



Diachronically Unified Consciousness in Augustine and Aquinas

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Abstract

Medieval accounts of diachronically unified consciousness have been overlooked by contemporary readers, because medieval thinkers have a unique and unexpected way of setting up the problem. This paper examines the approach to diachronically unified consciousness that is found in Augustine's and Aquinas's treatments of memory. For Augustine, although the mind is "distended" by time, it remains resilient, stretching across disparate moments to unify past, present, and future in a single personal present. Despite deceptively different phrasing, Aquinas develops a remarkably similar view when, in order to accommodate Aristotle's view of memory to Augustine's, he insists that an implicit self-awareness "time-stamps" all intellectual acts. According to their shared approach, diachronic unified consciousness is the result of the curious way in which the mind is both drawn into and transcends the temporal succession of its own acts.

Keywords

unity of consciousness, memory, Augustine, Aquinas, time

The experience of consciousness is both fragmented and yet curiously unified. When I remember my past life, it does not appear as a disconnected sequence of loose perceptions; these memories belong to the same "me" who am now

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asking about them, and I remember myself experiencing them. And in the short term, over the course of a day, my life does not unfold in a series of atomic instants of awareness; instead, I experience each instant as continuously connected to what came before and what will come after. The ability to perform basic tasks like walk up a flight of stairs or type the word “philosophy” assumes this continuity. I am aware, not just of each individual keystroke, but of typing a word, as a single continuous activity involving multiple keystrokes. This continuity, both long-term and short-term, seems connected to personal identity: these are *my experiences* and *my memories*, and they all fit into a larger web of personal experience that belongs to a single subject, me.

This phenomenon, known as “diachronically unified consciousness,” generates a problem: What unifies all these distinct individual experiences into the conscious whole of “my life”? Historically, this problem is typically associated with thinkers such as Descartes, Hume, or Kant,¹ and it remains one of the most intractable problems in the philosophy of mind. But few are aware that diachronically unified consciousness was also a matter of interest for some late antique and medieval thinkers,² including Augustine, Avicenna, Albert the Great, and Aquinas. In fact, medieval accounts of diachronically unified consciousness have generally been ignored. The omission is not surprising, however, because medieval thinkers do not set up diachronically unified consciousness as a distinct problem for inquiry under its own heading. Rather, it surfaces in unexpected places, within treatments of other topics such as memory, self-knowledge, time-consciousness, or the relationship of the soul’s powers to its essence. Even then, it is often addressed only obliquely and is easily overlooked.

In this paper, then, I seek to open up this unexplored area of medieval thought to contemporary inquiry. Broadly speaking, there are at least two different approaches to diachronically unified consciousness among medieval thinkers. One approach, which appears in the Islamic philosopher Avicenna

¹ See for instance Descartes, *Meditation 2*; Hume’s famous claim that “Identity is nothing really belonging to these different perceptions, and uniting them together; but is merely a quality, which we attribute to them, because of the union of their ideas in the imagination, when we reflect upon them” (*Treatise on Human Understanding* I.IV, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch, 2nd ed. [Oxford, 1978], 260); and Kant, *A Critique of Pure Reason*, A103–115, with his critique of Hume at A363–4.

² For just one example, the *Stanford Encyclopedia* article on “Unity of Consciousness” begins with Descartes without mentioning any earlier history; see Andrew Brook and Paul Raymond, “The Unity of Consciousness,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2010 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, URL=<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/consciousness-unity/>.

and some of his Latin followers, grounds diachronic unity in a unique kind of perpetual cognitive actuality, i.e., the mind's self-presence.³ This self-presence—a sort of non-conscious self-cognition that belongs to the mind's very essence—unifies all conscious experiences because it serves as a single constant matrix into which they are set.⁴

The second approach begins from the experience of unity in one's mental life—a unity which it grounds in the atemporality of the mental present—and then seeks to explain how the mind's single mental present is able to accommodate a succession of time-bound acts. (In this respect, the second approach is the reverse of the typical early modern approach, which begins from the disparity of mental acts and seeks to explain how they can be unified.) While this second approach is the rarer approach among medieval thinkers, in my view it is the more promising one. For one thing, it does not require a commitment to the (at least *prima facie*) doubtful notion of a non-conscious self-awareness. Further, in lieu of appealing to the latter notion as an easy principle of unification, thinkers who adopt this second approach were obliged to find creative ways of harmonizing unity and multiplicity in mental acts. The resulting accounts of diachronically unified consciousness are innovative and subtle, and they repay consideration.

³ Note, though, that just because a thinker adheres to the notion of a perpetual non-conscious self-cognition, one should not conclude that he is a follower of the first approach. For instance, Augustine probably posits such a self-cognition, but he takes the second approach in order to explain diachronically unified consciousness.

⁴ Deborah Black highlights some features of Avicenna's thought on mental unification in the course of her article, "Avicenna on Self-Awareness And Knowing that One Knows," in *The Unity of Science in the Arabic Tradition*, ed. S. Rahman, T. Hassan, T. Street (Dordrecht: Springer Science, 2008), 63-87. See also T.-A. Druart, "The Soul and Body Problem: Avicenna and Descartes," in *Arabic Philosophy and the West: Continuity and Interaction*, ed. id. (Washington, D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1998), 33. Avicenna's "Flying Man" thought experiment appears in his *De anima* I.1 and V.7, which can be found in the Latin translation that influenced the medieval West in *Liber de anima seu sextus De naturalibus*, ed. S. Van Riet, 2 vols (Louvain: Peeters, 1972 and 1968); for an English translation from the Arabic, see *The Metaphysics of The Healing: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, trans. Michael E. Marmura (Provo, Utah, 2005). Under Avicenna's influence, the notion of a continuous self-vision as the mental background for all cognitive acts became popular also among some Latin thinkers including William of Auvergne (*De anima* 2.14 and 3.13 [Paris 2.84 and 103-4]), Jean de la Rochelle (*Summa de anima* 1.1 [ed. Bougerol, 51-52]), and Albert the Great (*De homine* [Col. 27/2.421:51-64]; *Sent.* I.3.H.29 [Borgnet 25.130]; *In De anima* III.2.17 [Col. 7/1.203]). A helpful discussion of the impact of the "Flying Man" on the Latin West can be found in Dag Nikolaus Hasse, *Avicenna's De anima in the Latin West: The Formation of a Peripatetic Philosophy of the Soul 1160-1300* (London, 2000), 80-91.

Consequently, in this paper I will focus on this second approach to diachronically unified consciousness as articulated by Augustine and Aquinas, who were its major proponents.⁵ Their accounts of diachronically unified consciousness differ somewhat because Aquinas is seeking to integrate Augustine's insights into the Aristotelian view that the incorporeal mind is wholly atemporal. As a result, he has to revise both Augustine's account of time-consciousness and Aristotle's account of memory. Nevertheless, they share a common insight: namely, that the atemporal mind exists in its own single mental present, which serves to unify its conscious experiences from a single timeless perspective.

The present study is divided into two parts. In the first part, I will discuss how Augustine's discussion of the distended mind in *Confessions* XI suggests an account of diachronically unified consciousness, both short-term and long-term. The second part will examine a parallel account of long-term diachronically unified consciousness that is embedded in Aquinas's theory of intellectual memory, and show how his view both draws on and goes beyond Augustinian and Aristotelian insights.

I. Time, Memory, and the Unity of Consciousness in Augustine

Augustine's account of diachronically unified consciousness arises from his view that the mind's "present" is capable of "distending" in order to hold multiple times in mental existence at once. He seeks to use the "distended mental present" to explain two phenomena: 1) short-term diachronically uni-

⁵ Diachronically unified consciousness has been almost entirely passed over in studies of both Augustine and Aquinas, as in studies of medieval cognition theory generally. Regarding Augustine, an example is Gerard O'Daly's *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley, 1987), which addresses personal identity in Augustine only from the metaphysical perspective of what makes an individual *be* the same individual over time (148-51), and time-consciousness only in terms of time-measurement (152-61). Aquinas's account of diachronically unified consciousness has never been addressed in its own right, although it is occasionally thought to be located in his theory of habitual self-awareness, discussed in *DV* 10.8 (see Gaston Rabeau, *Species, Verbum: L'activité intellectuelle élémentaire selon S. Thomas d'Aquin* [Paris, 1938], 90; John D. McKian, "The Metaphysics of Introspection according to St. Thomas," *The New Scholasticism* 15 [1941], 105; Francisca Tomar Romero, "La memoria como conocimiento y amor de sí," *Revista española de filosofía medieval* 8 [2001], 104; Martín Federico Echevarría, "Memoria e identidad según Santo Tomás de Aquino," *Sapientia* 62 [2002], 110-11; and B. Goehring, "Saint Thomas Aquinas on Self-Knowledge and Self-Awareness," *Cithara* 42 [2003], 3-14). This interpretation, however, rests on a misunderstanding of habitual self-awareness in Aquinas.

fied consciousness, i.e., a unified sense of oneself as the single subject of a short, temporally extended event; and 2) long-term diachronically unified consciousness, i.e., a unified sense of oneself as the single subject across an entire lifetime. Since Augustine's account of long-term diachronically unified consciousness hinges on his account of short-term unification, I will present the latter first. In what follows, I will mainly focus on the detailed account found in *Confessions* XI, while briefly turning to the later *De Trinitate* for a piece of the puzzle that is missing from the *Confessions*.

