

Speculum

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Surprisingly, this is the first book-length monograph we have on Augustine's concept of memory. Unfortunately, it is neither complete nor very illuminating.

Hochschild does not try to be comprehensive, but deals with most of the important texts on memory in Augustine's *oeuvre*. After surveying Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus on memory and recollection, she examines Augustine's brief engagements with the classical sources in his early works, then proceeds to his treatment of memory, time, creation and Scripture in the last four books of *Confessions*, and concludes with a look at Augustine's *De Trinitate*, where the triad of memory, understanding and will in the soul furnishes the best image of the divine Trinity.

What Hochschild leaves out, most strikingly, is the explicit defense of Platonic recollection in Augustine's Epistle 7, where he argues that in addition to the memory of things past we have a memory of the mind's vision of eternal things, which do not pass away. This omission is indicative of a larger *Tendenz*. Hochschild repeatedly emphasizes the soul's memory of sensible things because it is evidence of the unity of soul and body, which she takes as a partial reconciliation of the "dualistic Platonic dilemma" of sensible and intelligible. In other words, she emphasizes an obvious and rather unproblematic feature of memory that all schools of philosophy agree on (we remember things we've seen and heard) at the expense of the fascinating and troublesome claims of Platonist philosophy, which are the real center of Augustine's attention because they offer a path to the knowledge of the eternal being of God.

This *Tendenz* is larger than Hochschild's own work. Like many theological readers today, she tries to downplay Augustine's embrace of the spirituality of ancient Platonism, which is grounded in its moderate dualism. This leads to persistently wrongheaded exegesis, because Augustine sees the unity of soul and body as problematic for exactly the opposite reason that Hochschild does: he takes their unity to be obvious (*of course* the human being is composed of body and soul) and sees the distinction between them as needing clarification. For Augustine this is a moral problem, requiring us to purify the soul from its fleshly attachments, its all-too-close unification with bodily things external to it, which is only strengthened by the memory of sensible pleasures. Hence also the incarnation of Christ does not function as a kind of argument against dualism, as Hochschild repeatedly suggests, but rather gives us the perfect example of a man who does not lust after the inferior goods of the body. These are indeed real goods (as the moderate dualism of Platonist philosophy affirms, in contrast to the radical dualism of the Manichean heresy which treats bodily things as evil) but are nonetheless inferior goods, which we should not cling to as if they could make us eternally happy.

Hochschild's programmatic anti-dualism leads her to miss the import of the passages in Augustine's early work where he affirms that all learning is recollection—an affirmation of Platonic doctrine that fits neatly with his early program of education in the liberal arts which, as in Plato's *Republic*, is designed to train the mind to see the divine, intelligible, eternal principle of all being and knowledge. Likewise, in Augustine's famous treatment of memory in *Confessions* 10, she misses the import of the distinction between sensible and intelligible memory, the one retaining images of bodily things, the other containing not merely images but

the *res ipsa*, the eternal truths themselves that are the substance of the liberal arts. The latter, not the former, opens up the possibility of finding God himself in memory. This becomes a crucial feature of the triad of memory, understanding and will in the soul which serves as an image of the Trinity in Augustine's great treatise *De Trinitate*. Throughout his career Augustine was convinced that somehow we can remember God, just as we can love him and seek to understand him.

The most important turning points in the development of Augustine's view of memory have to do with how he detached the memory of intelligible things from the Platonist doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul, which he seriously entertained in his early works but eventually came to reject. Hochschild fails to engage the work of Robert J. O'Connell, which set this development squarely on the agenda of Augustine scholarship. The advantage of pursuing this agenda is that it uncovers rather than denies the tensions in Augustine's Christian Platonism. One starts with Augustine's obvious attraction to Platonist spirituality and then sees how this had to be nuanced and qualified as his theology developed. Hochschild's approach, by contrast, ignores the attraction and treats the qualifications as foundational. The result is an evasive style of exegesis that attempts to avoid or sometimes simply denies the obvious, thus obscuring the real course of Augustine's thinking. Hence I cannot recommend this book as an introduction to Augustine's texts on the concept of memory.