicitly analyzes the latter in terms of the actualization of the soul's *acies*. This is not surprising given Augustine's commitment to the view that it is the soul (and not the body) that is the subject of conscious experience.<sup>37</sup>

I have also argued that careful attention to the details of Augustine's discussion in book 11 shows that the *acies animi* is activated upon receiving sensory information present in *memoria*. Thus, on my reading of Augustine, it turns out that perceptual awareness requires that sensory information be received in memory *prior* to its informing conscious

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *De Trin.* 11.2: "Nevertheless, it is the soul, conjoined to the body, that senses through a bodily instrument." Augustine lays emphasis on the soul as the subject of sensory or bodily awareness in other contexts as well. For example, in *Gen. Litt.*, he claims that it is "not the body that is the subject of sensation, but the soul through the body" (*Gen. Litt.* 3.7) and argues that "even bodily pain in any animate creature is itself a great and wonderful power of the soul" (*Gen. Litt.* 3.25). Part of what motivates Augustine's insistence on this point is his commitment to the view that the soul exercises at least some agency in directing its awareness toward one thing rather than another. But if it is the soul that is the source of such agency, it must also be the subject of the awareness thus achieved. To be clear, however, to say that the soul is the subject of conscious experience does not entail any kind of transparency thesis. For example, just because the soul animates the body, it does not follow that it is thereby conscious of *all* bodily operations. Indeed, it is precisely Augustine's rejection of such a transparency thesis that motivates his insistence on the limits of the soul's gaze. Conscious awareness requires that a given content is present to the *acies*, not just that it is present somehow in the soul (e.g., in the animated sense organs or in memory).

awareness. On the face of it, this result is perhaps somewhat surprising. For, while it is natural to suppose that memory is needed *to recall* a perceptual experience, it is far less obvious that memory should be a *prerequisite* for such experience. Thus, even if my reading is well-motivated in the context of the details of Augustine's discussion in book 11, it is harder to see what broader motivation there could be for assigning memory such a role in sense perception. Indeed, absent such motivation, one might be inclined to resist my interpretation on grounds of charity if nothing else.

As it turns out, however, such motivation is not far to seek. I want to conclude, therefore, by briefly situating my reading of *De Trin.* 11 vis-à-vis some of Augustine's wider philosophical and theological commitments. Doing so has the benefit of both highlighting the broader plausibility of Augustine's views as well as providing further corroboration and support for my interpretation of book 11.

To begin, it is worth bearing in mind that, for Augustine, the notion of memory is extremely broad. Memory is not strictly identified with a single psychological faculty or power, and its function goes well beyond the basic role of retaining and recollecting past experiences. In general, memory functions, for Augustine, as a kind of principle or source of human knowing and thinking. Thus, in some sense, memory encompasses everything we can mentally access or think about (or love, or seek)—even when we are not currently doing so.<sup>38</sup> That said, it remains true that memory's function in sense-based cognition is largely that of gathering and holding information received in the external sense organs. In this capacity, however, it plays a key role in structuring conscious perceptual awareness.<sup>39</sup> In this respect, memory's function in perception is continuous with the role it plays in mental activity in general: namely, as a principle or source of occurrent awareness.

<sup>38</sup> E.g., at *De Trin.* 15.40, Augustine sums up his account this way: "I have been attributing to memory all that we know even though we are not thinking about it . . . . But there are more hidden depths in our memory, where we found this thing even when we thought about it for the first time." Cf. section 2 above.

<sup>39</sup> I do not claim to be particularly original in calling attention to memory's role in perception. O'Daly, for example, has a lot to say on this score (*Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, chapter 3). Still, much more attention has been given to the role played by will in Augustine's account of perception than the role played by memory.

To see what I have in mind, let us take a particular example—one of Augustine’s own—namely, one involving memory’s role in our (auditory) perception of language. Because spoken words are comprised of syllables consecutively articulated, it is clear, Augustine thinks, that our ability to perceive even a single word requires the retention of sensory input in memory. As Augustine says, in *De Genesi ad litteram*: “unless the spirit immediately formed in itself an image of the voice heard by the ears and stored it in memory, you would not know that the second syllable was second since the first, having vanished after striking the ear, no longer exists.” Thus, insofar as the sounding of a word is a temporally extended event, there needs to be some way to retain and structure sensory information in order to generate a unified perceptual experience. This is the role memory performs. Augustine makes this explicit when discussing the same example in *De musica*: “unless memory helps us when we hear even the shortest syllable . . . we cannot say that we have heard anything.”<sup>40</sup> The same will hold true, Augustine thinks, for other sense modalities as well. For each sense is directed upon complex, extended objects—the parts of which cannot be grasped all at once. Augustine points out, for example, that memory is likewise required for perception of shape: the sense of touch and vision, say, cannot always take in the whole of a three-dimensional object simultaneously (e.g., side to side, front and back). Hence, here too memory receives, retains and integrates visual representations of the shape (or feel) of corporeal bodies.<sup>41</sup> Not only that, but insofar as perceptual awareness requires the integration of sensory input both within a single sense faculty, and *also* across distinct modalities—a point to which Augustine calls attention in book 2 of *De libero arbitrio*—it is natural to suppose that memory plays a role here as well.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> *De musica* 6.21.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *De libero arbitrio* 2.7. In this context, however, he speaks of the relevant faculty not as memory, but only as “a kind of inner sense to which everything is conveyed from the five familiar senses” and which is “neither sight nor hearing nor smell nor taste nor touch, but some other thing that presides over all of them.” Interestingly, Augustine assigns to this faculty the same sort of role he assigns to memory in other contexts, including that of facilitating conscious awareness of sensible objects. For more discussion of inner sense in *De libero arbitrio* and the way it fits within Augustine’s account of perception in other works see Charles Brittain, “Non-Rational Perception in the Stoics and Augustine,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 22 (2002), 288ff.