Short-term Unified Consciousness in Augustine

In *Conf.* XI, Augustine famously states: "It is clear to me that time is nothing else than a distension: but I know not of what it is a distension. It would be a wonder if it were not a distension of the mind itself."⁶ As O'Daly has recently pointed out, Augustine is here not attempting to define time here (as is often thought),⁷ but rather offering a meditation on the phenomenon of time-consciousness.⁸ And in fact, Augustine presents mental distension as the solution to a very specific problem: Our experiences of sensory objects include a sense of temporal duration; we complain that a speech lasted a long time, or explain that in Morse code a dash is three times as long as a dot. But it seems, Augustine says, that no stretch of time actually exists to be measured. Only the present instant exists—but it has no duration, merely marking the boundary between vanished past and not-yet-existing future.⁹ He concludes that

⁶ *Conf.* XI.26 [Loeb 27.268]. All translations of Augustine are my own, from the Latin text in the Loeb Classical Library, vols 26-27 (Cambridge, Mass., 1912): "Inde mihi visum est nihil esse aliud tempus quam distentionem: sed cuius rei, nescio, et mirum, si non ipsius animi."

⁷ For time in Augustine as a subjective mental phenomenon, see e.g., Bertrand Russell, *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* (New York, 1948), 212; for the view that he holds two theories of time, one subjective and one objective, see Simo Knuuttila, "Time and Creation in Augustine," in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge, 2001), 109-113; John M. Rist, *Augustine* (Cambridge, 1994), 79-85; James McEvoy, "St. Augustine's Account of Time and Wittgenstein's Criticism," *Review of Metaphysics* 38 (1984), 547-77. Roland Teske has argued for a well-known variant on the latter view, i.e., that Augustine posits a world-soul whose subjective measurement of time constitutes objective, common time (*Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine* [Milwaukee, 1996], 55).

⁸ O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, 152-61. I would go further to add that in *Conf.* XI Augustine's concern with time-consciousness is in service of a broader concern to elucidate Divine eternity, but that is an issue to be addressed in another paper.

⁹ See *Conf.* XI.20 [Loeb 27.252]: "Quod autem nunc liquet et claret, nec futura sunt nec praeterita"; and 21 [254]: "Quocirca, ut dicebam, praetereuntia metimur tempora; et si quis mihi dicat: 'Unde scis?' respondeam: scio, quia metimur, nec metiri quae non sunt possumus,

time-measurement can only be explained if distinct moments exist all together in the “mental present”:

Perhaps it could properly be said: There are three times, the present of things past (*praesens de praeteriis*), the present of things present (*praesens de praesentibus*), the present of future things (*praesens de futuribus*). For these three times exist in the soul, and I do not see them elsewhere: the present memory of things past, the present vision (*contuitus*) of things present, and the present expectation of future things.¹⁰

Here, mental “presence” has to do with attention. In *Conf.* X, Augustine had surrounded mental attention with spatial imagery: Images of absent things are “buried” in the depths of memory, from which they later rush forth “like cavalry” into the arena of mental attention.¹¹ Moving from the spatial to the temporal in *Conf.* XI, however, Augustine cleverly begins to play on the temporal connotations of the term “present” (*praesens*).¹² Besides the spatial con-

et non sunt praeterita vel futura. Praesens vero tempus quomodo metimur, quando non habet spatium? Metitur ergo, cum praeterit, cum autem praeterierit, non metitur; quid enim metiatur, non erit.”

¹⁰ *Conf.* XI.20 [Loeb 27.252]: “Sed fortasse proprie diceretur: tempora sunt tria, praesens de praeteritis, praesens de praesentibus, praesens de futuris. Sunt enim haec in anima tria quaedam, et alibi ea non video: praesens de praeteritis memoria, praesens de praesentibus contuitus, praesens de futuris expectatio.”

¹¹ See for instance *Conf.* X.8.12 [Loeb 27.94]: “[Q]uaedam statim prodeunt, quaedam requiruntur diutius et tamquam de abstrusioribus quibusdam receptaculis eruuntur, quaedam catervatim se prouunt et, dum aliud petitur et quaeritur, prosiliunt in medium quasi dicentia, ‘ne forte nos sumus?’ Et abigo ea manu cordis a facie recordationis meae, donec enubiletur quod volo atque in conspectum prodeat ex abditis”; *Conf.* X.8.14 [Loeb 27.98]: “. . . haec omnia rursus quasi praesentia meditor. . . ‘O si esset hoc aut illud!’ ‘Avertat Deus hoc aut illud!’: dico apud me ista, et cum dico, praesto sunt imagines omnium quae dico ex eodem thesauro memoriae, nec omnino aliquid eorum dicerem, si defuissent.” With this connotation of occurrent manifestation, the terms *praesentia* or *praesto esse* in *Conf.* X thus line up aptly with Augustine’s metaphors for recollection as a re-tasting of an experience (X.14.22), or a parading of images before the mind’s eye (X.8.12); see X.5.7, X.6.9, X.8.13–14, X.15.23–16.25. On occasion, however, Augustine uses *praesentia* or *praesto esse* to refer to the status of objects stored in memory, as opposed to objects of occurrent thoughts; see for instance X.8.14, X.17.26, X.31.43.

¹² *Conf.* XI.18.24 [Loeb 27.248] provides a particularly good example of the temporal description: “Quoquo modo se itaque habeat arcana praesensio futurorum, uideri nisi quod est non potest. Quod autem iam est, non futurum sed praesens est. Cum ergo uideri dicuntur futura, non ipsa quae nondum sunt, id est quae futura sunt, sed eorum causae uel signa forsitan uidentur, quae iam sunt. Ideo non futura sed praesentia sunt iam uidentibus, ex quibus futura praedicantur animo concepta. Quae rursus conceptiones iam sunt, et eas praesentes apud se intuentur qui illa praedicunt.”

notation of placement in front of the mind's eye, "presence" now takes on the temporal connotation of *existence right now*—the mental existence that something acquires as the object of attention.¹³

Now for Augustine, the reason that mental attention can hold past, present and future together in its own "present" is that its attention is distendable, stretching to accommodate the passage of time. For instance, the sung syllables of the hymn "*Deus creator omnium*," exist separately in the extramental world, "De-" giving way to "-us," each existing in a durationless instant between future and past. But the listener can measure the relative lengths of the syllables against each other because they *coexist in her perceiving mind*, held together in the mental present of her attention "distended" over the entire hymn:

It is not the syllables that I measure, but something in my memory which remains there fixed. In you, my soul, I measure my times. . . . The impression which things make upon you as they pass remains when they have passed by. That present affection is what I am measuring, not those things that have passed by, causing it. I measure that when I measure times.¹⁴

The succession of sounds leaves a lingering comet trail in the mind, as it were, allowing the hymn to exist mentally as an extended perceptual whole.¹⁵

Thus we can now see why Augustine refers to the mind as "distended" by time (*distentio*) rather than "fragmented" or "disintegrated." It is not broken apart by the succession of temporally-bound experiences flowing out of past nonexistence into future nonexistence; rather, it stabilizes them in its own extended present attention. The unification of disparate syllables into a single consciousness of a single hymn, for Augustine, occurs because mental attention "distends" to hold in existence the moments that are stretching it,¹⁶ letting its own "now" be drawn into their duration. The distendability of mental

¹³ On the mutual interchange whereby the object shares something of itself with mind, and mind shares something of itself with the object, see note 24 below.

¹⁴ *Conf.* XI.27 [Loeb 27.272-74]: "Non ergo ipsas, quae iam non sunt, sed aliquid in memoria mea metior, quod infixum manet. In te, anime meus, tempora mea metior. . . . Affectionem, quam res praetererunt in te faciunt, et cum illae praeterierint, manet, ipsam metior praesentem, non ea quae praeterierunt, ut fieret; ipsam metior, cum tempora metior."

¹⁵ This notion resonates with certain aspects of Husserl's protention and retention in the "living present"; see Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*, trans. J. Churchill, (Bloomington, Ind., 1964); and for discussion, Robert Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations* (Evanston, Ill., 1974), ch. 6.

¹⁶ Compare *Conf. X's* discussion of the mind as a unifying power that "collects" the parts of a life into the storehouses of memory.

attention allows us to experience our own unfolding actions as unified wholes, so that we are more properly said to be “hearing the psalm” rather than “registering note 1, registering note 2, etc.”¹⁷

It is important to be clear that for Augustine, this mental distension is not a static grasp of a temporal continuum in a single glance (as in the theological model of God seeing the temporal continuum in a single glance, as a hiker sees the whole road from a great height).¹⁸ Rather, the dynamic *feeling* of elapsing time is central to Augustine’s concept of distension.¹⁹ Thus a better model might be something like the following: Suppose a blob of malleable rubber pinned to a board is being impressed by a stamp that imprints its image by gradually stretching the rubber out in one direction. The longer the stamp is pressed into the rubber, the more extensive the image becomes, but the more tension it will be under. Now if this rubber is actually a mysterious living compound that feels whatever happens to it, over the course of a two-second imprinting it would *feel* itself being gradually, dynamically imprinted, as an increase of the forces of tension within itself. For Augustine, the mind similarly grasps the whole of the hymn, not in a single instantaneous glance, but in a process in which it feels the syllables succeeding each other one at a time within a single span of mental attention. This internal feeling is simply the

¹⁷ Teske notes that temporal distension is for Augustine what makes it possible to understand language (*Paradoxes of Time*, 35). See also Moreau, “Mémoire et durée,” 103, for an argument that mental distension is responsible for our ability to perceive a sensory manifold as an individual. In order to “view a sculpture,” perhaps several minutes are required in order to walk around and around it, examining it from all sides and noticing more and more details—during which time one’s act of attending to the statue must be extended. The same happens even in very fleeting glimpses of an object.

