

The Proliferation of Mental Images in Book XI of Augustine's *De Trinitate*

If we're to survive in the temporal world, it's not enough for us to perceive, recall, and think creatively about it. We must first of all have continuity in our experience. Without this, our lives could at best be only the chaos of disconnected perceptions.ⁱ To the extent that we escape this chaos, we seem to be capable of 'retention.' Retention, or primary memory, is the ability to somehow transform what we see into what we remember.ⁱⁱ The appearances of things in the world can thus become memory-images or impressions, enabling us to be aware of more than what we see at any given time.ⁱⁱⁱ Retention, then, is at work where the external meets the internal and perception comes up against memory. This is quite different from recollection, or secondary memory, which requires a discontinuity or delay between the acts of perceiving and remembering. We must avoid confusing the two as we begin to explore the problem of retention as it surfaces in Augustine's *De Trinitate*.

There Augustine lays out a schema that describes how we get from the bare data of sensual forms to the varied multiplicity of our remembrances. In so doing, he is forced to confront the obscure gap that lies between two different kinds of *imago*: images of perception, on the one hand, and images of recollection, on the other. To bridge this gap, Augustine has to come up with other kinds of images that could link these two sides together. But what stands between perception and recollection would seemingly have to be some kind of retention, even if it remains difficult to say what a retention-image might look like. The goal of this paper, then, is to sketch out the complex model of perception and memory we find in Book XI of *De Trinitate*, especially in chapters 9 through 11. Doing so will allow us to respond to the question animating Augustine's investigation here: how do we get from the simple shape of a thing to the seemingly infinite variety of remembered images of that thing?

The Ninefold

In Book XI, then, Augustine lays out a ninefold structure of thought, which brings us from the perception of external things, through the retention of their images, all the way down to our ability to imaginatively recall and manipulate them. Augustine's structure is ninefold because it's composed of two interlocking trinities, which could be pictured as a grid.^{iv} The first of these trinities is that of measure [*mensura*], number [*numerus*], and weight [*pondus*].^v The second consists of three modes of "vision," as Augustine figuratively calls them.^{vi} Primary vision, or perception, names the relation between the thing seen, the seeing of it, and the will directing that seeing.^{vii} For Augustine, these three components are intelligible in terms of our first trinity. The thing seen, the "body" [*corpus*], is the measure; the seeing is the number; the will-to-see is the weight. As he explains it, in general terms:

The number appears in the visions... [I]n the case of visible bodies, there is a certain measure to which the sense of seeing is fitted together in a great number of ways. ... [O]ut of one visible body an appearance is formed for multiple discerners, in such a way that one person might see one thing by way of two viewings, since he has two eyes. There is, then, a certain measure in these things from which visions are produced,^{viii} while there is a certain number in those visions themselves. The will, which joins, orders, and couples measure and number by means of a certain unity, is similar to a weight. It does not settle its appetite for experiencing and thinking down until it comes to rest in those things from which visions are formed.^{ix}

The body is the measure because its form is not entirely passive before the human gaze. Its contours or limits—Augustine will elsewhere write of the *modus* of things, their measure or limit—are the precondition of its being-perceived.^x They are, in that sense, the *modus cogitandi*.^{xi} These limits, however, don't entirely determine the seeing of bodies. For each observer, a different seeing takes place. Even within the same observer, there's a multiplicity of perspectives, given the contingencies of location and timing, as well as the duality of the eyes. And so the seeing of the body is associated with number, because numerous forms can be

perceived out of the same thing.^{xii} We could call these the aspects [*aspectus*], appearances, or phenomena of the thing.^{xiii} As Augustine points out, there is also a rigorous, rational distinction to be drawn between the forms of things as they are and their forms as they appear to us, however identical those two may seem to be in naïve experience.^{xiv} Finally, the whole process of vision is guided by the weight of the will, which draws the mind in this or that direction. It “joins” the measure of the body to the number of seeings, as Augustine tells us. This *pondus* of the mind drags it toward the things of the world, as its gaze encompasses more and more objects. Still, this pull of the will is never fully satisfied, and so must always press on in its search for rest.

This first stage of vision, of course, only tells us how the mind sees the world at all. Augustine next posits an interior trinity, which would account for our ability to recall and manipulate our memories of those things we have perceived throughout our lifetimes.^{xv} This mode of thought, too, is composed of measure, number, and weight. As Augustine writes:

[B]ecause those things which are individually impressed on the memory can be thought in numerous ways, measure would seem to pertain to memory, while number would pertain to vision, since, of course, there could be an innumerable multiplicity of such visions; nevertheless, a non-transgressible limit has been prescribed for each in the memory. The measure, therefore, is in the memory. The number appears in the visions, just as in the case of visible bodies...^{xvi}

When we recall things we've seen, it's as if we are seeing them anew within our own minds. Again, we find two seemingly identical but rationally differentiable forms—the “non-transgressible limit” of the memory-image and the innumerable possible recollection-appearances of that image. These two are brought together only in accord with the same guiding “intentionality of the will” we saw earlier. Interior vision, then, is the parallel of exterior or primary vision.^{xvii}