In general, then, Augustine is both explicit and consistent in defending—on philosophical grounds—the view that perception constitutively involves not merely the activation of the external sensory organs in receiving *species* of external bodies, but also the production, retention, and integration of sensory representations in memory.<sup>43</sup> He is equally explicit, moreover, that without this, perceptual awareness is not possible. Where there is a failure of uptake in memory, there is nothing to structure or inform conscious awareness—in which case, Augustine will say, there is no perception.

This is the reason why it often appears to us that we have not heard people speaking in front of us when we were occupied by some other thought...The sound undoubtedly reaches the ears...but...the impetus of that [sound's] motion is immediately extinguished because of the soul's interest being on something else. If the impetus remained, it would remain in the memory so that we would both find it and perceive that we had heard. (*De musica* 6.21)<sup>44</sup>

What is required for auditory perception, thus, is that sensory representations are held in memory in order that the soul may “find” them there

<sup>43</sup> Because Augustine wants to defend a view according to which perception is efficiently caused by the soul (rather than by external bodies) he is wont to emphasize the soul's active, ongoing role in generating sensory representations from information present in the senses. For example, in *Gen. Litt.* 12.33 he tells us that “although we first see a body which we had not seen before, and from that moment its image begins to be in our spirit, by which we can remember it when it is no longer there in front of us, still it is not the body that makes its own image in the spirit, but the spirit itself which makes it in itself with a wonderful swiftness that is infinitely removed from the sluggishness of the body. Thus, no sooner is the body seen by the eyes than its image is formed without the slightest interval of time in the spirit of the person seeing.” What Augustine's discussion in the *De musica* passage quoted just above seems to suggest, however, is that the mere production of such images does not ensure their reception or retention in memory.

<sup>44</sup> The full text runs as follows: “Thus, unless memory helps us when we hear even the shortest syllable, so that the motion, which was created when the beginning sounded, remains in our soul during that moment of time, when no longer the beginning but the end of the syllable is sounding, we cannot say that we have heard anything. This is the reason why it often appears to us that we have not heard people speaking in front of us when we were occupied by some other thought, and this happens not because the soul does not produce those occurring rhythms at that moment—since the sound undoubtedly reaches the ears, and since the soul cannot be inactive during this reaction of its body, nor can it be moved in a different way than if this reaction did not take place—but because the impetus of that motion is immediately extinguished because of the soul's interest being on something else. If the impetus remained, it would remain in the memory so that we would both find it and perceive that we had heard” (*De musica* 6.21).

and, thus, “perceive that we have heard.” It is in this sense, then, that memory functions as a kind of antecedent principle or source of perceptual awareness. To the extent that memory is needed to inform and structure the soul’s awareness of external, corporeal reality, there is good reason for Augustine’s insisting on memory’s functional priority—sensory content must be received in memory *in order that* we may be conscious of it.<sup>45</sup>

There are, finally, significant theological considerations motivating Augustine’s view about both the priority and necessity of memory’s role in perceptual awareness. As I noted at the outset, on Augustine’s view, occurrent conscious awareness (be it an act of thinking involving non-rational, sensory content, or one involving purely intelligible content) manifests a trinitarian structure. The best way to see Augustine’s commitment to a trinitarian analysis of thought is to note that while he habitually relies on metaphors involving vision or sight to characterize acts of thinking, he also introduces and develops a second metaphor: namely, thought as inner word (*verbum*).<sup>46</sup> It turns out that conscious thinking can be regarded not only as a kind of inner vision or seeing, but also and equally as an inner word or kind of speaking. As Augustine explains:

Thoughts are a kind of utterance of the heart . . . though just because we say thoughts are utterances of the heart does not mean they are not also acts of seeing (*visiones*), arising when they are true from vision of awareness (*de visionibus notitiae*). When these things happen

<sup>45</sup> It is worth noting that the claim that inner representations are involved in structuring perceptual awareness need not entail that such representations are the object of perceptual experience. Thus, I do not mean to be saddling Augustine with the sort of view that O’Daly attributes to him, namely, that, for Augustine, “sense perception is perception of incorporeal images of the objects perceived” (O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind*, 106). It is perfectly compatible with the view I am advancing that the external body—not an inner likeness of it—serves as the object of perceptual awareness. For a defense of the view that external things are objects of perception, see Brittain, “Non-Rational Perception,” Silva, “Augustine on Active Perception,” and Gareth Matthews, “Knowledge and Illumination,” in D. Meconi and E. Stump (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 171–85.