¹⁸ See Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* V, written approximately 150 years later; and Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* Ia.14.13, ad 3. In the *Confessions* Augustine uses a static model of time-consciousness in discussing Divine eternity; the eternal mind of God fully transcends the distance between past, present, and future, holding all moments together in one *durationless* mental present “without any variation in awareness,” the un-distended Divine attention (see for instance *Conf.* XI.31 [Loeb 27.282]): “Longe tu, longe mirabilis longeque secretius. Neque enim sicut nota cantatatis notumve canticum audientis expectatione vocum futurarum et memoria praeteritarum variatur affectus sensusque distendi, ita tibi aliquid accidit incommutabiliter aeterno, hoc est vere aeterno creatori mentium. Sicut ergo nosti in principio caelum et terram sine varietate notitiae tuae, ita fecisti in principio caelum et terram sine distinctione actionis tuae”). Eternity, then, is not for Augustine a sort of hyperduration or timeless duration, as some scholars have suggested; see for instance Virginia Burrus, Mark D. Jordan, and Karmen Mackendrick, *Seducing Augustine: Bodies, Desires, Confessions* (New York, 2010), 112–13; and Kirwan, *Augustine*, 169.

¹⁹ But see note 29 below for a more mature development in *De Trin.*

consciousness of duration that is essential to our experience of time-bound extramental events.

In the *Confessions*, Augustine does not clearly explain *why* mental attention is not just fixed to the currently sounding syllable, but is able to spread across multiple syllables to unify the hymn mentally as a whole. But we can glean an answer from *De Trinitate*, completed approximately twenty years later, in which mental unification emerges more clearly as the corollary of incorporeality. By this point, Augustine has developed a more sophisticated concept of incorporeality. And because of the text's Trinitarian context (i.e., how can there be three Persons in one God?), he is especially interested in the differences in the interplay of unity and multiplicity in the part-whole relationships of corporeal vs. incorporeal beings.

A corporeal whole is divisible into parts that are spread out three-dimensionally, so that each part blocks off for itself a mutually exclusive portion of the whole. But this sort of exclusive division does not characterize the relationship among distinct powers and acts in an incorporeal whole. For instance, the powers of memory, intellect, and will are each equal to the substance of the mind, and each wholly grasps the others (the circumincession of the powers).²⁰ Again, the mind can wholly reflect on itself, the whole grasping the whole—whereas in corporeal beings, there is no true reflexivity, because it is only possible for one part to touch or cognize a different part.²¹

Through these reflections, Augustine positions incorporeality as the property that allows the mind to transcend the restrictions governing the part-whole relationships of corporeal entities. Unfortunately, he does not here trace any implications for the mind's unification of temporally extended events, a phenomenon in which he seems to have little interest in *De Trinitate*. But we can glean some helpful insights from his treatment of a different (though related) case in which unity and multiplicity are at work in mental acts: namely, the judgment of changing sense-impressions against the unchanging

²⁰ See the famous text on this point in *De Trin.* X.11.18. [CCSL 50.330-31]: “Haec igitur tria, memoria, intelligentia, uoluntas, quoniam non sunt tres uitae sed una uita, nec tres mentes sed una mens, consequenter utique nec tres substantiae sunt sed *una substantia*. . . et quidquid aliud ad se ipsa singula dicuntur etiam simul, non pluraliter sed singulariter dicuntur. Eo uero tria quo ad se inuicem referuntur. Quae si aequalia non essent non solum singula singulis sed etiam omnibus singula, non utique se inuicem caperent. Neque enim tantum a singulis singula, uerum etiam a singulis omnia capiuntur. . . Quapropter quando inuicem a singulis et tota et omnia capiuntur, aequalia sunt tota singula totis singulis et tota singula simul omnibus totis, et *haec tria unum*, una uita, una mens, una essentia.”

²¹ See *De Trin.* X.3.5; X.4.6; and X.9.12.

standard of eternal essences. In treating judgment, Augustine repeatedly emphasizes that even when the mind becomes embroiled with images of corporeal things, it does not become subject to the laws governing corporeal parts and wholes. He describes a sort of exchange that occurs when these images are received into the “better nature” of the mind. The images take on the mind’s incorporeal characteristics to a certain extent;²² conversely, the outer reaches of the mind become entangled in corporeality.²³ Yet at the same time, the mind “preserves something by which it judges freely of the species of those images, and this is more properly the mind, namely the rational intelligence that is preserved so that it might judge.”²⁴ The mind can thus accommodate changing, imperfect images without being engulfed by their changeability. Its incorporeality not only gives some stability to these images in themselves, but provides a vantage point from which to judge them according to the unchanging standard that it sees within itself.²⁵

Extrapolating on this reasoning, we could argue that for Augustine, the mind’s incorporeality is likewise the source of its ability to accommodate past, present, and future heard syllables in a single present act of attention. Because it is not bound by time, it does not *itself* become past, present and future as it pulls successively-existing syllables together into the distended experience of a single hymn. Mental attention always maintains its present character, even while unifying multiple temporal events. Oblique support for this interpreta-

²² *De Trin.* IX.11.16 [CCSL 50.307]: “[N]on enim omnino ipsa corpora in animo sunt cum ea cogitamus sed eorum similitudines, itaque cum eas pro illis approbamus erramus; error est namque pro alio alterius approbatio; melior est tamen imaginatio corporis in animo quam illa species corporis in quantum haec in meliore natura est, id est in substantia igitali sicuti est animus.”

²³ *De Trin.* X.8.11 [CCSL 50.325]: “Cum ergo sit mens interior, quodam modo exit a semetipsa cum in haec quasi uestigia multarum intentionum exierit amoris affectum. Quae uestigia tamquam imprimuntur memoriae quando haec quae foris sunt corporalia sentiuntur ut etiam cum absunt ista, praesto sint tamen imagines eorum cogitantibus”; note that Augustine focuses the blame for the mind’s entanglement with corporeality on the desire for images, rather than strictly on the reception of images themselves (see also X.5.7).

²⁴ *De Trin.* X.5.7. [CCSL 50.321]: “Et quia illa corpora sunt quae foris per sensus carnis adamauit eorumque diuturna quadam familiaritate implicata est, nec secum potest introrsus tamquam in regionem incorporeae naturae ipsa corpora inferre, imagines eorum conuoluit et rapit factas in semetipsa de semetipsa. Dat enim eis formandis quiddam substantiae suae; seruat autem aliquid quo libere de specie talium imaginum iudicet, et hoc est magis mens, id est rationalis intelligentia quae seruatur ut iudicet. Nam illas animae partes quae corporum similitudinibus informantur etiam cum bestiis nos communes habere sentimus.”

²⁵ On the mind’s ability to judge the corporeal and changing in terms of the incorporeal and unchanging, see for instance *De Trin.* IX.6.9–11 and X.7.10–8.11.

tion appears in the interesting *De Trin* XII.14.23, where Augustine refers to the experience of hearing music in order to emphasize that the mind remains free from the constraints not only of space but also of time.²⁶ The incorporeal mind accesses not only “intelligible and incorporeal reasons (*rationes*) fixed in place without localized space” for spatially-expended objects like a cube, but also “intelligibles of motions passing through times, standing firm without temporal transition.” Although we are constantly using these eternal intelligibles to judge imperfect objects and temporally-unfolding experiences, the mind has difficulty fixing its variable attention directly on these intelligibles in themselves; they remain fixed instead in its memory. Augustine cites the example of music:

If one comprehends the multitude (*numerositas*) of some artificial and musical sound passing through the delays of time, standing timeless in some high and secret silence, then he can think about (*cogitare*) that song at least as long as it can be heard. But if the fleeting gaze of the mind snatches what it grasped [from the song] and reposes it in memory as though swallowing it into his stomach, it will be able to ponder it in some way by recalling it.²⁷

The mind straddles two worlds.²⁸ Because it engages with the temporal, it experiences that which “passes through the delays of time.” But because of its incorporeality, whereby it communes with the eternal, it experiences temporal events in a timeless way, judging them against the standard of an eternal intelligible (perhaps that of number).²⁹ In this way, the mind holds temporal multiplicity in a single unified perspective.

²⁶ Augustine also touches on the mind’s freedom from temporal constraints in connection with the mind’s ability to unite its attention to any image (not just the image of a present object) by an act of will; see *De Trin.* XII.25.

²⁷ *De Trin.* XII.14.23 [CCSL 50.376-77]: “Non autem solum rerum sensibilium in locis positarum sine spatiis localibus manent intellegibiles incorporalesque rationes, uerum etiam motionum in temporibus transeuntium sine temporalis transitu stant etiam ipsae utique intellegibiles, non sensibiles. Ad quas mentis acie peruenire paucorum est, . . . non in eis manet ipse peruentor, sed ueluti acies ipsa reuerberata repellitur et fit rei non transitoriae transitoria cogitatio. . . . Aut si alicuius artificiosi et musici soni per moras temporis transeuntis numerositas comprehendatur sine tempore stans in quodam secreto altoque silentio, tamdiu saltem cogitari potest quamdiu potest ille cantus audiri; tamen quod inde rapuerit etsi transiens mentis aspectus et quasi glutens in uentre ita in memoria reposuerit, poterit recordando quodam modo ruminare et in disciplinam quod sic didicerit traicere.”