This interior vision, moreover, isn't reserved for retrospection alone. By driving together the memorial object, the inner (re-)appearance, and the ever-active will, it constitutes ‘cognition’

in general, as the unity of a relational threefold—that is, as something like a trinity.^{xviii} Such cogitation would include the imaginative multiplication and manipulation of the likenesses we have stored up in our *memoria*, thereby bringing us to more complex kinds of thought, such as planning and storytelling.^{xix}

There's something missing, however, in this picture of thought. How, precisely, do we get from one level of vision to the other? How do we jump from parallel to parallel? The inner vision of imagination and recollection 'sees' likenesses of things, what we might call memory-images or impressions. But where do these come from? How do they arise? They're not at all identical with the *aspectus*, the phenomenal appearances of bodies to the mind. Those appearances are context-specific and fleeting. It's not phenomena that are stored up in the reserves of *memoria*. There must, then, be a stage of 'vision' or thought that bridges the gap between perception and cogitation. And so Augustine provides us with an intervening trinity, about which he says tantalizingly little. This threefold would insinuate itself between exterior (or primary) and interior (or tertiary) vision.

There are two visions, therefore: one of perceiving, another of thinking. However, in order for there to be a vision of thought, something similar must be made in the memory out of the perceptual vision. By thinking, the viewpoint of the soul turns itself to this 'something' [i.e. the memory-image], just as, by discerning, the viewpoint of the eyes turns itself toward the [external] body. I wanted, therefore, to point out two trinities in this way: one that occurs when perceptual vision is formed by a body, and another that occurs when the vision of thought is formed by memory. But I did not want to point out this middle trinity, because we do not usually call it 'vision' when a form which occurred in perceptual discernment is committed to the memory.^{xx}

With this middle trinity of secondary vision or retention, Augustine's account of thought becomes ninefold. The trinity of measure, number, and weight is at work within each of the three stages of vision, giving us nine distinct components describing the mind's relation to the

world. And yet Augustine has refused to elaborate on how such secondary vision works—how phenomena are retained or committed to memory.

Perhaps this is because of the confusions that tend to proliferate whenever the question of retention is submitted to scrutiny. In particular, as Augustine points out, this process is difficult to understand in terms of the ocular metaphor. ‘Vision,’ for one thing, would seem to suggest a distancing or mediation that might, at first glance, strike us as inappropriate. Isn’t it the case that our inner cognition recalls those very appearances which first arose in our perceptions of things? We might be tempted to think that the objects or ‘measures’ of our imaginative thought are identical to the numerous forms constituted in primary vision. But Augustine is suggesting to us that this isn’t the case. There is, in fact, a difference between the likenesses we recall and the appearances we perceived. This distinction is as rationally discernible as that between things and their appearances to us, or that between the images we recall and our imaginative manipulations of them.^{xxi}

Returning to the ninefold diagram, we could say that at each stage of vision, the ‘number’ of one stage becomes the ‘measure’ of the next.^{xxii} And so each of the numerous appearances of perception could become the measure or delimited form of secondary vision. Out of that *mensura secunda*, in a way analogous to perception, there would arise a multiplicity of rationally distinct forms, which would become our memory-images, the likenesses of things we have seen. Those likenesses would in turn become the measure of cogitation. When we recall a body from our past, then, we are directing our thought towards neither the thing itself nor its phenomenon, but rather the likeness created out of that phenomenon in the work of secondary vision. Though guided by the *intentio* of our will, this retention would not seem to be conscious or actively performed. Since we are not aware of its mediating function, we might be tempted to think of it

as automatic or even mechanistic.^{xxiii} At the very least, our own experience of the work of retention would strike us as more passive than active.

Obviously, Augustine's secondary vision—if we can call it that—opens up many troublesome questions. From the simple pairing of a thing's shape and its image in our minds when we recall it, we have now uncovered a proliferation of images aiming to link one to the other. Multiple *imagines* appear to be involved at each stage of these processes of perception, retention, and recollection. To sort through all of these and precisely justify their role in the overall structure would take us too far afield here. Given the time we have, it will be best if we stick to just one basic question arising from Augustine's allusion to secondary vision. This is the question of what, precisely, we think we're retaining or 'holding on to' when we move from the field of perception to the realm of recollective memory.

Retinere aut Retendere

Augustine's intervention here should, first and foremost, cause us to reflect on what it is we mean when we use the word 'retention.' Presumably, we're suggesting that contents perceived in a particular moment in time—a present—are 'retained' or held on to by our minds. The term would thus be derived from *retinere*: to hold back, restrain, maintain, keep. The metaphor is materialistic. We retain our possessions; we retain alcohol in our system; we even retain our rights. In a similar way, then, we might retain our own past experience. But is this the most accurate way of describing the obscure operation of secondary vision as Augustine frames it? What, precisely, would we be holding on to? This way of talking about experience assumes that there is something like 'present perception,' which could be determinately severed from the past or future. When I see a pen now, in a temporal present, it's as if I have it in my possession. As it passes out of my grasp, I hold on to it within myself by transforming it into an image of

some kind. I retain the image of that pen within the subconscious pit of my memory reserves, out of which it may or may not emerge at some point.

