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# The 'End' of Memory: Memory, the Porous Self, and the Communion of Saints in Augustine's *Confessions*

ABRAHAM S-C WU *†

Abstract: This article presents a brief, constructive, theological account of memory in response to contemporary questions regarding memory loss via Augustine's account of memory, which elucidates the remembering subject's openness and relatedness to God and the communion of saints. First, I examine Augustine's *Confessions,* showing how memory is embodied, affective, and cogitative, and that memory's end is in relation to God and the communion of saints. Afterwards, I consider the resonances between Augustine's account of memory and two threads of research in dementia studies—namely, the notion of the 'embodied self' and the concept of memory 'extension'—in order to propose how such a reading of Augustine on memory might contribute towards theological accounts and responses to memory impairment or loss.

## Introduction

'Tell me about yourself' presents itself as a simple invitation, offering an opportunity to share about one's past and present, one's hope for the future, and the people and values one most treasures. Yet such self-communication hinges on the extraordinary power of memory, that mostly unconscious faculty that serves as a mediator within oneself through a development of one's self-awareness that renders them intelligible

* Trinity College, Cambridge, CB2 1TQ, UK; † Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge, 25 West Road, Cambridge, CB3 9BS, UK

and opens them to the other, both human and divine.[1] In this paper, I will briefly seek to explore Augustine's account of memory, primarily in his *Confessions* (c. 397–400), before proceeding to consider how Augustine's account of memory might speak to contemporary questions regarding memory loss and impairment. In the first section, while I cannot cover the totality of memory's role in the text, I will seek to demonstrate how Augustine's account of memory in the *Confessions* develops one's true self-awareness in showing the failure of memory, shows memory's multi-faceted nature, (e.g., embodied, affective, and cogitative), and reveals the self's porousness to God and others.[2] Afterwards, I will proceed to consider how Augustine's account of memory – which is presented in his *Confessions* as embodied, affective, cogitative, and relational – might texture and contribute to theological accounts and responses to memory loss and impairment, in conversation with psychological and ethnographical accounts in dementia studies.

## Memory and the porous self in *Confessions*

While many scholarly treatments of memory in Augustine's *Confessions* begin in Book 10,[3] which is warranted given Augustine's extended treatment of memory in that Book, memory is woven throughout the text given the very genre and structure of *Confessions*. Yet, the puzzle of memory and narrative is that much of it is hidden and not easily self-transparent. As Rowan Williams suggests, the *Confessions* help one to recognize that they are 'not a simple history to be unveiled and displayed for inspection, nor a self-transparent

[1] In this paper, I use the term 'mediator' to refer to memory's intermediary function in Augustine's *Confessions*, following the lead of commentators such as Kevin G. Grove and Paige E. Hochschild. However, as we shall soon see, memory as a 'mediator' can only take us so far before it fails. As Augustine insists at the end of Book 10 of *Confessions* (10.43.68), Jesus Christ is the one, true, and living mediator between God and humanity (cf. 1 Tim. 2:15). For recent examples of work on Augustine's account of memory as a 'mediator', albeit a penultimate one, see Kevin G. Grove's *Augustine on Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021) and Paige E. Hochschild's *Memory in Augustine's Theological Anthropology*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[2] While Augustine has earlier treatments of memory in his Cassiacum Dialogues, such as in his *Soliloquies* (c. 386–7) or his early letters to Nebridius on memory, these earlier treatments of memory are largely interested in the unity of the human person. However, it is in *Confessions* that the maturing Augustine shows how memory and self-awareness break open to God; see, for example, Hochschild, *Memory*, pp. 69–134.

[3] For example, Raymond J. Shaw, 'Augustine's Extraordinary Theory of Memory', in Sandra Lee Dixon, John Doody, and Kim Paffenroth, eds., *Augustine and Psychology* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), pp. 156–70; Todd Breyfogle, 'Memory and Imagination in Augustine's Confessions', *New Blackfriars* 75 (1994), pp. 210–23; cf. Grove in *Augustine on Memory*, who perceives a pivotal role for memory in Book 7 of *Confessions* before delving into Book 10.

reasoning subject'.[4] Though we are, in a significant way, our memory, we are insufficient for telling the true and complete story about ourselves. Thus, it is fitting that Augustine writes *Confessions* as a prayer, which reorients self-awareness from self-obsession by attending to God, working out one's history and identity before, in, and to God.

Moreover, Augustine's account of memory also includes others. For example, in Book 1 of *Confessions*, he acknowledges that he is unable to recall his infancy and is thus reliant on the memories of others since it is 'lost in the darkness of [his] forgetfulness'.[5] Moreover, while Augustine notes how quickly he acquired speech, his 'grasp [of language] made use of memory' – both his own and others' memories.[6] Hence, we can see how from the beginning that memory in *Confessions* reveals a sense of self that is porous and that is unable to be closed off to the other, whether divine or human, since it is constituted from the beginning in relation to God and others.

So far, I have used the term 'self' with reference to the created human subject. However, as John Cavadini has argued, any notion of an Augustinian 'self' (*ipse*) is problematic if we conceive of it as 'a stable boundary at which one might gaze securely' – one that prioritizes inwardness over and above its porous and relational essence.[7] This is not the kind of self that I am referring to. Rather, like Cavadini and others, I agree that such boundaries become 'gloriously fuzzy'[8]

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4 Rowan Williams, *On Augustine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 2.

5 *Conf*. 1.7.12; cf. *Conf*. 10.4.6., in which Augustine recognizes how his personal recollections are also open to others, namely his 'fellow citizens and fellow travelers'. Unless otherwise noted, all *conf*. translations come from Henry Chadwick, *St. Augustine's Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

6 *Conf*. 1.8.13.

7 John Cavadini, 'The Darkest Enigma: Reconsidering the Self in Augustine's Thought', *Augustinian Studies* 38 (2007), p. 132. For a further exploration of the porous and relational nature of the Augustinian 'self', see also Rowan Williams, 'Time and Self-Awareness in the *Confessions*', in *On Augustine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 1–24. John Milbank, 'Sacred Triads: Augustine and the Indo-European Soul', *Modern Theology* 13 (1997), pp. 451–74. Gerald O'Daly, 'Two Kinds of Subjectivity in Augustine's 'Confessions': Memory and Identity, and the Integrated Self', in Pauliina Rimes and Juha Sihvola, eds., *Ancient Philosophy of the Self* (London: Springer, 2008), pp. 195–203. Pauliina Rimes, 'Inwardness and Infinity of Selfhood: From Plotinus to Augustine', in *Ancient Philosophy of the Self*, pp. 155–76. Matthew Drever, *Image, Identity, and the Formation of the Augustinian Soul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). The above readings of an Augustinian 'self' can be contrasted with Philip Cary's emphasis on the 'private inner space' of the Augustinian subject in Philip Cary, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); cf. Emmanuel Bermon, *Le Cogito dans la pensée de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Vrin, 2001) and Wayne Hankey, 'Between and Beyond Augustine and Descartes: More than a Source of the Self', *Augustinian Studies* 32 (2001), pp. 65–88, who also tend to minimize the relational and corporate dimensions of Augustinian interiority.