²⁸ See especially *De Trin.* IX.6.9-11.

²⁹ I should note, however, that on this point Augustine’s thought seems to have matured since *Conf.* XI. Here in *De Trin.*, Augustine still holds that the mind accommodates temporal flux in its lower reaches. But he has now specified that there is a part of the mind that is “preserved”

Long-term Unified Diachronically Unified Consciousness

Augustine's account of long-term diachronically unified consciousness arises from this view of the "elastic" mind's ability to hold in existence the flow of evanescent time. But so far we have seen Augustine describing only a short-term distension such as the experience of an unfolding hymn in a single distended attention span. In order to account for diachronically unified consciousness, he must also explain how multiple short-term unified experiences (listening to the same hymn this year, last year, and the previous year) can be grasped as part of a single life history of a single self. Augustine's solution rests on three claims: 1) The mind undergoes a single lifelong distension; 2) Mental attention is too weak to span this entire distension, so that the mind can only keep short stretches unified in its present "now"; 3) By recollection, past experiences are brought back into the light of present attention. By reviewing each of these, we can reconstruct Augustine's account of diachronically unified consciousness.

First, toward the end of *Conf. XI*, Augustine argues that the mind is affected by a *single continuous distension that stretches over an entire lifetime*.³⁰ While we tend to group our actions psychologically as "listening to the first hymn," "listening to the second hymn," "walking home," etc., these are merely parts selected from the continuous flow of a single life, just as the individual syllables of a hymn are parts of the continuous flow of the whole hymn:

I am about to proclaim a hymn that I know: before I begin, my expectation is stretched (*tenditur*) into the whole, but when I have begun, my memory too is stretched by however much I have gathered from [my expectation]. And the life of this action of mine is

from this flux in order to be able to judge it from a timeless perspective that more closely approximates the static "mental present" attributed to the Divine mind in *Conf. XI*. The reason is that in *De Trin.*, Augustine carefully distinguishes different grades of freedom from corporeality within the mind, relegating the reception of corporeal images to the lowest part of the mind, which we share with animals (see X.5.7, where Augustine describes the "[parts of the mind] that we have in common with animals . . . which are informed by the likenesses of bodies"; also note V.1.2, where he includes "distension of bulk" in the list of properties that must be denied of the mind, though he clearly has spatial rather than temporal distension in mind). This piece of the puzzle seems to be absent from *Conf. XI*, but it is not necessarily inconsistent with the picture painted in *Conf. XI*, and it is arguably required for a complete account of the mental unification of a temporally extended experience.

³⁰ Note that for Augustine, the mind is never truly inactive, even in sleep, and thus is continually undergoing activities of which it is not, and cannot, be conscious; see *De Trin.* 14.8.9 [CCSL 50A.432]: "Sed quoniam mentem semper sui meminisse semperque se ipsam intellegere et amare, quamuis non semper se cogitare discretam ab eis quae non sunt quod ipsa est."

distended into memory because I have proclaimed it, and into expectation because I am about to do so: but my attention is present at hand (*praesens adest attentio mea*), transporting what was future so that it becomes past. . . . What takes place in the whole hymn takes place in each single part, and in every single syllable; and the same happens in a longer action of which the hymn is perhaps a part—and in the whole life of a man, whose parts are all the man's actions, and in the whole age of the sons of men, whose parts are all the lives of men.³¹

Augustine summarizes dramatically: "Behold, my life is a distension!"³² Time flows remorselessly on into my mind, making a single lifelong impression.

Second, the unity of this single distension does not translate into a psychological unity, because the weak "light" of human attention can distend only so far. Outside its bounds, the continually distending human mind disappears from its own sight, into the dark "caverns" of memory, i.e., the mental past.³³

³¹ *Conf.* XI.28 [Loeb 27.276-78]: "Dicturus sum canticum, quod novi: antequam incipiam, in totum expectatio mea tenditur, cum autem coepero, quantum ex illa in praeteritum decerpsero, tenditur et memoria mea, atque distenditur vita huius actionis meae, in memoriam propter quod dixi, et in expectationem propter quod dicturus sum: praesens tamen adest attentio mea, per quam traicitur quod erat futurum, ut fiat praeteritum. . . . Et quod in toto cantico, hoc in singulis particulis eius, fit atque in singulis syllabis eius, hoc in actione longiore, cuius forte particula est illud canticum, hoc in tota vita hominis, cuius partes sunt omnes actiones hominis, hoc in toto saeculo filiorum hominum, cuius partes sunt omnes virtutes hominum." Given the title of the *Confessions*, this implicit comparison between a distended human life and a hymn is significant.

³² *Conf.* XI.29 [Loeb 27.278]: "Ecce distentio est vita mea."

³³ In *Conf.* X, in fact, Augustine had described the process of recollection by comparison to the parable of the "woman with a light" sweeping her house looking for the lost coin (*Conf.* X.18; cf. Luke 15:8). The implication is that if our mental attention were strong enough to stretch over the entirety of a lifetime, we would not have to struggle to dredge up things out of the dark recesses of memory and bring them back into the light of our mental attention. Conversely, if the mind only contained what is immediately present to mental attention, we would never be able to strive to recollect anything: "Nec invenisse nos dicimus quod perierat, si non agnoscimus, nec agnoscere possumus, si non meminimus: sed hoc perierat quidem oculis, memoria tenebatur." Note too in *Conf.* XI.31 [Loeb 27.282], the contrast that Augustine draws between the human mind and a hyperdistended cosmic mind, whose powerful attention could hold all historical moments together in a single mental present that stretches with the whole of history: "Certe si est tam grandi scientia et praescientia pollens animus, cui cuncta praeterita et futura ita nota sint, sicut mihi unum canticum notissimum, nimium mirabilis est animus iste. . . ." Teske takes this text to refer to a real mind, i.e., the world-soul; see his *Paradoxes of Time*, 55; and "The World-Soul and Time in St. Augustine," *Augustinian Studies* 14 (1983), 75-92. For critique of this interpretation, see Rist, *Augustine*, 83, n. 75. Be that as it may, Augustine's description of the hyperdistended cosmic mind (regardless of its existence) serves to highlight the possible disparity between the breadth of a mind's lifelong distension and the breadth of its *attention*, thus underscoring the human mind's inability to hold the entirety of its life in its present attention.

Augustine holds, then, that the limitations of human attention cause a *psychological split* in a lifelong distension that is *actually one*.

Consequently, the third foundational piece of Augustine's account of diachronically unified consciousness is found in his view of recollection. Psychological unity is achieved when the mind "recollects" (*recolere, recolligere*) the past, bringing it back into the "now" of the mental present.³⁴ Now in *Conf. X*, he had illustrated this point via colorful metaphors. The mind "gathers up again" the things it had previously experienced, "so that they may be known, as though collected from a dispersion."³⁵ Recollection is a faint re-tasting of previous experiences, like a cow chewing her cud.³⁶ And just like "the woman [in the parable] who lost a coin and sought it with a light," we search within ourselves for the image of a thing that has been "lost to the eyes," "until it returns again to our sight. And when it is found, it is cognized again by the interior image."³⁷

³⁴ Augustine makes precisely this point in his prayer for deliverance from temporal distension in *Conf. XI.29*. The distension he fears is not just any distension, but one that allows the chaos of historical events to fragment mental attention. To repair the structural weaknesses that allow temporal fracturing, Augustine proposes recollecting one's scattered mental attention by stretching it forward in expectation of future union with God. A fragmentary collection of lived moments is organized and given meaning only by recognizing the orderly work of divine providence in the historical events of a life—which is precisely the project of the *Confessions* as a whole (see especially *Conf. XI.1-2*). See for instance at the beginning of *Conf. XI* Augustine's repeated references to his autobiography of Books 1-IX as an orderly arrangement of temporal events in the sight of God; *Conf. XI.1* [Loeb 27.208]: "Cur ergo tibi tot rerum narrationes digero?" and 2 [Loeb 27.210]: "Et si sufficio haec enuntiare ex ordine, caro mihi valent stillae temporum." Distension, then, need not be *in itself* an evil that traps and fragments the mind, as most have assumed (see for instance Joseph Cavadini, "Time and the Ascent in *Confessions XI*," in *Augustine: Presbyter factus sum*, ed. Joseph T. Lienhard, Earl C. Muller, and Roland J. Teske [New York, 1993], 176; Robert J. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of Soul* [Cambridge, Mass., 1969], 142; Troup, *Temporality, Eternity, and Wisdom*, 102; but an exception is Maria Bettetini, "Measuring in Accordance with *dimensiones certae*: Augustine of Hippo and the Question of Time," in *The Medieval Concept of Time: The Scholastic Debate and its Reception in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Pasquale Porro [Leiden: Brill, 2001], 44). Rather, for Augustine, the fault lies with the limitations of mental attention, which is too easily tempted into distraction by time.

³⁵ *Conf. X.11* [Loeb 27.106]: "... ut denuo velut nova excogitanda sint indidem iterum—neque enim est alia regio eorum—et cogenda rursus, ut sciri possint, id est velut ex quadam dispersione colligenda, unde dictum est cogitare."