And yet it is Augustine, in Book XI—not of *De Trinitate*, but of his *Confessions*—who has shown us that the present cannot be discretely severed from the flux of experience in this way.^{xxiv} The present, conceived as a point or instant, simply is not. It's already passing away as soon as it arises—past and future are thus found within the present, disrupting its discrete identity from the inside. If this is indeed the case, then the ‘retaining’ model of retention would fall apart. If the present is nothing or has no span, if it is already becoming-past, then how can I explain my relation to my past by saying that I hold on to what was once present for me?^{xxv} Whatever has been present for me was also—at that time, even while it was seemingly ‘there’ in the presence of a now—past for me. Following Augustine, no firm boundary-line can be drawn between present and past, especially in the realm of lived experience. Retention, however, is supposed to explain how contents encountered within a discrete present can be preserved for reactivation once they’ve become past. It builds the bridge between past and present. But if our relation to our own immediate temporal context of past and future cannot be expressed in terms of a ‘holding-on-to,’ then the retaining model of retention would simply be holding us back from understanding retention at all.

But what if we were to conceive of retention as *re-tendere* instead of *re-tenere*? While this would be etymologically inaccurate, it might allow us to reconsider retention in light of Augustine’s description of temporal experience as *distentio*, found in the same book of the *Confessions*. The temporality of *distentio* is that of being “stretched apart” in and by time.^{xxvi} Throughout his work, Augustine uses words based on stretching or reaching—*tendere*—in order to express the tension of being in time. Think of the prevalence of *extentio*, *attentio*, *intentio*,

and so on. These words come into English as extension, attention, and intention, all of which are often asked to bear heavy philosophical burdens. Confusingly, the endings of these words (at least in English) obscure their different etymological roots.^{xxvii} Retention appears to derive from *tenere*, while distention and the rest seem to trace back to *tendere*. The difference between retaining and ‘re-tending’ might then be analogous to that between attaining and attending. When we say that we attain, we often mean that we achieve something, meet our goal, or acquire some possession. Attending, however, has little if anything to do with achievement or acquisition.^{xxviii} It is merely a relation; we might even call it an intentional relation. When we attend, we’re merely directed toward this or that. If we could re-tend, then, we would be directed toward the past without necessarily having it or its likeness in our possession. We would not be holding on to a past present, not even to one that’s just passed.

Thinking about retention in terms of stretching or being-stretched-out does not so much solve as reformulate the question of memory. If, given the temporality of *distentio*, there is no present that we take into our grasp, we’d have to rethink our temporal experience without falling back on the foundational notion of a now.^{xxix} *Praesens tempus* would have to be thought on the basis of *distentio*, and not the reverse.^{xxx} Retention, stretching-back, would thus be one aspect of the tensile force of time that pulls us apart. The other would have to involve the future—it would have to be pro-tention.^{xxxi} And this, it would seem, could be thinkable only in terms of *tendere*. For what would it mean to hold on to the future? To keep it in our grasp?

Reframing retention as ‘re-tending’ does not, of course, resolve all of our problems here, especially if we conceive of it in terms of ‘reaching.’ For if we are already pulled apart by a time without present, how can we be said to reach back into the past? On what basis could we do that? On what ground would we be standing? Time would keep passing, continually preventing the

concretion of the present into a discrete instant. The image of a platform upon which we could stand and direct our gaze forward or backward proves unhelpful here. If there's any value in thinking of retention as *re-tendere*, it lies not in the idea of our active agency, but in the passive experience of being stretched out or even torn apart by time's fierce currents and undertows. And yet we still remember and anticipate; there remain modes of active comportment in both directions. Perhaps, then, we need to have recourse to something like the middle voice, since both *distentio* and *retentio* refuse to be either wholly active or purely passive.^{xxxii}

Conclusion

All of these questions, admittedly, become visible mostly on the surface of Augustine's *De Trinitate*. Here we are dealing only with a small part of Book XI. The threefolds that Augustine proposes here will, eventually, fall far short of counting as true trinities, since there turns out to be only one of those. The full extent and aims of Augustine's psychology, too, can only be appreciated if we take into account his claim that the *imago dei* in humanity can never be attained through thinking alone. Only thought informed by God could come close to that.

Augustine's journey toward that conclusion, though, gave him time to think through the complexity of our conscious life as we relate to the world around us. These middle passages from Book XI of *De Trinitate* are able to excavate the tunnels linking perception to retention and recollection, each of which bears within itself a multiplicity of potential images. Only rational thought can hope to pry these interrelated images apart and try to set them in their proper place. But when we map this network of images onto Augustine's account of temporality as *distentio* from Book XI of the *Confessions*, the task becomes even more challenging. We cannot remember what we perceived without retaining some sort of image, and yet it remains unclear what this retention-image is or how it's produced. If we're to continue to believe that the images

we recollect relate back to the things we once perceived, then—following Augustine—we might just have to depend on this strange kind of vision that we simply do not see at all.

Fig. 1: The ninefold structure of intentional thought according to Augustine.