8 Cavadini, 'Darkest Enigma', p. 131.

for Augustine as human beings are continually drawn to, stretched by, and transformed in reference to the God who is *interior intimo meo et superior summo meo*.[9] Thus, when I use 'self' when discussing the human subject in Augustine's *Confessions*, it is ultimately *this* 'self' – this human interiority that is always porous to and held by God – that I refer to. Moreover, it is within and from this 'self' that memory reveals deep webs of relation to oneself, others, and ultimately God.

Going forward, Augustine's self-recollection and exploration in *Confessions* portray a narrative of creation, fall, and redemption from Books 1 through 9, pivoting with his decision to seek baptism in Book 8 before pressing into extensive reflections on memory (Book 10), time (Book 11), and creation (Books 12 to 13).[10] The text's integrity is held together by Augustine's openness and orientation to God, both in the past and the present. Throughout *Confessions*, Augustine presents himself as a seeker of God throughout time, never fully healed yet never apart from the God who created and sustains him in love.

Throughout Books 1–9, Augustine recalls his pilgrimage to Christ through his memory. From recalling his past carnality in Book 2, he recalls that '[i]t is from love that I make the act of recollection'[11] – seeing afresh how, even in sin's bondage, God was 'always with me'.[12] This theme of God's pervading presence in one's memory persists throughout the text. For example, Book 4 begins with Augustine praying that he might 'run through [his] memory, as it is in the present … to sacrifice to you [i.e., God] a victim of jubilation'.[13] Yet, far from being a passive object of his memory, Augustine understands God as being the source of his memory – indeed, as 'the living memory of [his] soul'.[14] Augustine praises God throughout for working within him and leading him on via memory, from particular episodes such as imprinting doubts about astrology in his memory[15] to remain in his memory even alongside his transgressions.[16]

Yet, throughout *Confessions*, memory alone is never presented as guaranteeing perfect self-awareness. In Book 2, for example, Augustine questions

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9 *Conf*. 3.6.11.

10 While this structure initially appears ununified, one may see that Books 1–9 present Augustine in the past as a seeker of God and that Books 10 through 13 present Augustine, currently, as someone who *continues* seeking God and who is never finished or closed off from the interruptions of grace.

11 *Conf*. 2.1.1.

12 *Conf*. 2.2.4.

13 *Conf*. 4.1.1.

14 *Conf*. 2.9.17.

15 *Conf*. 4.3.6.

16 *Conf*. 7.17.23; cf. *Conf*. 9.4.7: 'My memory calls me back to that period, and it becomes sweet for me, Lord, to confess to you by what inward goads you tamed me'.

the state of his mind during his infamous pear tree incident and interrogates his motivations before ending in frustration: 'Who can untie this extremely twisted and tangled knot?'[17] Contrary to a classical figure like Plotinus, who approached his inner world with confident reassurance,[18] or a later Enlightenment figure like Rousseau, who began from a confident recollection of the past,[19] Augustine knows the dangers of self-examination due to one's sinful propensity towards self-deception and self-aggrandizement. Instead, for Augustine, it is only in laying open his heart and memory before God that he might be healed and made whole.[20]

One episode that especially illustrates this is in Book 7, in which Augustine details his engagement with Neoplatonism and his intellectual awakening to the immaterial nature of God and the insubstantiality of evil vis-à-vis the Manicheans. Yet, Augustine's new perceptions are unable to be sustained. He writes of being caught up by God's beauty and being torn away by the weight of his sin – particularly sexual habits – which reveal an embodied memory of disordered love and pleasure that leads away from God. Augustine's vision is unable to produce a change in his habits or his imagination, leaving him with 'a loving memory and a desire for that which [he] had the aroma but … not yet the capacity to eat'.[21]

While Augustine writes of his desire 'to obtain strength enough to enjoy [God]', he admits that '[t]o possess my God … I was not yet humble enough' since that same God is the humble Jesus, who is 'divinity become weak'.[22] While Augustine's memory alone could not serve as a sufficient mediator to God, it led him to embrace the incarnate Christ, the one, true, and living mediator between God and humanity (1 Tim. 2:15).[23] Thus, true knowledge of God – as well as true self-knowledge – comes through humble surrender at the feet of the incarnate Christ. Herein lies an important Christological principle that pervades Augustine's work, both in *Confessions* and beyond: the nature of the self is understood in relation to God and that such knowing rests on 'the foundation of humility which is Christ Jesus'.[24] This means that since God is the true living memory of his soul,[25] Augustine can even admit that he does not truly know himself, but God does; later, Augustine even prays that although he might forget God, God does not forget him.[26]

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17 *Conf*. 2.10.18.
18 Plotinus, *Ennead*, 4.3.30.
19 Cf. Ann Hartle, 'Augustine and Rousseau: Narrative and Self-Knowledge in the Two *Confessions*', in Gareth B. Matthews, ed., *The Augustinian Tradition* (Berkely, CA: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 263–85.
20 *Conf*. 5.6.12.
21 *Conf*. 7.17.23.
22 *Conf*. 7.18.24.
23 Cf. *Conf*. 10.43.68.
24 *Conf*. 7.20.26.
25 Cf. *Conf*. 2.9.17.
26 See *Conf*. 13.1.1.

This understanding of the self's fundamental – even constitutive – relation to God is crucial as we proceed to Book 10, which (as mentioned earlier) is frequently presented as Augustine's main treatise on memory. The problem with this, however, is that it attenuates the literary place of Book 10 and Augustine's larger theological argument regarding memory as a revelation of the porous self and as a pathway or mediator to God in Christ.[27] Augustine begins this Book not by revisiting past episodes but with his seeking in the present, thereby also opening himself for the edification of his readers.

First, Augustine opens Book 10 by acknowledging that his memory, even if compromised by self-deception, cannot be hidden from God since he can pray nothing true 'which [God] has not first told me'.[28] Then, after searching for God in creation using his senses, Augustine goes further up and further in by turning to 'the fields and vast palaces of memory'.[29] Augustine begins by using a variety of metaphors to describe memory – from 'storehouse' to the 'stomach of the mind' – to portray memory's function in storing past sensory impressions, experiences, and affections that were impressed in the mind and experienced by the body, and then mediating them to the present through recollection.[30] Then, Augustine posits that his memory does more than recollect and mediate sensory images and experiences from *his* past since he finds that words[31] and numbers[32] are all present in memory – but not as mere images but as realities.[33]

Yet, Augustine also confesses that memory alone is insufficient for finding the Truth (i.e., God). Augustine notes that memory holds falsehoods and discrepancies,[34] as well as inconsistencies in how it recalls feelings and affections (e.g., recalling sadness with gladness),[35] and often frustrates attempts at orderly recollection by 'pour[ing] out to crowd the mind'.[36] Augustine even finds that his memory 'retains forgetfulness'.[37]