³⁶ *Conf. X.14* [Loeb 27.112]: "Forte ergo sicut de ventre cibus ruminando, sic ista de memoria recordando proferuntur."

³⁷ *Conf. X.18* [Loeb 27.124]: "Perdiderat enim mulier drachmam et quaesivit eam cum lucerna, et nisis memor eius esset, non inveniret eam.... Verum tamen si forte aliquid ab oculis perit,

In *Conf.* XI, however, the restoration of “lost” memories into the “light” of the mental present is reformulated in a more technical way, in terms of the mind’s three “presents”: the “present of past things, the present of present things, the present of the future things.”³⁸ The mind has just one present-tense act of attention, which can illuminate not only ongoing extramental events (the presence of the present), but past experiences stored in memory (the presence of the past, whether the recent past or the far distant past), and which can draw the present and the past together in a single act of attention, over the short term or over the long term. Recollecting one’s past experiences is thus not like looking at pictures in a picture album and recognizing, “That was me.” Instead, it is a re-living of that experience *in the mental present, as a past experience*: the present of past things (we will see this paradigm reappear in Aquinas). Recollection brings the past to life again, re-illuminating it in the mental present.

For Augustine, then, our experiences are *actually unified* in the long term as parts of a single distended life-experience. And they can be *psychologically unified* because there is only one mental “now” (the light of present attention), into which present experiences like “listening to the psalm” flow and past memories like “stealing the pears” are recalled. When one remembers, “I stole pears once,” the mind is drawing a past part of its distended life back into the light of its own present attention. While Augustine does not explain why a memory is recalled as mine, I suspect that the explanation lies in his view that images “stretch out” the distendable mind as it receives them. In feeling itself being distended by unfolding impressions, the mind is conscious of being impressed by the sound of the hymn unfolding across time. This applies not only to ongoing extramental events, but also to previously experienced ones. The feeling of the ongoing hymn unfolding in *my mental present* is, for Augustine, what allows me to grasp this experience as *mine*. And the feeling of a memory like “stealing the pears” re-unfolding in my mental present is likewise what allows me to re-experience it more faintly as “mine.” In short, whatever is experienced or recalled into that light is recalled *to a single present-tense self* whose presence is the “present of things past, the present of present things, and the present of future things.”

non a memoria, veluti corpus quodlibet visibile, tenetur intus imago eius et quaeritur, donec reddatur aspectui.” Cf. note 33 above.

³⁸⁾ See note 9 above.

It is important to distinguish this view from what one might call an “Identity of Selves” account of diachronically unified consciousness, according to which the mind recalls a past self, the past agent of remembered acts, and associates or identifies it with its present self. For Augustine, there is not “a past I” who stole the pears and “a present I” writing the *Confessions*, and “a future I,” bishop of Hippo. Instead, there is always just one “I” existing in its own mental present, its attentive “now” that can be extended over the short space of an ongoing event, or sent to revivify past events, reilluminating them in the mental present.

II. Aquinas on Diachronically Unified Consciousness

Even with the clarifications provided by *De Trin.*, Augustine’s account of diachronically unified consciousness leaves the line between the corporeal and the incorporeal blurry: How can a mind that is timeless and incorporeal at its core be entangled by images and distended by temporal experiences? Characteristically, Augustine relishes the paradoxes while leaving ambiguous how they should be resolved. In contrast, Thomas Aquinas develops a more structured account of mental unification. This account relies on Aristotelian psychology’s sharp distinction between the corporeal power of imagination, which receives the image of a particular with its sensible and temporal determinations, and the incorporeal power of intellect, which receives universals abstracted from those images. It is important to note that Aquinas does not address diachronically unified consciousness as a problem in its own right. Rather, we must extract his thoughts on this issue from his treatment of a larger problem related to the presence of temporality and multiplicity in human cognitive acts—a problem that he faces in attempting to incorporate the Augustinian view of memory into the framework of Aristotelian psychology.

For Aquinas, human time-cognition falls into two broad categories, one that incorporates a sense of duration and one that does not: 1) Via the external and internal senses, I experience temporal duration and judge the length of time elapsed; 2) Via the intellect, I experience the sequential ordering of my acts of thinking. Thus Aquinas does not provide a single account to cover both short-term and long-term unification, as Augustine does; rather, these two phenomena are apportioned to distinct cognitive powers and explained differently. *Short-term diachronic unification* of a temporally-extended impression like listening to a hymn or typing a word is attributable solely to the complex

of external and internal senses. Because these senses operate by corporeal organs, they are capable of experiencing and judging temporal duration. *Long-term diachronically unified consciousness*, or the sense of continuity in one's ownership of one's mental life, however, is a function of the intellect.³⁹

While Aquinas's thoughts on short-term unification are fascinating, in the interests of space I will set them aside here. In the remaining space, I want to focus on teasing out how exactly Aquinas thinks the intellect is able to achieve long-term unification of consciousness as the highest stage of unification in the human mental life. I contend that a working account of long-term diachronically unified consciousness can be reconstructed from Aquinas's theory of intellectual memory, in the context of his theory of self-knowledge. In fact, the phenomenon of diachronically unified consciousness is integral to Aquinas's theory of intellectual memory, which is built on the premise that stored intelligibles can be grasped as having been previously known *by me*, from the same first-person perspective across time.

As we will see, although Aquinas distinguishes the experience of duration sharply from the intellectual sense of a unified mental life, his account is otherwise similar to Augustine's in a number of respects. For both thinkers, recollection, attention, and self-awareness play crucial roles in explaining how our consciousness is unified under a single first-person viewpoint. Most significantly, Aquinas conceives of the principle of mental unity along much the same lines as Augustine: namely, the mind exists in a single time-transcending present that encompasses a multitude of past and present experiences while remaining free from the constraints of temporality.

³⁹) There may be something like a long-term unification of consciousness in imaginative memory, since Aquinas holds that the latter is able to judge the amount of time that has elapsed between repeated cognitions (see *In De mem* 1 [Leon. 45/2.106:185-95]). But properly speaking, long-term unification must include not just an awareness of a time lapse, but also a grasp of *oneself as a single subject* across time, and as far as I can tell, the latter function is not present in imaginative memory. So I focus here only on the kind of long-term unification accomplished in the intellect.

*Intellectual Memory in Aquinas*⁴⁰

Aquinas's theory of intellectual memory develops from an ambiguity in Aristotle. In *De memoria* 2, Aristotle insists that memory relies on the storage of a temporally extended image, and that consequently memory belongs properly to the physical inner senses, not to the intellect.⁴¹ On these grounds, the Islamic philosopher Avicenna concludes that the species of, say, dogness remains in the intellect only as long as I am actually thinking about dogness,⁴²

⁴⁰ The main texts on intellectual memory in Aquinas are *In Sent.* I.3.4.1, *DV* 10.2-3, *ST* Ia.79.6-7, and *In De mem.* Note that in the texts from *DV*, *ST*, and *In De mem.*, memory is not a separate power in its own right; rather, "intellectual memory" refers to the intellect itself considered under its retentive aspect. The Latin texts of Aquinas are taken from the Leonine edition, and occasionally from the Marietti edition for works that have not yet been edited by the Leonine Commission. All English translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

Recent studies of Aquinas's theory of cognition have tended to focus more on his theory of imaginative memory than of intellectual memory; see for instance Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (New York, 2003), ch. 8; Robert Pasnau's *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa theologiae Ia 75-89* (Cambridge, 2002), ch. 9; Robert Pasnau and Christopher Shields, *The Philosophy of Aquinas* (Boulder, Col., 2004), 179. In fact, there has been surprisingly little secondary literature on Aquinas's theory of intellectual memory. One might note George P. Klubertanz, *The Discursive Power: Sources and Doctrine of the Vis Cogitativa according to St. Thomas Aquinas* (Carthagen, Oh., 1952), 160-62; J. Castonguay, *Psychologie de la mémoire: sources et doctrine de la memoria chez saint Thomas d'Aquin*, 1st ed. (Montreal, 1963); Marcos F. Manzanedo, *La imaginación y la memoria según santo Tomás* (Rome, 1978), 275-382; Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity* (which discusses Aquinas's development of Augustine's account of memory); Héctor Hernando Salinas, "El problema de la memoria intelectual en Tomás de Aquino," *Universitas Philosophica* 42 (2004), 87-115; Patricia Schell, "La doctrina tomista de la memoria espiritual: un punto de equilibrio ante las anomalías contemporáneas," *Sapientia* 59 (2004), 49-75; and Kevin White, notes to *Commentaries on Aristotle's "On Sense and What is Sensed" and "On Memory and Recollection,"* trans. Kevin White and Edward M. Macierowski (Washington, D.C., 2005). For discussion of the relation between memory and personal identity, see Martín Federico Echavarría, "Memoria e identidad según Santo Tomás de Aquino," *Sapientia* 62 (2002), 91-112.

⁴¹ *De mem.* 2, 450a9-14. According to the Latin translation that Aquinas was using, as edited by R.-A. Gauthier in the Leonine edition of Aquinas's commentary, this text reads: "Magnitudinem autem et motum cognoscere necesse quo et tempus. Et fantasma communis sensus passio est. Quare manifestum quod primo sensitiuo horum cognitio est. Memoria autem, et que est intelligibilium, non sine fantasmate est. Quare intellectui secundum accidens utique erit, per se autem primi sensitiui" [Leon 45/2. 107].