THOUGHT (levels of objectivation)	Measure (limit)	Number (multiplicity)	Weight (directedness)
Perception (primary vision)	Bodies or Things ('objects seen;' <i>formae vel species rerum in mundo</i>)	Phenomena ('seeings;' the appearances of the body, as opposed to the body which appears, are multiple due to: (a) different seeings of the same thing by the same mind; (b) different seeings of the same thing by different minds)	Will (perceptual <i>intentio</i>)
Retention (secondary vision)	Phenomena (now themselves objectified; <i>formae rerum visarum</i>)	Memory-Impressions (the same phenomena can be imprinted into <i>memoria</i> in countless—if not infinite—ways)	Will (retentional <i>intentio—re-tentio?</i>)
Imagination (tertiary vision)	Memory-Impressions (now themselves objectified; <i>formae rerum memoriae</i>)	Phantasies (imaginative multiplications and variations; the same memory-impressions can be used in myriad ways)	Will (cognitive <i>intentio</i> ; includes: recollective memory [to be distinguished from the 'retention' of secondary vision], anticipation, imagination, planning, interpretation, etc.)

Bibliography

Augustine. *Confessions*. Trans. William Watt. Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1912.

_____. *De Trinitate*. CCSL 50-50A. Eds. W.J. Mountain & F. Glorie. Turnhout: Brepols, 1968.

_____. *On Christian Doctrine*. Trans. R.P.H. Green. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.

_____. *The Trinity*. Trans. Stephen MacKenna. Washington DC: CUA Press, 2003.

Derrida, Jacques. *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1985.

_____. *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*. Trans. David B. Allison. Evanston IL: Northwestern UP, 1973.

Hegel, G.W.F. *Philosophy of Mind*. Trans. W. Wallace & A.V. Miller, ed. M.J. Inwood. Oxford: Clarendon, 2007.

Heidegger, Martin. *Holzwege*. Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2003.

_____. *Identity and Difference*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2002.

_____. *Off the Beaten Track*. Trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002.

Husserl, Edmund. *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*. Trans. Anthony J. Steinbock. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001.

_____. *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)*. Trans. John Barnett Brough. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Paul Guyer & Allan Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.

Marion, Jean-Luc. "Resting, Moving, Loving: the Access to the Self according to Saint Augustine." *Journal of Religion* 91, no. 1 (January 2011).

McEvoy, James. "Biblical and Platonic Measure in John Scotus Eriugena," in Bernard McGinn & Willemien Otten, eds., *Eriugena: East and West*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994.

_____. "The Divine as the Measure of Being in Platonic and Scholastic Thought." *Studies in Medieval Philosophy* 17, ed. J.F. Wippel (Washington DC, 1986): 85-116.

O'Donnell, James J. *Commentary on the Electronic Edition of Augustine's Confessions*. <http://www.stoa.org/hippo>. 1992.

Plato. *Theaetetus; Sophist*. Trans. Harold North Fowler. Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1921.

Plotinus. *Enneads*. Trans. A.H. Armstrong. Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1966-1988.

ⁱ Immanuel Kant articulated this necessity in his discussion of the three levels of synthesis (as part of the transcendental deduction): apprehension (in the intuition), reproduction (in the imagination), and finally apperception (the mind's continuity with itself through time). He draws his distinctions within cognition differently than do Hegel and Augustine, as we shall see. See the *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer & Allan Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), A103-A110: "Without consciousness that that which we think is the very same as what we thought a moment before, all reproduction in the series of representations would be in vain." Just prior to that section, on A102, Kant also argues that apprehension is "inseparably combined" with the synthesis of reproduction, without which thought could in no way be coherent. However, he is primarily concerned with transcendental apperception as a logical prerequisite (and in its logical functioning through concepts), less so with the mechanics (retentional and potentional) by which such apperception is made possible.

ⁱⁱ The terminology of retention (as primary memory) and recollection (as secondary memory) is taken from John Barnett Brough's English translation of Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal*

Time (1893-1917) (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), e.g., §14 & §19. The division between retention and recollection is not always drawn this way, as we will see below.

ⁱⁱⁱ Our way of speaking about the relationship between perception and retention is still plagued by obfuscations in the way we talk about time. The phrase ‘at any given time’ suggests that time is made up of punctiliar or at least discrete units, which are lined up in succession. For reasons elaborated upon below, such a conception of time cannot be accepted here. This is especially true given that we are discussing Augustine, whose account of time cries out against the dissection of temporality into a row of individual nows. The wording of ‘a chaos of disconnected perceptions’ is also inexact, since it assumes that there is not an underlying temporal continuity already running beneath perceptual sequences. The question is not so much ‘how do we get out of the present and have access to the past?’ as ‘how could we even have conjured up the idea that we live in a discrete present in the first place?’ See, e.g., the *Confessions*, ed. William Watt (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1912), XI.xv: *Quod tamen ita raptim a futuro in praeteritum transvolat, ut nulla morula extendatur. Nam si extenditur, dividitur in praeteritum et futurum: praesens autem nullum habet spatium.* / The present “thus nevertheless flies immediately from future to past, so that it is stretched out by not even the smallest pause. For if it is stretched out, it is divided between past and future. But the present has no span.” (All translations from *De Trinitate* or the *Confessions* will be my own.)