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27 See also Grove, *Augustine*, pp. 35–7.
28 *Conf*. 10.2.2.
29 *Conf*. 10.8.12.
30 *Conf*. 10.8.12–14. While Augustine's *memoria* is often compared with Plato's *anamnesis*, his conception of memory as a faculty that retains sensory or mental impressions also demonstrates his familiarity with the wider classical tradition; see Peter Agócs, 'Speaking in the Wax Tablets of Memory', in Luca Castagnoli and Paola Ceccarelli, eds., *Greek Memories: Theories and Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 68–90.
31 *Conf*. 10.10.17.
32 *Conf*. 10.12.19.
33 *Conf*. 10.10.17.
34 *Conf*. 10.13.20.
35 *Conf*. 10.14.21.
36 *Conf*. 10.8.12.
37 *Conf*. 10.16.24; cf. *Trin*. 11.12. Like evil, Augustine seems to understand forgetfulness as a privation of being and thus, as insubstantial; see also Breyfogle's 'Memory and Imagination', p. 212.

As Augustine says, 'it is I who remember, I who am mind'.[38] In Lewis Ayres' words, this indicates memory's 'necessary but near incomprehensible self-presence'.[39] One finds that self-awareness and self-communication are underpinned by memory in such a way that one cannot simply interrogate their mind or memory from a distance as external objects since memory is, in a remarkable way, what one is.[40] Without the ability to gain a neutral vantage point and without the privilege of being a perfectly self-transparent subject, Augustine proceeds to ask how can we learn to see ourselves truthfully and how we can attend to Truth itself.

Therefore, in an interesting parallel to Book 7, Augustine again writes of his desire to ascend beyond sense perception and the body by *transcending* memory towards the *beata vita* that is God.[41] Yet Augustine asks, 'If I shall find you outside my memory, I am not mindful of you. And how shall I find you if I am not mindful of you?'[42] Nonetheless, as with the woman who lost her drachma (Lk. 15:8), Augustine suggests that though something might be 'lost to the eyes', it remains in one's memory.[43] Thus, the desire for the *beata vita* remains in the memory of all people since 'we would not love it if we did not know what it is'.[44] Here, Augustine's understanding of *memoria* echoes the Platonic notion of *anamnesis*, in which the soul learns by remembering what it already knows from its previous existence.[45] Indeed, Augustine later writes that 'the happy life is not seen by the eyes' since our memory does not merely grasp the image of the *beata vita* but the reality.[46] The happy life is found not merely via our senses (i.e., bodies) or intellect but also in our affections, mediated via our memory through flashes – like memories of partial and fleeting joy that stir up a desire for a fuller flowering and enjoyment of it.[47] Although one might go astray in pursuing that joy elsewhere, seeking a 'false joy', one is still drawn by the memory 'of the true joy' that is God.[48] As James

38 Augustine, *Confessions*, 10.16.25.

39 Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 129.

40 Cf. *Conf*. 10.16.25: 'Indeed, the power of memory is something I do not understand when without it I cannot speak about myself'.

41 *Conf*. 10.17.26.; cf. *Conf*. 7.10.16 and 7.17.23, in which Augustine recalls his failed attempts to ascend to God through contemplation alone.

42 *Conf*. 10.17.26.

43 *Conf*. 10.18.27.

44 *Conf*. 10.20.29.

45 Notably, in *retr*. 1.1.3–4 and *Trin*. 12.24, Augustine later repudiates the notion of the soul's pre-existence vis-à-vis the body since he asserts the soul has been created. For more on this, see Grove, *Augustine*, p. 30; also, Breyfogle, 'Memory and Imagination', p. 213.

46 *Conf*. 10.21.30.

47 *Conf*. 10.21.30–31. As Paige Hochschild notes, it is 'anthropologically significant' that God is not present to the soul merely through ideas or through the senses *per se*, but through affections and the will; Hochschild, *Memory*, p. 148.

48 *Conf*. 10.22.32; cf. 10.23.33–34.

Wetzel suggests, 'God and soul slip past simple recall (the sort perfected through memorization) because they act perpetually prior to it'.[49]

## The limits of memory in *Confessions*

For Augustine, God is the Truth who inhabits, illumines, and transcends one's memory, rendering our knowledge of God in a way that the happy life draws us constantly and yet remains beyond our total grasp or control. This tension remains, for example, as Augustine continues to seek God in a 'place' or 'part' of his mind – which remains impossible since God 'is not the mind itself' but 'the Lord God of the mind'.[50] Yet, despite being unable to 'place' God anywhere – even within himself – Augustine does not end with God being in no place but with God being in *every* place and being present to all 'at one and the same time'.[51] Crucially, we might also say, in examining Book X, that Augustine conceives of memory as a trichotomy – embodied, affective, and cogitative – in which God is present and yet in which spiritual and moral incongruence remains.

As Lewis Ayres suggests, Augustine's discussion of memory in Book 10 of *Confessions* differs markedly from his earlier works (e.g., *Soliloquies*) in that his exploration of memory no longer finds its highpoint in articulating memory's power and complexity; rather, the highpoint comes in articulating 'the tension between the complex character of the mind's self-knowing in the context of fallen desire, and the divine presence to the mind enabling it to know and judge even as fallen'.[52] Again, we see a similar dynamic in Book 10 and Books 1–9 wherein there is a tension between memory as a mediator, and memory (or the mind itself) as being deceived due to the soul's distention (*distentio animi*) in time and between its true love for God and its misdirected desires.[53]

Moreover, while the presence and delight of God are found in his memory, the converted Augustine nonetheless finds the law of sin in his members (cf. Rom. 7:23) through embodied, habituated memories (e.g., in sexual dreams or gluttony) that afflict him, spiritually and morally.[54] Even after his conversion,

[49] See James Wetzel, 'Memory', in *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

[50] *Conf*. 10.25.36.

[51] *Conf*. 10.25.36; also, Grove, *Augustine on Memory*, p. 42; cf. Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of St. Augustine*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 311; David Tell, 'Beyond Mnemotechnics: Confession and Memory in Augustine', *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 39 (2006), pp. 233, 247–9.

[52] Ayres, *Augustine*, p. 129.

[53] Cf. Augustine's use of *alienari* in *Trin*. 11.9.