⁴² See Avicenna, *De anima* V.7 [ed. Van Riet, 146-47]: "Aut dicemus quod ipse forme intelligibiles sunt res per se existentes, quorum unumquisque est species et res per se existens, set intelligendo aspicit illas et aliquando advertitur illis, et postea convertitur ad illas; et est anima

and that my memory of dogness is really just a stored image of an individual dog. But as Aquinas frequently points out against Avicenna, in *De anima* III.2 Aristotle states that the intellect is permanently affected by the forms that it receives. So how could the intellect have the habit of geometry unless it is storing the geometrical forms it received in the past?⁴³

This ambiguity creates room for Aquinas to develop a theory of intellectual memory that harmonizes a) the Augustinian view of mind as memory, subject to temporality and b) the Aristotelian view that the immaterial intellect cognizes the essences of material objects stripped of all material particularity, including temporality. The problem that he must overcome, however, is that if ‘dogness as such’ is cognized indifferently to time,⁴⁴ it seems that one cannot “remember ‘dogness’” as though it were a past object. Aquinas solves this problem by insisting that the possibility of memory depends, not on the object itself being a past object, but rather on its being recognized as the *object of a past act of cognition*—a condition that can be satisfied by both imaginative and intellectual memory.⁴⁵ Aquinas traces this condition to Aristotle’s *De memoria* 1, which states that when something is remembered, one judges

quasi speculum, ipse uero quasi res extrinsece que aliquando apparent in ea et aliquando non apparent.”

⁴³ See for instance *DV* 10.2, *ST* Ia.79.6, *In De an.* III.2, and *QDDA* 15, ad 15.

⁴⁴ *ST* Ia.79.6, ad 2 [Leon 5.271]: “Sed quantum ad partem intellectivam pertinet, praeteritio accidit, et non per se convenit, ex parte obiecti intellectus. Intelligit enim intellectus hominem, in quantum est homo, homini autem, in quantum est homo, accidit vel in praesenti vel in praeterito vel in futuro esse.” See also *DV* 10.2-3.

⁴⁵ This solution is most clearly developed in *DV* 10.2 (disputed in 1257-58); *ST* Ia, q. 79 (approx. 1265-68), and the commentary on *De memoria* (approx. 1268-69). (Note though that as Merriell points out, in *In Sent.* I.3.4.1, Aquinas defended a more literal Augustinian view, distinguishing “tres potentiae distinctae ab invicem, memoria, intelligentia et voluntas” [*To the Image of the Trinity*, 119]). Aquinas’s solution is sometimes taken as a superficial concession to Augustine, arguing that for Aquinas intellectual memory is not memory “in the strict sense” (see Castonguay, *Psychologie de la mémoire*, 182-84; Salinas, “El problema de la memoria intelectual,” 106-7). But Aquinas insists that the defining characteristic of memory is to remember *A* as the object of a past cognition, even though occasionally he does offer an alternate (apparently commonly-used) definition which includes the pastness of the object (see *ST* Ia.79.6, ad 2; and *In De mem.* 2)—in which case the intellect’s retention of species cannot be called memory.

that one has “heard or sensed or understood this before”;⁴⁶ he also claims Augustinian authority for the same view.⁴⁷

The result is the full-fledged account of intellectual memory that appears in *ST* Ia, 79.6, ad 2:

As for an act, [its] pastness can be grasped by the intellect just as well as by the sense. For our soul’s act of understanding is a particular act, existing in this or that time, insofar as a man is said to know now or yesterday or tomorrow. And this is not incompatible with intellectuality, because to know in this way, although it is a certain particular, is yet an immaterial act . . . and therefore just as the intellect understands itself, although it is itself a certain singular intellect, so too it understands its understanding, which is a singular act existing in the past or in the present or in the future. Therefore in this way the definition (*ratio*) of memory as concerning past things, is preserved in the intellect insofar as it understands itself to have understood previously, but not insofar as it understands a past thing precisely as being here and now.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Aristotle *De mem.* 1 [Leon. 45/1.103, at 419b19-23]: “Cum uero sine actibus scienciam et sensum habeat, sic memoratur eas que trianguli quod duobus rectis equales; hoc quidem quia didicit aut speculatus fuit, illud uero quoniam audiuit aut uidit aut aliquid tale. Semper enim, cum secundum memorari agat, sic in anima dicit, quod hoc prius audiuit aut sensit aut intellexit.” Aquinas *In De mem.* 1 [Leon. 45/1.106]: “Set intentio Philosophi est dicere quod memoria est preteritorum quantum ad nostram apprehensionem, id est quod prius sensimus uel intelleximus aliqua, indifferenter siue ille res secundum se considerate sint in presenti siue non.” Having found in c. 1 the central principle he needs to justify intellectual memory, Aquinas nevertheless accepts that from c. 2 onwards, Aristotle focuses on imaginative memory.

⁴⁷ *DV* 10.2. [Leon. 22/2.301:105-106]: “Sed quia intellectus non solum intelligit intelligibile sed etiam intelligit se intelligere tale intelligibile, ideo nomen memoriae potest extendi ad notitiam qua, etsi non cognoscatur obiectum ut in praeteritione modo praedicto, cognoscitur tamen obiectum de quo etiam prius est notitia habita in quantum aliquis scit se eam prius habuisse; et sic omnis notitia non de novo accepta potest dici memoria. . . [E]t hoc modo videtur Augustinus memoriam accipere, ponens eam partem imaginis: vult enim, omne illud quod habitualiter in mente tenetur ut in actum non prodeat, ad memoriam pertinere.” For discussion of this text in Aquinas’s account of Augustinian *memoria*, see Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity*, 115-22.

⁴⁸ *ST* Ia.79.6, ad 2 [Leon 5.271]: “Sed quantum ad partem intellectivam pertinet, praeteritio accidit, et non per se convenit, ex parte obiecti intellectus. Intelligit enim intellectus hominem, in quantum est homo, homini autem, in quantum est homo, accidit vel in praesenti vel in praeterito vel in futuro esse. Ex parte vero actus, praeteritio per se accipi potest etiam in intellectu, sicut in sensu. Quia intelligere animae nostrae est quidam particularis actus, in hoc vel in illo tempore existens, secundum quod dicitur homo intelligere nunc vel heri vel cras. Et hoc non repugnat intellectualitati: quia huiusmodi intelligere, quamvis sit quoddam particulare, tamen est immaterialis actus, ut supra de intellectu dictum est; et ideo sicut intelligit seipsum intellectus, quamvis ipse sit quidam singularis intellectus, ita intelligit suum intelligere, quod est singularis actus vel in praeterito vel in praesenti vel in futuro existens. Sic igitur salvatur ratio memoriae, quantum ad hoc quod est praeteritorium, in intellectu, secundum quod intelligit se

In other words, intellect can be said to remember an atemporal intelligible ('dogness') because that intelligible appears to the intellect as the object of its own previous intellectual act.

The possibility of intellectual memory thus depends on the intellect's ability to do the following:

- 1) recognize its previous acts of thinking *as past* (a premise developed by distinguishing between duration and sequentiality);
- 2) recognize its previous acts of thinking *as its own* (a premise that relies on his theory of self-knowledge)

In what follows, I examine how Aquinas explains each of these two intellectual conditions for memory. In the process, the outlines of his account of diachronically unified consciousness will emerge.

Recognizing an Act as Past

First, how do I recognize my past acts of understanding as *past*—i.e., as “a particular act, existing in this or that time”—if there is no time in the intellect? In *ST* Ia.85.4, ad 1, Aquinas explains that while intellectual acts are durationless (as the indivisible acts of an indivisible intellectual power),⁴⁹ they nevertheless occur in a determinate order of priority and posteriority with respect to each other. “The intellect is above the time that is the numbering of the motion of corporeal beings. But the multitude of intelligible species causes a certain change (*vicissitudinem quandam*) among intelligible operations, insofar as one operation is prior to another.” Aquinas cleverly adds that when Augustine speaks of the “time” of human or angelic minds, he merely means this kind of ordered sequentiality.⁵⁰

prius intellexisse, non autem secundum quod intelligit praeteritum, prout est hic et nunc.” Aquinas repeats the same doctrine frequently throughout *In De mem.*; see for instance c. 1 [Leon. 45/1.161-62]; c. 6 [123:11-124:60]; c. 7 [129:150-84].

⁴⁹ See for instance *In De an.* III.5.

⁵⁰ *ST* Ia.85.4, ad 1 [Leon. 5.339]: “[I]ntellectus est supra tempus quod est numerus motus corporalium rerum. Sed ipsa pluralitas specierum intelligibilium causat vicissitudinem quandam intelligibilium operationum, secundum quam una operatio est prior altera. Et hanc vicissitudinem Augustinus nominat tempus, cum dicit, VIII super Gen. ad Litt., quod *Deus movet creaturam spiritualem per tempus*”; and the identical claim in *DV* 8.4, ad 14-15, where Aquinas attributes succession to angelic thoughts. See also *QDDA* 3 [Leon. 24/2.26:250-27:256]: “Ipsium ergo intelligere, quod est operatio intellectus possibilis, potest quidem multiplicari secundum obiecta, ut aliud sit intelligere hominem, aliud intelligere equum; et etiam secundum tempus, ut aliud sit numero intelligere quod fuit heri, et quod est hodie, si tamen discontinuetur operatio.”