^{iv} See fig. 1 below.

^v There is not necessarily a relation of priority or superiority between the ‘first’ and ‘second’ trinities. They are ordered this way merely for elucidatory purposes. On the measure-number-weight trinity and its various permutations in ancient thought, see James McEvoy, “Biblical and Platonic Measure in John Scotus Eriugena,” in Bernard McGinn & Willemien Otten, eds., *Eriugena: East and West* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), as well as McEvoy, “The Divine as the Measure of Being in Platonic and Scholastic Thought,” in *Studies in Medieval Philosophy* 17, ed. J.F. Wippel (Washington DC, 1986), 85-116. The most common Christian example is Wisdom 11.21: God “ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight.” Measure imagery occurs elsewhere in the Bible, of course, such as Job 38.4-5, Luke 6.38, Matt. 7.2, and 2 Cor. 10.13. Likewise, in the Platonic tradition there is a recurring question about whether man or god is the measure of the world, and in what sense. See, e.g., *Theaetetus* 152A and Plotinus, *Enneads* I.viii.2 (on the One as measure). In his commentary on *Conf.* I.vii.12, James J. O’Donnell provides a summary discussion of a related trinity (*modus, forma, ordo*) in Augustine’s thought. *Ordo* also seems to be linked to Augustine’s understanding of weight. Weight is the force that draws everything into its proper place, and thus into an order. On this, see Jean-Luc Marion, “Resting, Moving, Loving: the Access to the Self according to Saint Augustine,” *Journal of Religion* 91, no. 1 (January 2011), 24-42.

^{vi} Precisely how figuratively ‘*visio*’ is meant to be taken is a question of both great difficulty and some importance. Does the extensive reach of the ocular metaphor severely hinder our attempts to describe intentional (or even just perceptive) thought, or is its necessity inescapable?

^{vii} Augustine, *De Trinitate*, CCSL 50-50A, eds. W.J. Mountain & F. Glorie (Turnhout: Brepols, 1968), XI.ii.5: *tria haec quamvis diuersa natura quemadmodum in quandam unitatem contemperentur meminerimus, id est species corporis quae uidetur et imago eius impressa sensui quod est uisio sensusue formatus et uoluntas animi quae rei sensibili sensum admouet, in eoque ipsam uisionem tenet.* / “Let us recall how these three things, although diverse in nature, were determined to be in a certain unity: (1) the shape of the body, which is seen; (2) its image, impressed into the sense, which is ‘vision’ or the formed sense; (3) the will of the soul, which moves the sense to the sensible thing, on which it holds that vision.” Although these translations are original, the edition of Stephen MacKenna, *The Trinity* (Washington DC: CUA Press, 2003), was consulted here.

^{viii} *Exprimuntur.* ‘Express,’ though it matches up neatly with our (and Augustine’s) terminology of memory ‘impressions,’ seems too awkward here.

^{ix} *De Trin.* XI.xi.18. Here is the Latin passage in full, the beginning of which will be cited below: *Sed quia numerose cogitari possunt quae singillatim sunt impressa memoriae, uidetur ad memoriam mensura, ad uisionem uero numerus pertinere quia licet innumerabilis sit multiplicitas talium uisionum, singulis tamen in memoria praescriptus est intransgressibilis modus. Mensura igitur in memoria, in uisionibus numerus appetit sicut in ipsis corporibus uisibilibus mensura quaedam est cui numerosissime coaptatur sensus uidendi, et ex uno uisibili multorum cernentium aspectus ita ut etiam unus propter duorum oculorum numerum plerumque unam rem geminata specie uideat sicut supra docuimus. In his ergo rebus unde uisiones exprimuntur quaedam mensura est, in ipsis autem uisionibus numerus. Voluntas uero quae ista coniungit et ordinat et quadam unitate copulat, nec sentiendi aut cogitandi appetitum nisi in his rebus unde uisiones formantur adquiescens conlocat, ponderi similis est.*

^x On the *modus* of all embodied and temporal (i.e. mortal) things, see *Conf.* IV.x: *oriuntur et occidunt, et oriendo quasi esse incipiunt, et crescunt, ut perficiantur, et perfecta senescunt et intereunt: et non omnia sensescunt et omnia intereunt.* Ergo cum oriuntur et tendunt esse, quo magis celeriter crescunt, ut sint, eo magis festinant, ut non