[54] *Conf*. 10.30.41–10.31.45. Much more could be written on the connection between memory, habit, and addiction in Augustine; see, for example, *Augustine and Contemporary Social Issues*, ed. Paul L. Allen (London: Routledge, 2022), ch. 10.

we see that Augustine does not present himself as a 'finished' saint but, in Peter Brown's words, as 'a convalescent' – as a pilgrim continually dependent on God.[55] As Rowan Williams notes, what makes Augustine's *Confessions* so distinct from earlier classical or even Christian biographies is his 'refusal to present a narrative that in any sense claims clarity or finality'.[56]

Rather, as Augustine prays, only God can show 'my full self to myself'[57] because, as Augustine confesses, his past explorations of his memory were often self-deceived since he hid some memories away and drew others out to satisfy his ego.[58] Memory alone, for Augustine, is insufficient for knowing, loving, and enjoying God. Only when his finite memory is graced with God's presence does Augustine discover a truer degree of self-awareness by attending humbly to his weakness, distension, and need for God.[59] Indeed, as James Wetzel argues, '[i]f Augustine were to achieve a state where he is fully present to himself, with no possibility of interruption, he will have forgotten God beyond all possibility of recall'.[60] Only in attending to God, the 'abiding light' and the 'safe place of [his] soul' does Augustine, in his self-examination of memory, discover how in God, his 'dispersed aspirations are gathered together' and how he is held together in God.[61] God, for Augustine, is the end of his memory.

Thus, instead of trusting in his own faculties or fecundity, as in Book 7, Augustine turns to Christ as his 'true mediator'[62] – hence Augustine's continued prayers to God to '[g]rant what you command, and command what you will',[63] and his hope in Christ's intercession.[64] Therefore, we might say that memory is also the site of confession and encounter with God in Christ while simultaneously revealing the dependence and porosity of the human creature to God. While memory in *Confessions* facilitates self-awareness and communication, it is never self-enclosed – it is always constituted in relation to God, who is other and over it. For Augustine, as Michael Hanby suggests, 'relation to God is the source and ground of the incommunicable and inexhaustible interiority of being'.[65]

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55 Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. 45th Anniversary Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 171.
56 Williams, *Augustine*, p. 3.
57 *Conf*. 10.37.62.
58 *Conf*. 10.40.65.
59 Even prior to a self-knowledge that leads to a knowledge of God (*noverim me, noverim te*), Augustine needs to remember God and find the God who remembers him.
60 James Wetzel, 'The Force of Memory: Reflections on the Interrupted Self', *Augustinian Studies* 38 (2007), p. 156.
61 *Conf*. 10.40.65.
62 *Conf*. 10.43.68.
63 *Conf*. 10.31.45.
64 *Conf*. 10.31.47.
65 Michael Hanby, 'Augustine on Human Being', in C.C. Pecknold and Tarmo Toom, eds., *T&T Clark Companion to Augustine and Modern Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 33.

Moreover, it is in relation to God that Augustine also explores the connection between his memory and his sense of self (i.e., narrative identity). *Confessions* show how Augustine's memory and history reveal how God encounters *all* human beings in their lives and history.[66] Moreover, just as this eternal God can attend to each particular, temporal human, the *Confessions* are particular to Augustine – fitting given his belief that human beings differed due to their unique, past experiences.[67] While memory, for Augustine, thus could serve as the mode for dissolution and distention *in* time, it could also serve as the precondition and mediator of an identity that persists *through* time in relation to the unchanging God who can order the soul and whose love upholds every creature. As Todd Breyfogle suggests, Augustine's *Confessions* reveal how his conversion to Christ serves as 'the ordering of memory' that provides 'an understanding of the meaning of his past, and consequently of his present'.[68] For Augustine, it is this (re)ordering and (re)orientation that reveals an integral connection between memory and identity, as well as spiritual and moral formation, since the ordering of memory leads to Christ.

The importance of God as the one who sustains and fulfils creaturely unity and identity through the manifold changes of time comes to the fore as Augustine explores time, eternity, and creation in the remainder of *Confessions*. In these Books, we see Augustine continue reflecting on how, as an embodied, temporal creature, he is pulled ('distended') across time (*distentio animi*) between recollection and expectation.[69] Just as Augustine's memory is unable to discern between truth and falsehood with regards his own self-recollection in Book 10, he needs a memory – and authority – greater than his own to discern and move truthfully in time and creation. If understood in this way, Augustine's distention – while a representation of the interrupted, incomplete self – is not necessarily a call to escape time but an invitation to accept our distention and disjunction in time as a feature of creaturely life.[70] As James Wetzel notes, regarding Augustine,

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66 Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 33.

67 *De div. quaest*. 83.40; Brown, *Augustine*, p. 167.

68 Breyfogle, 'Memory and Imagination', p. 217.

69 *Conf*. 11.23.30, 11.26.33, 11.29.39. While there have been protracted scholarly debates on time's objective-subjective nature in Book 11 of *Confessions*, I follow the lead of scholars such as Gerald O'Daly, James Wetzel, and John Rist to focus instead on time's connection to memory and the distended self's unity in God. See Gerald O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), James Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 17–44, and John Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 73–85. As O'Daly suggests, when Augustine introduces the *distentio animi*, he is interested in much more than the measurement of time but its effects on the soul, see O'Daly, *Philosophy of Mind*, p. 153.

70 As Augustine notes in *Conf*. 4.5.10 and 4.8.13, time can even have therapeutic effects.

'much of his time is not his to remember and none of it is his alone – not if his creator is the creator of time'.[71] Indeed, for Augustine, since God is the creator of time – and thus, outside of time – God alone can know everything *in time* 'in a much more wonderful and much more mysterious way'.[72] For Augustine, Christ again is the way and end of our traveling within time to God; it is Christ, 'mediator between [God] the One and us the many', who gathers our distended selves together so that we might follow God *non distentus sed extentus*.[73] Thus, for Augustine, God in Christ – the true living memory of his soul – integrates both past and present, memory and expectation, in an *ordo* that transcends time while remaining *interior intimo meo*, so that in cleaving to God, the distended self is integrated.[74]

## Memory and the communion of saints in *Confessions*

In Augustine's view of memory, one's turn inward is the turn to God because the infinite God is interiorly present in a constant, constitutive relation to finite creatures, which makes both the turn to God and the remembering, knowing, and loving subject, in Hanby's estimation, 'bottomless'.[75] Thus, far from the remembering subject's interiority being a world unto itself, memory leads to the discovery that finite creaturely existence and memory ultimately participate in the God who lovingly upholds all in and for Christ.

For this reason, we should not be surprised that Augustine's recollection in and through God in Christ is almost never a solitary act or experience: it includes and involves others. Throughout *Confessions*, Augustine's recollection reveals that 'he has hardly ever been alone' and has always been surrounded by others (e.g., Monica, Alypius, Nebridius, etc.).[76] In Book 9, Augustine and Monica experience a beatific vision of God and feed on eternal, unchanging wisdom.[77] Yet, it is notable that they experienced (and that Augustine remembered) this ascent to God not as isolated individuals caught in the 'flight of the alone to the alone'[78] but as pilgrims lit aflame after contemplating the eternal life of the saints'.[79] Book 10 makes this clear when Augustine acknowledges that he writes for the edification of his 'fellow citizens and

71 Wetzel, 'Force of Memory', p. 1582.
72 *Conf*. 11.31.41. We might compare God's being outside of time in *Conf*. 11 with God as being in 'no place' in 10.25.36. As Rist notes, because God knows the past perfectly, God can perfectly hold it in the present; see Rist, *Augustine*, p. 79.
73 *Conf*. 11.29.39; cf. 9.10.23.
74 Cf. *Conf*. 12.15.22.
75 Hanby, 'Augustine', p. 31.
76 Brown, *Augustine*, p. 174.
77 *Conf*. 9.10.23–24.
78 Plotinus, *Enneads*, 6.9.9.
79 *Conf*. 9.10.23.

pilgrims'.[80] Not only does Augustine see himself with and for his fellow citizens on pilgrimage, but he also understands himself as being joined to and with them in Christ as the *totus Christus*.[81] This is most evident in the last lines of Book 10 when Augustine writes of eating, drinking, and distributing 'redemption' in the Eucharist, thereby satisfied 'together with those who eat and are satisfied [cf. Ps. 61:5]'.[82] In the Eucharist, human memory – embodied, affective, and cogitative – is not simply something that mediates a retrospective glance to the cross but something that participates in and is transformed by the memory of Christ and his body as it tastes, eats, and inwardly digests him, in remembrance of him.