Indeed, Aquinas explains, the experience of duration only accrues to intellectual acts accidentally, inasmuch as our durationless human intellectual acts are always paired with extended acts of imagination. “Man cannot understand anything without the continuum and time. This happens insofar as man cannot understand anything without a phantasm [viz., a bodily image].”⁵¹ If it seems to me to be a long time since I thought about the Pythagorean theorem, the sense of duration derives from the measurement of time by imaginative memory. If I could have an intellectual memory of the theorem, without the imaginative memory in which I picture myself seeing the teacher’s diagrams on the board for the first time, my experience of remembering the Pythagorean theorem would wholly lack a sense of duration. I would simply understand the Pythagorean theorem as object of both intellectual acts, grasped together in their ordered relation of priority and posteriority: “I knew the Pythagorean theorem before.”

“As understood by me”: The Intersection of Memory and Self-Knowledge

Second, how do I recognize those past acts as *mine*? This aspect of Aquinas’s theory of intellectual memory relies on a principle taken from his theory of self-knowledge: Whenever I am thinking about anything, I thereby implicitly cognize that act of thinking and myself as the one who is thinking. “[I]n perceiving its acts, [the mind] understands itself *whenever it understands something*.”⁵² Aquinas grounds this principle in the Aristotelian paradigm of

For discussion, see Steven C. Snyder, “Aquinas and the Reality of Time,” *Sapientia* 55 (2000), 380; as well as Schell, “La doctrina tomista de la *memoria* espiritual,” 64–65.

⁵¹ *In De mem.* 2 [Leon. 45/2.107:51–57]: “[N]ichil homo potest intelligere sine continuo <et> tempore. Quod quidem accidit in quantum nichil potest homo intelligere sine fantasmate: fantasma enim oportet quod sit cum continuo et tempore, eo quod est similitudo rei singularis que est hic et nunc”; compare *SCG* I.102 [Leon. 13:268]: “Divinum autem intelligere est absque successione totum simul aeternaliter existens: nostrum autem intelligere successionem habet, in quantum adiungitur ei per accidens continuum et tempus.” Armand Maurer offers an intriguing reflection on this point in his “Time and the Person,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 53 (1979), 182–93.

⁵² *ST* Ia.93.7, ad 4. See also *Sent.* I.1.2.1, ad 2 [Mand. 1.38]: “[E]adem operatione intelligo intelligibile et intelligo me intelligere”; *Sent.* I.3.4.5 [Mand. 1.122]: “Alio tamen modo, secundum philosophos, intelligitur quod anima semper se intelligit, eo quod omne quod intelligitur, non intelligitur nisi illustratum lumine intellectus agentis, et receptum in intellectu possibili. Unde sicut in omni colore videtur lumen corporale, ita in omni intelligibili videtur lumen intellectus agentis; non tamen in ratione objecti sed in ratione medii cognoscendi”; *InMet.* XII.8, no. 2539 [Mar. 594]: “Et dicit, quod hoc est de ratione intellectus, quod intelligat seipsum in quantum transmittit vel concipit in se aliquid intelligibile; fit enim intellectus intelligibilis

intellectual cognition as the union of intellect-in-act and intelligible-in-act. The human possible intellect has no form of its own, but is a sort of quasi-matter among intellects, a sheer potency for intelligible form. So when it receives the intelligible species of dogness, it takes on the form of dogness *as its own form* which manifests the intellect to itself even as it manifests dogness to the intellect.⁵³

The significance of this view for the present discussion is that for Aquinas, any cognitive object is manifested to me as *the object of my particular intellectual act*; conversely, I grasp my intellectual act as *my act of thinking about this object*. “Whoever understands or is enlightened cognizes that he is understanding and he is being enlightened, because he cognizes that the thing is manifest to himself.”⁵⁴ Aquinas’s theory of memory depends on this point. The reason that I recall intelligibles as having-been-previously-understood by me is that an awareness of my present act and of myself as its agent is built into my present cognition of essences and remains part of my memory of those essences.

But in what sense can an act of thinking be committed to memory? Here we must proceed with caution. When Aquinas speaks of “understanding one’s understanding, which is a singular act existing in the past or in the present or in the future,”⁵⁵ it is easy to get the impression that the intellect stores its bare acts alongside other objects (as though among the contents of intellectual memory one might find ‘the Pythagorean theorem’, ‘humanity’, ‘an act of thinking dated 11:30am on February 1st, 1992’, and so forth). But the

per hoc quod attingit aliquod intelligibile. Et ideo, cum ipse intellectus fiat intelligibilis concipiendo aliquod intelligibile, sequetur quod idem sit intellectus et intelligibile”; *In Ethic.* III.3 [Leon. 47/1.127:165-67]: “[M]anifestum est, quod non potest ignorare quis sit operans, quia sic ignoraret se ipsum, quod est impossibile.” For other texts in which Aquinas asserts that the soul cognizes other things and itself in a single act, or that the soul cognizes itself in all its acts, see *Sent.* I.10.1.5, ad 2; *Sent.* I.17.1.5, ad 4; *DV* 8.6; *DV* 10.8, ad 9 and ad 10 s.c.; *ST* Ia.14.2, 87.1, and 93.7, ad 4; *In Sent.* I.1.2.1, ad 2 [Mand. 1.38]: “[E]adem operatione intelligo intelligibile et intelligo me intelligere.”

⁵³ See *ST* Ia.87.1, ad 3 [Leon. 5.356]: “[I]ntellectus in actu est intellectum in actu, propter similitudinem rei intellectae, quae est forma intellectus in actu. Et ideo intellectus humanus, qui fit in actu per speciem rei intellectae, per eandem speciem intelligitur, sicut per formam suam”; *QDDA* 16, ad 8 [Leon. 24/1.147:405-410]: “Vnde, cum intellectus possibilis sit potentia tantum in esse intelligibili, non potest intelligi nisi per formam suam per quam fit actu, quae est species a fantasmatibus accepta; sicut et quilibet alia res intelligitur per formam suam.” See also *DV* 8.6; *DV* 10.8, ad 10 s.c.; *DV* 18.1, ad 10; *In Ethic.* III.3; *ST* Ia.14.2, ad 3; *ST* Ia.93.7, ad 4; *ST* Ia.111.1, ad 3; *ST* IIa-IIae.25.2; *In Sent.* I.17.1.4.

⁵⁴ *ST* Ia.111.1, ad 3 [Leon. 5.516]: “[Q]uicumque intelligit vel illuminatur, cognoscit se intelligere vel illuminari; quia cognoscit rem sibi esse manifestam.”

⁵⁵ See *ST* Ia.79.6, ad 2, in note 48 above.

intellectual act itself cannot be retained in memory, because it is not an idea, but the intellect's proper operation. To have the operation of "thinking about the Pythagorean theorem" *is* to be thinking about the theorem.⁵⁶

How then do I recognize a stored intelligible as "the object of my previous act"? The answer, I believe, is that for Aquinas the species, as form, is individuated by its reception into the intellect, as matter, in the act of thinking.⁵⁷ Even though that act of thinking itself does not remain as part of the species, my intelligible species is permanently stamped by this individual relation to *my* intellect in *this* act. (And against Averroes, Aquinas insists that this individuation does not detract from the universality of the species' content.)⁵⁸ For Aquinas, then, the possibility of intellectual memory does not imply that the intellect stores and then recalls individual acts themselves. Rather, the intellect recalls a stored intelligible, in which it recognizes a preexisting individual relation to itself as cognizer, a relation established by an act that took place prior to the present. And in recognizing this relation as one that *preexists* the present act, the intellect grasps the object in terms of the sequential ordering of the acts whereby that object has been (and is now again) related to it.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ In fact, Aquinas's defense of intellectual memory depends on his distinguishing between the species and the operation in which the species is used; when the intellect stops thinking about the corresponding object, the species is "deactivated," so to speak, and retained habitually. See *In De an.* III.2 [Leon. 45/1.209:46-50]: "[C]um enim intellectus actu intelligit, species intelligibiles sunt in ipso secundum actum perfectum, cum autem habet habitum sciencie, sunt species in intellectu medio modo inter potentiam puram et actum purum"; see also *ST Ia.*79.6, ad 3; and *SCG* 1.56.

⁵⁷ See also *De unitate intellectus* 5 [Leon. 43.312:226-30]: "Est ergo unum quod intelligitur et a me et a te, sed alio intelligitur a me et alio a te, id est alia specie intelligibili; et aliud est intelligere meum et aliud tuum; et alius est intellectus meus et alius tuus"; and the texts cited below in note 58. For Aquinas's mature thought on the individuation of form by its existence in matter broadly speaking, see for instance *De spiritualibus creaturis* 8, ad 4 [Leon. 24/4.83:350-352]: "Forma, que est in subiecto vel materia, indiuiduatur per hoc quod est in hoc." Note that Aquinas characterizes the act of thinking as the intellect's *esse*; see *SCG* 1.45 [Leon. 13.136]: "Intelligere comparatur ad intellectum sicut esse ad essentiam"; and *ST Ia.*14.4 [Leon. 13.171]: "[I]ntelligere . . . manet in operante sicut actus et perfectio eius, prout esse est perfectio existentis: sicut enim esse consequitur formam, ita intelligere sequitur speciem intelligibilem."