<sup>46</sup> The image of the *verbum* is first introduced in book 9 (at 9.12ff.) but Augustine discusses and develops it further in book 15 (at 15.17–26).

outwardly through the body, speech is one thing, sight another; but when we think inwardly they are both one and the same.

(*De Trin.* 15.18)

While Augustine is often willing to move freely between metaphors of inner seeing and speaking, the image of thought as the soul's *word* (*verbum*) carries important theological resonance, especially in connection with the broader trinitarian aims that guide his project. For, understood as word, conscious thought serves as mind's analogue to the second person of the Trinity—namely, God the Son, the divine Word spoken by God the Father (the first person of the Trinity).<sup>47</sup> Note, however, that in the human mind, it is memory that always functions as the analogue to the first person of the Trinity.<sup>48</sup> Thus, it is memory that must beget—i.e., be the source or principle of—acts of conscious thought. As Augustine tells us:

All these things then that the human soul knows by perceiving them through itself or through the senses of the body or through the testimony of others, it holds onto where they are stacked away in the treasury of memory (*thesauro memoriae condita*). From them is begotten (*gignitur*) a true word when we utter what we know . . . For it is then that the word (*verbum*) is most like the thing known, and most its image because the sight that belongs to thinking (*visio cogitationis*) springs direct from the sight that belongs to knowing (*visione scientiae*) . . . (*De Trin.* 15.22)

It is precisely the fact that the soul's gaze is formed *from memory* that secures the trinitarian image in general, and conscious thought as begotten word in particular. As Augustine says, "our word, the one that has

<sup>47</sup> Here, of course, Augustine is drawing on the Gospel of John (John 1:1) where Jesus is introduced as the Word of God and as the Word made flesh (John 1:14). See *De Trin.* 15.19–20.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, *De Trin.* 15.40: "Certainly I have been trying as best I could to delineate God the Father and God the Son—that is, God the begetter, who in his Word co-eternal with himself somehow or other uttered all that he has substantially, and God this Word of his, who also substantially has neither more nor less than what is in him who begot him as a true and not a false Word—I have been trying to delineate all this, not as it might already be seen face-to-face, but as it might be seen by whatever kind of limited inference from this likeness in a puzzle, which we find in the memory and understanding of our mind. In this likeness I have been attributing to memory all that we know even if we are not thinking about it, and to intelligence in the proper sense a kind of formation of thought."

neither sound nor thought of sound...is at least something like that Word of God which is also God since this one [in us] is born of our knowledge just as that one was born of the Father's."<sup>49</sup>

Here, then we have further—and, in this case, theological—motivation for the priority of memory in perceptual awareness. After all, if, as the foregoing passages suggest, the informing of the *acies animi* in perceptual awareness is itself a kind of inner word, then such awareness (*qua* analogue of God the Son) must have memory (*qua* analogue of God the Father) as its immediate source and principle. Awareness, in other words, must be produced by or “begotten from” memory. Not only that, but where memory serves as the source of conscious awareness, there is the requisite equality and substantial unity between that which begets (*memoria*) and what is begotten (*informed acies*): both are the soul itself.<sup>50</sup> In light of this, it is difficult to see how perceptual awareness could qualify as an image of the Word if it is not formed from memory. And yet it seems quite clear that Augustine means for such awareness to count as an image (or, at least a quasi-image) of the divine *Verbum*.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *De Trin.* 15.24.

<sup>50</sup> This equality and unity is at the very heart of the image of the *verbum*. See, for example, *De Trin.* 15.19: “For when we utter something true, that is when we utter what we know, a word is necessarily born from the knowledge we hold in memory, a word which is absolutely the same kind of thing as the knowledge it was born from.” Indeed, it is for this reason (i.e., failure of substantial unity) that outer vision fails to generate a proper image of the trinity.

<sup>51</sup> I am deeply grateful to Scott MacDonald and Charles Brittain, who generously included me in a series of workshops and seminars they organized around the *De Trinitate* starting in the early 2000s. It is thanks to them that I began thinking about *De Trinitate* as a whole and, later, about these issues in book 11 more specifically. I have learned an enormous amount from both of them over the years. Back in 2012, I gave a very early version of this paper at a SMRP memorial session honoring Gareth Matthews (to whom I am also indebted for much of what I know about Augustine) and, more recently, I presented it at the 2019 Cornell Summer Colloquium in Medieval Philosophy. I’m grateful to audiences on both occasions for their valuable feedback. Finally, thanks go to Therese Scarpelli Cory, Mary SIRRIDGE, Jeff Brower, Brent Brower-Toland, and an anonymous referee for helpful comments on previous drafts of the paper.

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