sint. *Sic est modus eorum. Tantum dedisti eis, quia partes sunt rerum, quae non sunt omnes simul, sed decadendo ac succedendo agunt omnes universum, cuius partes sunt. Ecce sic peragitur et sermo noster per signa sonantia. Non enim erit totus sermo, si unum verbum non decadat, cum sonuerit partes suas, ut succedat aliud. Laudet te ex illis anima mea, deus, creator omnium, sed non eis infigatur glutine amore per sensus corporis. Eunt enim qui ibant, ut non sint, et conscindunt eam desideriis pestilentiosis, quoniam ipsa esse vult et requiescere amat in eis, quae amat. In illis autem non est ubi, quia non stant: fugiunt, et quis ea sequitur sensu carnis? Aut quis ea comprehendit, vel cum praesto sunt? /* “All things arise and fall. By arising, it is as if they begin to be. They grow until they are mature. When they are mature, they grow old and perish. Not all things grow old, but all perish. And so while they are arising and stretching out towards being, by which they grow more quickly, so that they might be, they are also hastening away from being, so that they are not. This is their measure [*modus*]. You gave them this much, because they are ‘parts’ of things, which are not all together at once. Rather, by giving way and coming forth, all things ‘perform’ the universe of which they are the parts. ... God, creator of all, let my soul praise you for these things. But don’t let it be stuck to them with the glue of love in its embodied experience. For they are going where they would go, so that they are not. They tear the soul to pieces with sickening desires, since it wants to *be* and yet loves to rest in the things it loves. But there is no rest in those things, since they do not stand still. They flee away. And who could follow them in incarnate experience? Or who could grasp them, even when they are right there?” On the relation between *modus* and *mensura* in this context, see McEvoy, “Biblical and Platonic Measure,” 165: “*modus* is a synonym for *mensura*.”

^{xi} This *modus*, as we will see, is found in both exterior and interior vision; see *De Trin.* XI.viii.14: *At si propterea nemo aliquid corporale cogitat nisi quod sensit, quia nemo meminit corporale aliquid nisi quod sensit, sicut in corporibus sentiendi sic in memoria est cogitandi modus. /* “But if, therefore, no one thinks about anything embodied except for what he has sensed [experienced], since no one remembers anything embodied unless he has sensed it, then there is a limit of thinking in memory just as there is in the bodies which are sensed.”

^{xii} Recall that the trinity *mensura-numerus-pondus* finds its parallel in *modus-forma-ordo*, where *forma* (or sometimes *species*) takes the place of *numerus*.

^{xiii} Perhaps the ambiguity of *aspectus*, which seems to be both the seeing of an object and the appearance of that object to the mind (that is, both an act and a form), would be best captured in the English “view.” A “view” may refer both to: (1) my seeing of something, the way I see it [“My view of the ocean from here...”]; and (2) the appearance of a thing [“That’s a nice view.”]. Still, for purposes of precision, and because of the questions to be addressed, ‘appearance’ or ‘phenomenon’ will be used most often below.

^{xiv} *De Trin.* XI.ii.3: *nullo modo tamen eiusdem substantiae est corpus quo formatur sensus oculorum cum idem corpus uidetur et ipsa forma quae ab eodem imprimitur sensui, quae uisio uocatur. /* “Still, in no way is the body, by which the sense of sight is formed (when this body is seen), of the same substance as that form itself, which is impressed by the body on the senses, which [form] is called ‘vision.’” Also in XI.ii.3: *Sed formam corporis quod uidemus et formam quae ab illa in sensu uidentis fit per eundem sensum non discernimus quoniam tanta coniunctio est ut non pateat discernendi locus. /* “But we do not differentiate between (1) the form of the body which we see and (2) the form which is made by it in the sense of sight by means of that same sense. This is because there is such a conjoining of the two that a place of differentiation does not open up.”

^{xv} We find a more subtle and complex account of remembering than that of *Conf.* X.xiv in *De Trin.* XI.iii.6: *Atque ita fit illa trinitas ex memoria et interna uisione et quae utrumque copulat uoluntate, quae tria cum in unum coguntur ab ipso coactu cogitatio dicitur. Nec iam in his tribus diuersa substantia est. ... Sicut autem ratione discernebatur species uisibilis qua sensus corporis formabatur et eius similitudo quae fiebat in sensu formato ut esset uisio (aliоquin ita erant coniunctae ut omnino una eademque putaretur), sic illa phantasia, cum animus cogitat speciem uisi corporis, cum constet ex corporis similitudine quam memoria tenet et ex ea quae inde formatur in acie recordantis animi, tamen sic una et singularis appetet ut duo quaedam esse non inueniantur nisi iudicante ratione qua intellegimus aliud esse illud quod in memoria manet etiam cum aliunde cogitamus et aliud fieri cum recordamur, id est ad memoriam redimus, et illic inuenimus eandem speciem. /* “And so, in this way, that trinity is made out of the memory, the internal vision, and the will that joins both together. These three, when they are coagulated into one, are said to be thought or ‘co-gitation,’ on account of that very ‘co-agulation.’ For there is no longer any difference of substance in these three. ... Just as, moreover, a visible shape was rationally distinguished, by which the sense of the body was formed, and its likeness, which was made in the formed sense so that there could be vision (although they had been conjoined in such a way that they were thought to be entirely one), so it is with phantasy. When the soul thinks about the shape of a body it has seen, although it is composed of the likeness [i.e. representation] of a body (which memory holds on to) and of that likeness which is formed in the viewpoint of the recollecting soul, still it appears that there is only one, singular likeness. Thus, these two likenesses are not found to

be two, unless by recourse to rational judgment. Through rational judgment, we understand that what remains in the memory is one thing, even though we think about it in different ways, while another thing comes to be whenever we recollect, that is, return to memory, and find there the same shape.” *Acies* is here given as “viewpoint” in an attempt to capture the double connotation of seeing (*acies* as sight) and directedness (*acies* as the point, the tip of the blade).^{xvi} *De Trin.* XI.xi.18; the Latin has already been cited above.