Moreover, to remember Christ through the participation of our memory in his body both involves and invites us to remember others in loving prayer and service. For example, as Augustine ends Book 9, he implores his readers to remember his parents in prayer before God, thereby remaining in communion with both his 'fellow citizens in the eternal Jerusalem' and God's 'pilgrim people'.[83] Thus, not only is memory embodied, affective, and cogitative – it is relational with others and with God. Hence why Augustine's *Confessions* pulse with the pervading memory that God is 'mindful of us'[84] and continually remembers us.[85] Memory is not simply the mediator and locus of self-disclosure but also the mediator and locus of *God's* self-disclosure, encounter, and gracious activity from creation to 'the sabbath of eternal life'.[86]

To close this first section, one finds that the portrait which emerges from Augustine's *Confessions* is not of a solitary, closed subject that recollects in the confidence of their inner world but a temporal, created, and dependent subject that is porous and formed in relation to God and other creatures.[87] Augustine does not conceive of memory as a 'closed loop' but as being open; not only open to self-deception, but also the memories and lives of others and ultimately to God – the soul's living memory. Furthermore, the Augustinian portrait of memory that emerges from *Confessions* is one that is embodied (e.g., sensory and habitual), affective (e.g., the memory of joy as a guide to God), cogitative or intellectual (e.g., memory's inextricable role in self-awareness and reflection), and relational (e.g., shared memory with others and participatory in God). Finally, Augustine's discussion of memory in *Confessions* connects to a further line of

[80] *Conf*. 10.4.6.
[81] An extremely prominent theme that Augustine picks up in his *Enarrationes*, for example, *en. Ps*. 37.6.
[82] *Conf*. 10.43.70.
[83] *Conf*. 9.13.37.
[84] *Conf*. 9.3.6.
[85] *Conf*. 13.1.1.
[86] *Conf*. 13.34.51.
[87] Cf. Philip Cary's emphasis on the 'private inner space' of the Augustinian subject in *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 115–41.

exploration – the relation between the intra-personal relatedness of the human being and the relatedness and coinherence of the Trinity – which he offers in Book 13 the *Confessions* and picks up in *De Trinitate*.[88] Augustine does not set self-awareness and one's relation to the other, divine or human, in competition but as complements. Thus, we also find in *Confessions* the seeds of a suggestive and generative vision in which memory, self-awareness, and narrative identity are intrinsically *social*, open and related to God and to others – particularly in the communion of saints, with and for whom Augustine serves and writes.

Augustine's account of memory continues beyond *Confessions* and features notably in his *Sermones, Enarrationes*, and *De Trinitate*. However, in considering what memory has to do with the communion of saints, we might also ask a question beyond what Augustine thought about memory in order to consider what we might think *with the help* of Augustine's account of memory: namely what, if anything, might Augustine's theological account of memory contribute to *contemporary* questions and discussions regarding memory and memory loss? While there have been excellent works on Augustine's account of memory,[89] there appears to be little in the field that seeks to connect Augustine's account of memory to contemporary questions of memory loss, and doing so in conversation with psychology, neuroscience, and Christian theology. As the contributions of nonmedical fields and other 'helping professions' are increasingly valued as constitutive of a 'holistic approach' to dementia alongside medical interventions,[90] there might be an opportunity for a constructive theological response to memory loss. This is what I shall offer in the next section as a reflection on how memory in Augustine is integrally connected to the communion of saints, and how the open and relational nature of memory in Augustine's account might contribute to theological responses to memory loss or impairment.

## Thinking *with* Augustine about memory loss

So far, we have illuminated various aspects of Augustine's account of memory in *Confessions*, which presents a textured account of how memory reveals the openness of the remembering subject to others and the presence and activity of

[88] *Conf*. 13.11.12.

[89] Older examples include John A. Mourant's *Saint Augustine on Memory*, Saint Augustine and the Augustinian Tradition (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1980). Recent examples are Kevin G. Grove's *Augustine on Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021) and Paige E. Hochschild's *Memory in Augustine's Theological Anthropology*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). See also James Wetzel, 'The Force of Memory: Reflections on the Interrupted Self', *Augustinian Studies* 38 (2007), pp. 147–59.

[90] See Annette Leibing, 'Divided Gazes: Alzheimer's Disease, the Person within, and Death in Life', in Annette Leibing and Lawrence Cohen, eds., *Thinking About Dementia: Culture, Loss, and the Anthropology of Senility* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), pp. 242–5.

God in every life. Memory is also particularly important for Augustine because it serves to undergird one's orientation, perception, imagination, and activity – both interiorly and in the world; thus, it is little wonder why Augustine considers memory as setting 'the limits of thinking'.[91] Given the prized role that Augustine gives memory, what might his account contribute to thinking theologically about memory *loss*?[92]

Firstly, as we have explored, Augustine's account of memory is markedly intersubjective: he presents the remembering subject as being fundamentally open to God and to others, especially given how one's memory can also be open to self-deception and frustration. Secondly, Augustine understands that human memory is multi-layered and complex – that is, embodied, affective, and cogitative. Finally, Augustine understands that the openness of memory means that it is also relational – that is, that one's memory can hold the memories of others, be held in the memory of others, and that one is even remembered by God, the living memory of every soul.

In comparison to this, we might consider what alternative philosophical accounts in philosophy say about memory loss and the self, particularly in John Locke's 'forensic' view of personhood. Famously, in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Locke defines a person as 'a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself … which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking and … is essential to it'.[93] Locke's forensic definition of personhood, which necessarily involves memory, might lead one to conclude that one's personal identity extends only so far as one's memory.[94] Indeed, if one forgot past events their life, this would indicate that the person represented by these forgotten memories 'was no longer in that [forgetful] man'.[95] In other words, Locke's

[91] *Trin*. 11.15.

[92] While an extended discussion of the physiological and psychological literature surrounding dementia exceeds the scope of this present paper, it is still important to clarify what I mean by 'memory' given that there are varieties of memory. For example, there is procedural memory (e.g., how to play the piano), semantic memory (e.g., knowing when the Second World War ended), and episodic memory (e.g., remembering one's first day in secondary school). The 'type' of memory most relevant to this discussion is episodic memory, though we shall touch on others – particularly procedural memory as an echo to Augustine's account of embodied memory.