⁵⁸ *QDDA* 2, ad 5 [Leon. 24/2.19:380-85]: "Sciendum igitur, quod quamvis species receptae in intellectu possibili sint indiuiduatae ex illa parte qua inhaerent intellectui possibili; tamen in eis, in quantum sunt immateriales, cognoscitur universale quod concipitur per abstractionem a principiis indiuiduantibus"; see also *QDDA* 3, ad 7, 8, 13, 17.

⁵⁹ Note that priority/posteriority is a relation of reason, following the mode of understanding by which "the intellect understands something as ordered to another thing"; see *De potentia* 7.11 [Mar. 65]: "Quandoque autem intellectus accipit aliqua duo ut entia, quorum alterum

Aquinas's account of self-knowledge thus provides him with a way to satisfy the underlying condition for intellectual memory: In recalling *A* to mind, I find that *A* presents itself as-previously-understood-by-me: "One remembers that he learned it from someone or that he beheld it by himself."⁶⁰ Stored intelligibles are stored as *my* intelligibles, objects of *my* cognition. And thus conversely, I can perceive myself, not only as the subject of my present acts, but also as the subject of my past acts.⁶¹

Diachronically Unified Consciousness

Aquinas's defense of intellectual memory suggests a provocative account of long-term diachronically unified consciousness: namely, the reason that my entire mental life is unified under a single subject-perspective, is that all my acts of thinking and remembering reveal to me one same acting subject, i.e., myself. The human intellect discovers within its retained intelligibles a preexisting relation to itself, established by an act that occurred prior to the present act. When in use, species are marked by an individual relation to my intellect and stored with that relation, which can then be recognized when the same species is later brought back into use. For example, my stored idea of beauty is an idea of beauty-as-understood-by-me-then. So when I begin to think about beauty later and recall "I read about the idea of beauty in Plato once," I am considering beauty under the aspect of its past and present relation to *the same present intellect*.

Now at first, this account of diachronically unified consciousness sounds quite a lot like an Identity among Selves account. Suppose that one day I think about beauty at 8am (let us call this act of thinking C_1) and then again later at 6pm (C_2), with both acts implicitly containing an awareness of myself as the subject of those acts. If Aquinas were an Identity among Selves theorist,⁶² he would be arguing that my memory of beauty as cognized in C_1 includes a

tantum vel neutrum est ens: sicut cum accipit duo futura, vel unum praesens et aliud futurum, et intelligit unum cum ordine ad aliud, dicens alterum esse prius altero; unde istae relationes sunt rationis tantum, utpote modum intelligendi consequentes"; and *ST* Ia.28.1, ad 4.

⁶⁰ *In De mem.* 1 [Leon. 45/2.105:156-106.159]: "[E]t ex quadam parte operationis intellectualis memoratur aliquis, quia didicit ab alio, vel quia speculatus est per seipsum."

⁶¹ On the robust notion of individual cognitive agency that Aquinas develops in response to his reading of Averroes' "one intellect for all humans," see for instance Deborah Black, "Models of the Mind: Metaphysical Presuppositions of the Averroist and Thomistic Accounts of Intellection," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 15 (2004), 319-52; Alain De Libera, *Archéologie du sujet*, vol. 1, *Naissance du sujet* (Paris, 2010), ch. 4.

⁶² See the discussion at the end of §I above.

memory of a past self (S_1), while my current thought about beauty (C_2) includes a current awareness of my current self (S_2). So my consciousness is diachronically unified because I am able to perceive the *identity* between S_1 and S_2 . This Identity among Selves reading of Aquinas seems initially plausible inasmuch as he holds every retained species is embedded with an implicit reference to the thinker.

But I do not think that this is what Aquinas has in mind. Rather, his construal of diachronically unified consciousness more closely approximates Augustine's, as follows: When I recall that "I was thinking about beauty this morning," I am grasping beauty as the object, not of a past act of some past self, but as the past act (C_1) of my present self (S), insofar as I discover in beauty a preexisting relation to my present intellect. Thus I grasp beauty as something I understood before, where the first-person pronoun refers to myself, the present subject. This interpretation finds indirect support in Aquinas's descriptions of intellectual memory. For one thing, as we have already seen, he insists upon the atemporality of the incorporeal intellect, allowing only a spiritual time in the sequence of its acts. In no way does he suggest that the intellect itself has any sequentiality. Furthermore, although Aquinas insists that one understands *acts* as past, he never speaks as though one understands *the agent of those acts* to be a past agent. In defending the possibility of intellectual memory in *ST* Ia.79.6, ad 2, Aquinas emphasizes that the intellect is capable of understanding immaterial singulars such as itself or its acts—but when he goes on to draw the implications for memory, he mentions temporality only in connection with the acts:

And this is not incompatible with intellectuality, because to know in this way, although it is a certain particular, is yet an immaterial act...and therefore just as the intellect understands itself, although it is itself a certain singular intellect, so too it understands its understanding, which is a singular act existing in the past or in the present or in the future.

Even the grammatical structure of the last sentence is conducive to associating the pastness with the act rather than the agent: "The intellect understands itself to have understood before (*se prius intellexisse*)."⁶³ There is no indication here that *se* refers to anything other than to the present intellect itself, *S*. Whether or not Aquinas would hold that one can have a concept of oneself as one was in the past (i.e., by remembering what one was like as a bratty child),

⁶³ *ST* Ia.79.6, ad 2; Latin text cited above in note 48. The same grammatical structure is used in Aquinas's other texts on memory, listed in note 40 above.

it seems likely that for him the ordinary structure of intellectual memory, and hence of the diachronically unified consciousness that relies on memory, involves the attribution of a *past act* to one's *present self*.

I would argue, then, that for Aquinas, unity of consciousness involves, not the identification of successively experienced "selves," but the experience of a single present-tense subject anchoring a sequence of past and present thoughts. In fact, intellectual memory, the grasp of beauty-as-having-been-previously-understood, is possible only if I grasp my present self as the single subject of the present and past acts. Only then can I get a single perspective from which to compare past and present acts according to their sequential order. Aquinas's account of diachronically unified consciousness thus resonates with Hume's claim that our sense of personal identity across time derives from something similar among impressions, i.e., a reference to the cognizing subject, the "I."⁶⁴ But for Aquinas, that reference does not refer to *some* subject, or to the past subject of each past act—rather, it inevitably and exclusively refers to the *present* subject, because the cognizing subject is always exclusively present-tense and can only be conceived of as such. For Aquinas, it is as though every past cognitive act is embedded with a hyperlink that points back to the present knowing "I." From this perspective, the problem of how to identify the past subject, S_1 , with the present subject, S_2 , is actually a false problem. There is just one present-tense subject, S , which anchors two acts, grasping C_1 as past in relation to the presence of C_2 .

Conclusion: From the Augustinian to the Thomistic Mind

In sum, the difference between Augustine's and Aquinas's account of diachronically unified consciousness stems from their different ways of dividing up mental powers: Augustine allows the mind to perform both short-term and long-term unification, whereas in Aquinas, short-term unification occurs in the corporeal imagination and long-term unification at the highest level occurs in the incorporeal intellect. Nevertheless, despite this difference, these two thinkers share the same basic approach to diachronically unified consciousness. At the core of both accounts is the same paradigm of the atemporal personal subject or "I," existing in a single time-transcending mental "now" that encompasses a sequence of temporal moments. For both of these thinkers, the incorporeal mind has a fixed standard—the perspective of its own

⁶⁴ See note 1 above.

mental “now”—according to which it measures the sequentiality (for Aquinas) or the duration and sequentiality (for Augustine) of its mental acts. For both thinkers, experience of oneself is therefore utterly unlike our experience of anything else; consciousness does not need to *be* unified because there is just *one* of it, and it is itself unifying.

Consequently, according to the Augustinian/Thomistic model of diachronically unified consciousness, when I say, “I stole the pears” and “I am writing about time,” I am not judging that a perceived past self and a perceived present self are numerically identical. For Augustine and Aquinas, an Identity of Selves model confuses the way we grasp identity in extramentals with the way we grasp our own identity. For instance, in order to grasp that a plastic plant in the lobby is the same plant from day to day, I make an identity judgment that yesterday’s “perceived plant” (P_1) is numerically identical to today’s “perceived plant” (P_2). In the case of personal identity, however, I can only ever experience myself as just *one* self in the present. The word “I” refers to an irreducibly and exclusively present-tense subject. There never is in our experience any real sense of a “past self,” even a past self that is identical with our present self. There are only “past experiences” or “past acts” of our present self. Thus for Augustine and Aquinas, when I remember the plant that was in the office yesterday, I remember a *past perceived plant*. But when I remember the theft of the pears, I recall a past act (or the object of a past act) of my *present self*. In this way, I am able to take responsibility for my past acts: when I say, “I was wrong to steal the pears,” the referent of the first-person pronoun is the *present subject*, not some past subject that I am identifying with my present self.

The notion that the mind can only ever grasp itself as a present-tense item is, I believe, the lynchpin of the Augustinian/Thomistic account of diachronically unified consciousness. According to this account, the very phrase “diachronically unified consciousness” is misleading, because consciousness itself is not scattered, as though in need of some sort of unifying principle. For both these thinkers, the conscious viewpoint is *necessarily and essentially one, and necessarily and essentially perceived as one*, because of the kind of thing that it is. It is in itself the principle that imparts its unifying force to the disparate events and impressions of human life.