^{xvii} On this parallelism, see *De Trin.* XI.iv.7: *Quod ergo est ad corporis sensum aliquod corpus in loco, hoc est ad animi aciem similitudo corporis in memoria; et quod est aspicientis uisio ad eam speciem corporis ex qua sensus formatur, hoc est uisio cogitantis ad imaginem corporis in memoria constitutam ex qua formatur acies animi; et quod est intentio uoluntatis ad corpus uisum uisionemque copulandam ut fiat ibi quaedam unitas trium quamuis eorum sit diuersa natura, hoc est eadem uoluntatis intentio ad copulandam imaginem corporis quae inest in memoria et uisionem cogitantis, id est formam quam cepit acies animi rediens ad memoriam, ut fiat et hic quaedam unitas ex tribus non iam naturae diuersitate discretis sed unius eiusdemque substantiae quia hoc totum intus est et totum unus animus.* / “Therefore, as a body in space is to the sense of a body, so the likeness of a body in memory is to the viewpoint of the soul. As the vision of the viewer is to the shape of the body (by which the sense is formed), so the vision of the thinker is to the image of the body constituted in the memory (by which the viewpoint of the soul is informed). As the intentionality of the will is to the body that is seen and the vision coupled with it (so that there a certain unity of the three occurs, although they are of diverse natures), so the same intentionality of the will is to the image of the body (which is in the memory) and its conjoined vision of thought, i.e., the form which the viewpoint of the soul grasps when it goes back into the memory. In this latter case, this unity is no longer made out of three different things of diverse natures. The three components are now of one and the same substance, since they are all wholly interior and wholly one soul.”

^{xviii} This etymology of *cogitatio* from *cogere* is given in *De Trin.* XI.iii.6, cited above.

^{xix} On Augustine’s expansive understanding of *memoria* (to include activities that we would usually subsume under ‘mind’ in general), see *Conf.* X.viii.

^{xx} *De Trin.* XI.ix.16: *Visiones enim duae sunt, una sentientis, altera cogitantis. Ut autem possit esse uisio cogitantis ideo fit in memoria de uisione sentientis simile aliquid quo se ita convertat in cogitando acies animi, sicut se in cernendo conuertit ad corpus acies oculorum. Propterea duas in hoc genere trinitates uolui commendare, unam cum uisio sentientis formatur ex corpore, aliam cum uisio cogitantis formatur ex memoria. Medium uero nolui quia non ibi solet uisio dici cum memoriae commendatur forma quae fit in sensu cernentis.*

^{xxi} This latter distinction, between memory-images and their phantasy-appearances (in internal vision), is made by Aug in *De Trin.* XI.iii.6 and reiterated in XI.viii.13: *Sed hinc aduerti aliquanto manifestius potest aliud esse quod reconditum memoria tenet et aliud quod inde in cogitatione recordantis exprimitur, quamuis cum fit utriusque copulatio unum idemque uideatur.* / “But here it can be perceived somewhat more clearly that what the memory holds hidden is one thing and what is produced from it in the thought of the one who recalls is another, although they appear to be one and the same, since a connection is made between the two.”

^{xxii} The possibility of a stage or ‘number’ preceding the ‘measure’ of perception exceeds our scope here, but may ultimately be of some importance. Within the context of the ninefold, Augustine stops the multiplication of formal types at four: (1) the body perceived; (2) the phenomenon; (3) the retained memory-image; (4) the phantasy-image or imaginative form. See *De Trin.* XI.ix.16: *Ab specie quippe corporis quod cernitur exoritur ea quae fit in sensu cernentis, et ab hac ea quae fit in memoria, et ab hac ea quae fit in acie cogitantis. Quapropter uoluntas quasi parentem cum proli copulat: primo speciem corporis cum ea quam gignit in corporis sensu, et ipsam rursus cum ea quae ex illa fit in memoria, atque istam quoque tertio cum ea quae ex illa paritur in cogitantis intuitu.* / “Of course, from the shape of the body which is discerned there arises a shape which occurs in the sense of the one who discerns; by means of this latter shape [the experiential phenomenon] there arises a shape which occurs in the memory; and by means of this shape in the memory [retention-image] there arises a shape which occurs in the viewpoint of the thinker [the phantasy-image]. Hence the will joins together (as if parent and child): the shape of the body with that which it begets in the bodily sense; the shape begotten in the bodily sense with that which is made out of it in the memory; that shape made in the memory with that which is produced from it in the intuition of the thinker.”

^{xxiii} Of course, the possibility remains that retention might be best spoken of in the middle voice, or as taking place in a way that is both mediate and automatic.

^{xxiv} Recall, e.g., *Conf.*, XI.xv.20: *si quid intellegitur temporis, quod in nullas iam vel minutissimas momentorum partes dividi possit, id solum est quod praesens dicatur; quod tamen ita raptim a futuro in praeteritum transvolat, ut nulla morula extendatur. nam si extenditur, dividitur in praeteritum et futurum; praesens autem nullum habet spatium.* / “If we conceive of something temporal which could no longer be divided into any tiny little parts of movements—that alone is what could be called ‘present.’ And yet it flies immediately from future to past, so that it

is stretched out by not even the smallest pause. For if it is stretched out, it is divided between past and future. But the present has no span.”