[93] John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), E II.xxvii.9, p. 335.

[94] Giddeon Yaffe, 'Locke on Ideas of Identity and Diversity', in Lex Newman, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Locke's 'Essay Concerning Human Understanding'* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2007), pp. 214–6.

[95] Cf. Locke, *Human Understanding*, E.II.xxxvii.20, pp. 342–3; Raymond Martin and John Barresi, *Naturalization of the Soul: Self and Personal Identity in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 26–9.

account suggests that forgetfulness compromises one's personal identity.[96] Thus, for analytic philosophers like Don Locke, such a presumption means that one 'cannot question the possibility of memory-knowledge without shaking the entire structure of human knowledge' since without memory 'there would be no knowledge at all'.[97]

This has significant implications that prove increasingly relevant and troubling given that millions suffer from varying forms of dementia. To apply Locke's definition of personhood to dementia sufferers would suggest that they have 'lost their minds' or become 'shells' of their former selves since the person they were *prior* to the disease is gone. Such a description of memory loss or impairment, according to John Swinton, contributes to a 'negative hermeneutic' of reading and relating to persons with dementia, thereby creating an additional psychic and emotional barrier and burden for themselves and their loved ones and caregivers.[98] This popular account may even contribute to the social isolation that many with dementia, and the elderly overall, face – an issue exacerbated by our increasingly *asocial* society.[99]

In comparison, I believe that Augustine's account of memory provides theological resources for working towards 'thicker' descriptions of identity – particularly in the face of memory loss or impairment – that (re)orient our perceptions of memory loss by recognizing the presence and action of God – as well as the dignity of creatures – amidst the failures of memory. What I will explore below is how we might think *with* Augustine on memory by 're-describing' memory as something that finds its end in relation to God and the communion of saints, which might also shape the church's witness to God's action and presence amidst the loss or 'end' of memory. I will explore how Augustine's account of memory shares marked resonances with contemporary research in dementia studies – particularly around memory's

[96] On a different note, Locke's anthropology of 'forensic personhood' has a fascinating moral significance: if one cannot remember or is unconscious regarding their actions, then these actions should not be held against them at the Last Judgment.

[97] Don Locke, *Memory* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1971), p. 137. Notably, Galen Strawson disagrees with this traditional reading of Locke, arguing that Locke's concept of consciousness is more akin to *qualia* (e.g., a fundamental sensation underlying conscious existence). Thus, according to Strawson, Lockean consciousness is not self-narration via recollection; thus, it might be possible for an 'Episodic' or non-narrative person with 'only a few seconds' worth' of memory and still be conscious according to Locke. See Galen Strawson, *The Subject of Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 243–52.

[98] John Swinton, *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), pp. 108–9; cf. Hans S. Reinders, *Receiving the Gift of Friendship: Profound Disability, Theological Anthropology, and Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), pp. 197–203.

[99] Michael Banner, *The Ethics of Everyday Life: Moral Theology, Social Anthropology, and the Imagination of the Human*, The Bampton Lectures in the University of Oxford 2013 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 120.

embodied nature and memory's openness to being 'extended' by others – so to show how it might contribute to a theological response to memory loss and impairment.

## Augustinian *habitus* and 'embodied selfhood'

One way that an Augustinian account of memory can contribute toward a theological account of memory loss and impairment is by exploring the embodied and habitual nature of memory, which can persist in the face of memory loss. For example, recalling the classical and Hellenistic metaphors of memory as a wax tablet, we might notice that wax tablets themselves have a memory. This accords with contemporary psychological accounts of memory as something that is embodied and corporeal, as well as cogitative. The human body, like a wax tablet, serves as a medium that holds and communicates memories alongside and beyond what can be expressed cogitatively. As John Swinton argues, memory is 'something that we do with the whole of who we are, not something that simply occurs at a purely material level'.[100] Thus, in considering a theological response to memory loss, we must consider other ways of understanding memory that account for more than merely cogitative forms of recall and reflection. For example, memory is sensual: the smell of sea air, a relatively abstract sensory phenomenon, can involuntarily bring memories of one's childhood to the surface. While the past is often unconscious, it is also indelibly and unmistakably present in materiality – awaiting the particular stimulus that will facilitate its return.

Likewise, Thomas Fuchs describes memory as comprising 'not only one's explicit recollections of the past but also the acquired dispositions, skills and habits that implicitly influence one's present experience and behaviour'.[101] Going further, Fuchs suggests using the term 'body memory' to refer to 'all the implicit knowledge, capacities and dispositions' that are mediated by the body and that 'structure and guide' our lives.[102] This 'body memory' or implicit/embodied memory can be developed through repetition and habituation so that one does not necessarily recollect or re-present the past but *re-enacts* it as their lived past.[103] According to Fuchs, such implicit memory is not a mere reflex or habituated motor skill but a 'refutation of the dualism of pure consciousness and the physical body, for it cannot be attributed to either of them'. While implicit memory is habituated, it remains

[100] John Swinton, *Becoming Friends of Time: Disability, Timefullness, and Gentle Discipleship* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), p. 146.
[101] Thomas Fuchs, 'The Phenomenology of Body Memory', in Sabine C. Koch, Thomas Fuchs, Michela Summa, and Cornelia Müller, eds., *Body Memory, Metaphor and Movement* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012), p. 9.
[102] Fuchs, 'Body Memory', in *Body Memory*, p. 9.
[103] Fuchs, 'Body Memory', in *Body Memory*, p. 17.

intrinsically personal; it is not just anyone re-enacting the past – it is *someone* re-enacting *their* past.[104] As Alasdair MacIntyre wrote, human identity is 'primarily, even if it is not only, bodily'.[105]

Moreover, contemporary researchers have found that while various kinds of dementia are typically marked by damage in parts of the brain that subserve episodic memory, many kinds of 'embodied memories' (i.e., procedural memories) remain intact – even in advanced stages of the disease.[106] For example, ethnographic studies of dementia patients find that many advanced-stage patients could still remember entire songs or prayers from their youth; others could still play instruments that they had played for most of their life, and some even learned new skills like typing (though they forgot that they had learned the skill at all!).[107]

One striking account from Pia C. Kontos details the liturgical life among the residents of an Orthodox Jewish facility that provides long-term care for residents with dementia. One resident, 'Jacob' (a pseudonym), despite being 'unable to put a sentence together' in most interactions could still recite prayers from the Torah with 'absolute coherence and precise pronunciation'.[108] Another resident, 'Dora', is recounted as being unwilling to leave a celebration on the eighth day of Hannukah until she could pray privately before the menorah. Kontos observes that 'Dora had seemingly slipped into another time, subsumed by an inner experience that was strangely sheltered from the ongoing commotion in the room'.[109] Significantly, Kontos notes that such behavior exhibited by these two residents was consistent with their actions prior to their advanced dementia. Kontos suggests that this demonstrates how selfhood persists despite dementia because it 'resides in corporeality'.[110] While one might be unwilling to say that the body *exhausts* selfhood, one ought to conclude that the body is not less than it since memory is not merely cogitative but also embodied/habitual and affective.