^{xxv} Here there is obviously an ambiguity between the presence of things in the world and the present as a phase in time. A critique of the now, inspired by Augustine, need not become an attack upon presence in general. However, we would have to figure out a way to conceive of that presence without recourse to ‘the present,’ naively construed as a discrete instant or something substantially different from the rest of the flux. An attempt to rethink presence this way can be found in Martin Heidegger, “*Der Spruch des Anaximander*,” in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1950/2003); *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. Julian Young & Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge UP, 2002), esp. 261-264.

^{xxvi} *Conf. XI.xxix* (here give in full): *Sed quoniam melior est misericordia tua super vitas, ecce distentio est vita mea, et me suscepit dextera tua in domino meo, mediatore filio hominis inter te unum et nos multos, in multis per multa, ut per eum adprehendam, in quo et adprehensus sum, et a veteribus diebus colligar sequens unum, praeterita oblitus, non in ea quae futura et transitura sunt, sed in ea quae ante sunt non distentus, sed extensus, non secundum distentionem, sed secundum intentionem sequor ad palmam supernae vocationis, ubi audiam vocem laudis et contemplar delectationem tuam nec venientem nec praetereuntem. Nunc vero anni mei in gemitibus, et tu solacium meum, domine, pater meus aeternus es; at ego in tempora dissilui, quorum ordinem nescio, et tumultuosis varietatibus dilaniantur cogitationes meae, intima viscera animae meae, donec in te confluam purgatus et liquidus igne amoris tui.* / “Since, however, your mercy is better and above our lives—look at how my life is a stretching-apart. Your right hand picks me up and brings me to my lord, the human mediator. He mediates between you, who are One, and we, who are many. We are in many things and we pass through many things. You bring me to him so that I might take hold of him by whom I am already held, so that I might be gathered up from my aged days, so that I chase after one thing, having forgotten all that has passed away. I’m not chasing after those things that are going to be and pass away, but rather those things that are ‘before.’ I am stretched out, but I am not torn apart. I am pursuing not distraction but focus. I am chasing after the victory palm of the calling from above. If I could win this palm, I would hear a voice of praise and contemplate your delight, which neither arrives nor passes away. Now, of course, my years are full of groans. You are my relief, Lord. You are eternal, my father. But I am ripped apart in times. I have no idea what their order is. My thoughts and the innermost guts of my soul will be torn to shreds by unstable differences until I flow into you, purified and melted down by the fire of your love.”

^{xxvii} The seemingly arbitrary shift between the endings *-sion* and *-tion* does not help matters.

^{xxviii} As usual, ambiguity remains, as when we say that we “attain to” something in the sense of striving for it.

^{xxix} On the impossibility of grasping in time, recall Augustine, *Conf. IV.x*: *sed decedendo ac succedendo agunt omnes universum, cuius partes sunt. Ecce sic peragitur et sermo noster per signa sonantia. Non enim erit totus sermo, si unum verbum non decedat, cum sonuerit partes suas, ut succedat aliud. Laudet te ex illis anima mea, deus, creator omnium, sed non eis infigatur glutine amore per sensus corporis. Eunt enim quo ibant, ut non sint, et consindunt eam desideriis pestilentiosis, quoniam ipsa esse vult et requiescere amat in eis, quae amat. In illis autem non est ubi, quia non stant: fugiunt, et quis ea sequitur sensu carnis? Aut quis ea comprehendit, vel cum praesto sunt?* / “Rather, by giving way and coming forth, all things ‘perform’ the universe of which they are the parts. … God, creator of all, let my soul praise you for these things. But don’t let it be stuck to them with the glue of love in its embodied experience. For they are going where they would go, so that they are not. They tear the soul to pieces with sickening desires, since it wants to *be* and yet loves to rest in the things it loves. But there is no rest in those things, since they do not stand still. They flee away. And who could follow them in incarnate experience? Or who could grasp them, even when they are right there?”

^{xxx} Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston IL: Northwestern UP, 1973), 85: “The living present springs forth out of its nonidentity with itself and from the possibility of a retentional trace. Being-primordial must be thought on the basis of the trace, and not the reverse.”

^{xxxi} On protention, and its difference from ‘secondary anticipation,’ see Husserl, *Internal Time*, esp. §40.

^{xxxii} On the passivity of retention, and its relation to affection (being-affected), see Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, trans. Anthony J. Steinbock (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001), esp. §33. Husserl even goes as far as to imply that an investigation into passive retention would lead to something like a “phenomenology of the unconscious,” strange as that may sound. In his words (from §33, 201): “These questions are difficult to answer; and they are especially difficult if we wish to make our way from the sphere of the living present into the sphere of forgetfulness and to comprehend reproductive awakening, as will be necessary to do later. I do not need to say that the entirety of these observations that we are undertaking can also be given the famed title of the ‘unconscious.’ Thus, our considerations concern a phenomenology of the so-called unconscious.”