Despite not having a modern scientific understanding of memory, Augustine's account of memory as being embodied or sensory – as well as affective and cogitative – accords with such contemporary ethnographic research on embodied, habituated memory in dementia patients. Memory, for Augustine, is deeply ingrained in our sensory experience and deeply connected to *habitus*.

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104 Fuchs, 'Body Memory', in *Body Memory*, p. 11.
105 Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent, Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1999), p. 8.
106 Jonathan K. Foster, *Memory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 109–13.
107 Leibing, 'Divided Gazes', p. 244; Pia C. Kontos, 'Embodied Selfhood: An Ethnographic Exploration of Alzheimer's Disease', in *Thinking about Dementia*, pp. 194–203.
108 Kontos, 'Embodied Selfhood', p. 201.
109 Kontos, 'Embodied Selfhood', p. 203.
110 Kontos, 'Embodied Selfhood', p. 203.

For example, Augustine writes of how memory is embodied in sensory experiences,[111] habituated in sexual habits, gluttony, or carnal perceptions,[112] and rehabilitated in Christ and through the habituated worshipping life of the *totus Christus*.[113] For Augustine, habituated memory speaks to the totality of one's formation, for good or ill, whose score is kept by one's body and renewed in the body of Christ. Such a theological account might also speak to why embodied and habitual memories appear to persist in the face of memory loss or impairment.

One example that might also address the embodied and habitual nature of memory is found in Book 14 of *De Trinitate*, in which Augustine considers how the mind always remembers, knows, and loves itself even if it isn't always thinking of itself.[114] Likewise, Augustine suggests how absurd it might be to call an accomplished musician ignorant of music because they are not currently thinking about it since they remain someone who remembers, knows, and loves it—even if their awareness is elsewhere.[115] What I find suggestive and potentially relevant about this for a theological response to memory loss is how Augustine's example of a musician speaks to how remembering, knowing, and loving any esthetic or intellectual discipline requires various *types* of our consciousness: for example, sensory, affective, and cogitative. Becoming an accomplished musician demands multiple aspects of that person so that habituated memories can remain even when episodic memory is damaged; for example, in how procedural memories (e.g., how to play an instrument) persist, as the above ethnographic studies described. Not only this, but Augustine's example of an accomplished musician also involves *others'* knowledge of the musician's prowess,[116] which appears to imply that such formation can not only be remembered in one's body but also among others given that, for Augustine, memory is intrinsically open and incomplete.

## The communion of saints and the 'end' of memory

Augustine's account of memory as being open, rather than a closed-off faculty belonging to the privileged interiority of a subject, also appears to have resonances with researchers in dementia studies who call for accounts of memory that are 'interactive' and not merely as an individualized neural activity.[117] For example, we might consider the marked resonances between

111 *Conf*. 10.8.12–14.
112 Cf. *Conf*. 10.30.41–10.31.45.
113 *Conf*. 13.34.49; cf. *Trin*. 11.15, 14.23, 15.51. See also Hochschild, *Memory*, pp. 199–203.
114 *Trin*, 14.9.
115 *Trin*, 14.9.
116 *Trin*, 14.9.
117 Leibing, 'Divided Gazes', p. 260; see also Tom Kitwood's *Dementia Reconsidered: The Person Comes First* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1997).

Augustine's account of memory and what contemporary researchers call 'transactive memory'.[118] Transactive memory refers to a shared 'system' in which group members share responsibility for encoding, storing, and retrieving memories from different areas of knowledge, as well as for communicating and connecting the memories of members to the wider group, as well as to the larger 'network' in which the group is situated.[119]

For example, in couples or families, members hold responsibility – whether explicitly or implicitly – for different categories of knowledge (e.g., a partner who remembers when the bills should be paid; one family member who remembers stories from previous generations). This is further illustrated when the relationships that ground a group's transactive memory are disrupted – for example, a couple's breakup or family estrangement – the remaining member(s) assume new responsibility for areas of knowledge and memory that the other(s) once held.[120] While this can be initially jarring for the member(s) of the group, a structure of shared memory might also foster greater recovery from – and future resilience – to such disruptions.[121]

This concept of transactive memory and Augustine's account of memory both indicate memory's open and relational nature might also elucidate the grief of memory loss or impairment. As John Swinton suggests, dementia entails a loss not just for an individual but also for a community.[122] An Augustinian reading of this might be that in my experience of someone's memory loss (e.g., an acquaintance, a close friend, partner, or parent), my grief is textured by the seeming fact that the memories and experiences shared between us now appear to have collapsed solely into the frame of my memory, so that I hold the lonely responsibility of remembering for the both of us. Yet,

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118 Philosophical accounts, such as the extended mind hypothesis, also appear to share interesting parallels with the relational and open nature of Augustinian memory that I have proposed. See, for example, Andy Clark and David Chalmers, 'The extended mind', *Analysis* 58 (1998), pp. 7–19; Andy Clark, 'Intrinsic content, active memory and the extended mind', *Analysis* 65 (2005), pp. 1–11; Mark Rowlands, *The New Science of the Mind: From Extended Mind to Embodied Phenomenology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

119 Daniel M. Wegner, Ralph Erber, and Paula Raymond, 'Transactive Memory in Close Relationships', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 61 (1991), pp. 923–9; cf. Bei Yan, Andrea B. Hollingshead, Kristen S. Alexander, Ignacio Cruz, and Sonia Jawaid Shaikh, 'Communication in Transactive Memory Systems: A Review and Multidimensional Network Perspective', *Small Group Research* 52 (2021), pp. 3–32.

120 Wegner, 'Transactive Memory', p. 929.

121 E.g., studies in organizational behavior suggest that transactive memory systems might foster increased resilience, learning, and performance in groups or firms. See Diogo Cotta and Fabrizio Salvador, 'Exploring the antecedents of organizational resilience practices – a transactive memory systems approach', *International Journal of Operations & Production Management* 40 (2020), pp. 1531–59.

122 John Swinton, *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), p. 107.

while an Augustinian account might hold that memory is a mediator that fosters self-awareness, openness, and even friendship, memory alone is insufficient given its openness to dissolution, distention, and self-deception. Rather, the integrity of memory and the hope of its promise and truthfulness is found in God, the living memory of one's soul. Since, for Augustine, God is ultimately *not* merely found in human memory but is always beyond it,[123] God can hold and remember us amid temporal and affective distention – even in our forgetfulness.[124]

Thus, rather than an Augustinian account of memory pinning personhood to a particular human faculty, it uncovers vision of a *porous* interiority in which even before someone remembers, they are remembered by God. Recalling Augustine in *De Trinitate*, we might also remember that the trinity of our mind (e.g., memory, intellect, and will) 'is not the image of God because it remembers, understands, and loves itself, but because it can remember, understand, and love Him by whom it was made'.[125] For Augustine, the *imago Dei* is not realized in the trinity of memory, intellect, and will through isolated mastery or self-obsession but in love and orientation to God. As Rowan Williams suggests, Augustine's introspective methodology interrogates and demythologizes 'the solitary human ego' by establishing the self 'firmly in relation to God'.[126]

Therefore, in recalling that the image of God in human creatures is not restored or perfected in their own capacity but in their dependence and orientation to God, the communion of saints ought to resist narratives or lists that seek to determine what kind of capacities or degrees of consciousness in a person call for one's full attendance and respect. It is true that because memory is deeply connected to interiority, narrative identity, and formation, the loss or impairment of human memory suggests a profound change in how that person experiences others and is experienced by others. Yet, an Augustinian account of memory might also suggest that such a change does not destroy or erase the presence and action of God in and through that person, nor does it erase the prior and constitutive relation that person has with God. This invites an openness to how, even if we cannot see it, a person suffering from memory loss remains porous to God and others while also being elusively beyond our final accounting since before they are related to us, they are related to God.

Like embodied memories, relations also persist despite memory loss. To understand memory as being open to God and others means that we continue to live in one another's life, even when our memory fails. For example, suppose I am a husband and child because of my relationships with my wife and parents.

123 *Conf*. 10.25.36.
124 *Conf*. 13.1.1.
125 *Trin*. 14.15.
126 Williams, *Augustine*, p. 186.

Such relations are not precluded by memory loss since, even without *my* memory, my wife and parents (and others) would still know me. As Rowan Williams suggests, 'What makes me a person, and what makes me this person rather than another, is not simply a set of facts… I stand in the middle of a network of relations, the point where the lines cross.'[127]

This shares resonances with how researchers in dementia studies consider memory to be 'interactive' so that the memory of dementia patients can be 'extended' by the memories of others.[128] For example, we might consider how adult children who are able to retell the forgotten past to their mother might become, albeit momentarily, an extension of their mother's memory as they share in it together. This concept of 'extending' memory through interpersonal interactions again seems to accord with an Augustinian account of memory in which the communion of saints might appropriate his plea to his readers in Book 9 by upholding one another in remembrance, prayer, and service.[129] This might constitute, as John Swinton suggests, a 're-membering' of those suffering from memory loss by being together with them in a way that participates in and reflects God's loving remembrance and knowledge of them.[130] While such 're-membering' serves to reflect and participate in the reality that finite and temporal creatures are held in divine and human memory, it can take the form of graced, quotidian means. This might entail corporate worship, singing, and prayer – especially songs and prayers that are familiar and beloved by those with dementia; it might also include patiently exchanging stories with them or sharing stories with others who remember so that the sharing of memories serves to 're-member' the loved one; and it can entail spending time in the presence of persons with dementia, which might help them 'sustain a healthy sense of self-identity'.[131] In practising such 're-membering', like Augustine in Book 4 of *Confessions*, we are learning to love others not as eternal, unchanging beings; rather, we are learning to love 'with

127 Rowan Williams, *Being Human: Bodies, Minds, and Persons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), pp. 31–2.

128 Leibing, 'Divided Gazes', p. 260.

129 *Conf*. 9.13.37. See also Eleonore Stump's discussion of the 'second-personal' in *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) and *Philosophical Theology and the Knowledge of Persons* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2023), pp. 38–42. Following Stump, I would suggest that such sharing of second-personal experiences apropos 're-membering' ought also to be acknowledged as being dynamic and open—beyond any one person's sole possession—even while the whole story is known by (and loved in) God.

130 John Swinton, 'Forgetting Whose We Are', *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 11 (2007), p. 59.

131 Glenn Weaver, 'Losing our Memories and Gaining our Souls: The Scandal of Alzheimer's Dementia for the Modern or Postmodern Self', in Paul C. Vitz and Susan M. Felch, eds., *The Self: Beyond the Postmodern Crisis (*Wilmington: ISI Books, 2006), p. 140.

an awareness of the human condition [*humaniter*]'.[132] In other words, 're-membering' serves as a theological response to the finitudes of the human condition while testifying to how, even at the end of memory, memory's *telos* still reveals the continuing presence and action of God in one's life and their remembrance by the communion of saints. As Monica tells Augustine, '[n]othing is distant from God, and there is no ground for fear that he may not acknowledge [us] at the end of the world and raise [us] up'.[133]

## Conclusion

Augustine's account of memory in *Confessions* shows how memory can serve in the ordering and construction of narrative identity but also how given memory's fallibility and openness, remembering subjects are not the only narrators. Augustine 'narrates' his life in prayer before God while also narrating before the communion of saints, his fellow pilgrims.[134] For Augustine, memory does not result in a rootless, self-indulgent individualism but develops true self-awareness in revealing one's relatedness to God and others. Thus, Augustine shows how his memory makes him both the narrator and the one narrated, so that memory is shared among other remembering subjects in the communion of saints by participating in the memory of God in Christ, by the Spirit. Such participation finds its embodied form and fulfilment in the Eucharist in which human memory participates in and is transformed by the memory of Christ and his body, as the communion of saints is infolded in the life of the triune God.[135] Thus, the Eucharist offers, as Alan Torrance suggests, the good news of salvation to those who 'find no confidence in any mode of existence conceived subjectively' by joining together the saints as the *totus Christus* and proclaiming the unconditional love and remembrance of God.[136]

It is unlikely that any theological account will be able to provide sufficiently coherent or neat clarity to the experience of memory loss and impairment – nor, perhaps, should theology endeavor to provide a fully 'satisfactory' account vis-à-vis suffering.[137] However, I hope that this account helps to open horizons of attending to the depth and presence of God in creaturely life, which is open to others and marked by structures and relationships of trust and fidelity that can persist amid memory loss and impairment. Such recognition might also point to the hopeful presence and reality of others, both divine and human, who can

132 *Conf*. 4.7.12.
133 *Conf*. 9.11.28.
134 *Conf*. 10.4.6.
135 *Conf*. 10.43.70.
136 Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), p. 302.
137 Cf. Karen Kilby, 'Evil and the Limits of Theology', *New Blackfriars* 84 (2003), pp. 13–29.

hold us together by remembering with and for us when we cannot. Still, such a theological account or response to memory loss, following Augustine's account of memory, must not give a 'finished' account that pre-maturely resolves pain and loss by giving clear closure where there is none; like Augustine, we do well to reckon with the depth and complexity of our real and unfinished selves, our unresolved losses, and our unanswered questions. Yet, with Augustine, we might also recognize that we do not reckon with such a great loss alone but in dependent and grateful relation to God and with others. Therefore, at the end of memory, we might hope with Augustine in the God who remembers us and gathers together our dispersed selves, and from whom 'no part of [us] will depart'.[138]

138 *Conf*. 10.40.65.