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**Key Insights About the Relations Between Memory, Self, and
God in Augustine's *Confessions* Book 10**

Abstract: How can Augustine claim to remember God if God is outside of time? Augustine makes an implicit argument in *Confessions* 10.25.36, what I call Argument A, and its conclusion provides an answer to this question. The human mind can be divided into two parts: Mind_{physical} and Mind_{non-physical}. Since Augustine thinks that the “I” (*ego*) is responsible for human remembering, these two parts of the mind also have corresponding memorative powers, the I_{physically-remember} and the I_{non-physically-remember} powers; the latter is responsible for remembering God. For clues to the exact content of Augustine's remembrance of God, I turn to book 7 where he describes the internal sight of God above the eye of his mind (*oculo animae meae*) as the seeing of truth, immutable light, and eternity. I then reformulate Argument A into Argument A', which concludes that God is a

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content of non-physical memory in the $Mind_{non-physical}$ and answers the question motivating this study.

Keywords: Augustine, memory, self, God, Confessions.

Résumé : Comment Augustin peut-il prétendre se souvenir de Dieu si Dieu est hors du temps ? Augustin avance un argument implicite dans les *Confessions* 10.25.36, que j'appelle Argument A, et sa conclusion apporte une réponse à cette question. L'esprit humain peut être divisé en deux parties: l'Esprit_{physique} et l'Esprit_{non-physique}. Puisqu'Augustin pense que le «Je» (*ego*) est responsable de la mémoire humaine, ces deux parties de l'esprit possèdent également des pouvoirs mémoriels correspondants, les pouvoirs $Je_{me-souviens-physiquement}$ et $Je_{me-souviens-non-physiquement}$; ce dernier est responsable du souvenir de Dieu. Pour des indices sur le contenu exact du souvenir de Dieu chez Augustin, je me tourne vers le Livre VII, où il décrit la vision intérieure de Dieu au-dessus de l'œil de son esprit (*oculo animae meae*) comme la vision de la vérité, de la lumière immuable et de l'éternité. Je reformule ensuite l'Argument A en Argument A', qui conclut que Dieu est un contenu de la mémoire non physique dans l'Esprit_{non-physique} et répond à la question qui motive cette étude.

Mots-Clés : Augustin, mémoire, soi, Dieu, Confessions.

1. Introduction

After 9 books of Augustine living in his memory and remembering his own life, in book 10 of his *Confessions*, he turns to a philosophical exploration of his own power of memory. I read *Confessions* book 10 under the lens of analytic philosophy, with its merits of studying a text critically, deeply, and dispassionately, with the goal of drawing sharp distinctions for clearer understanding. I concentrate on book 10 and I do not mention other Augustinian works. I also focus on the primary text of what Augustine himself says rather than on secondary literature. The problem I study in this paper is the following: how can Augustine claim to remember God if God is atemporal, as Augustine believes?

The analytic methodology will help make the answer clear throughout book 10 of the *Confessions*. First, we will look at how Augustine characterizes the human mind and its relation to memory in *Confessions* book 10. Second, we will briefly look at Augustine's philosophy of forgetting to understand the distinction of what I call pure and impure forgetting. Third, we will look at Augustine's claim that God is in his memory and construct argument A which gives a basis for the answer to the question motivating this study. Fourth, we will draw ontological distinctions about the mind and its memorative powers. Fifth, we will briefly look at *Confessions* book 7 for clues to what the content of Augustine's memory of God is. Sixth, we will

look at an analytic example of the remembrance of God, reconstruct argument A (what I call argument A'), and provide additional premises to explain the remembrance of God more clearly. Seventh, we will provide some objections and replies. Finally, we will summarize and offer more questions for further study.

2. 1. Augustine on the relation of memory and self in *Confessions* book 10

The first sentences of Book 10 of the *Confessions* set the tone for the rest of the book. Augustine writes, «May I know you, who know me. May I 'know as I also am known' (1 Cor.13:12)»¹. Augustine wants to know God, an important theme throughout the *Confessions*. In the first half of Book 10, Augustine searches his own memory to try to find God. He believes he needs to «ascend» (*ascendam*) to God through his soul (*animam*) and «rise above» (*transibo*) his body². More specifically, Augustine uses the power of his memory to rise above his body.

¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, transl. H. Chadwick, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1991. For the Latin, I am using the following reference: Augustine, *The Confessions*, ed. J.P. Migne, URL: <https://augustinus.cc/la/en/~Conf> (accessed online 14 June 2025). *Confessions* 10.1.1: «Cognoscam te, cognitor meus, cognoscam, sicut et cognitus sum.» Hereafter I will use the shortform “*Conf.*” for *Confessions*.

² *Conf.* 10.7.11. «Per ipsam animam meam ascendam at illum. Transibo vim meam, qua haero corpori et vitaliter compagem eius repleo.»

This paper will not go into depth on how Augustine understands the difference between human and animal souls, but some comments are in order. According to Augustine, animals cannot ascend to God through their souls as they do not have the same kind of soul as humans. Animals are unable to reason or ask questions³. Animals have an *anima*, but humans have an *animus*, which is able to reason and ask questions. I will follow Chadwick's translation of *animus* as «mind», or occasionally «soul», which I understand him to mean the human mind that is different from the *anima* of animals. The specific difference between «human mind» and «soul» is not always clear. Augustine thinks that one important feature of the *animus* is its ability to go beyond itself to reach the divine through its memory which animals lack.

Embedded in his discussions of knowledge, Augustine gives an important insight into how he thinks the human mind (or soul) relates to memory. He writes, «It is I who remember, I who am mind»⁴. Since he accepts a dualistic ontology of body (*corpus*) and human mind (*animus*), he identifies his «I» or «self» with the *animus*. The «I» (ego) is who remembers (*qui memini*) so memory must be a power of the «I». Indeed, without his memory, he cannot

³ See *Conf.* 10.6.10. «Animalia pusilla et magna vident eam, sed interrogare nequeunt. Non enim praeposita est in eis nuntiantibus sensibus iudex ratio.»

⁴ *Conf.* 10.16.25. «Ego sum, qui memini, ego animus.»

even speak of himself⁵. Additional comments about the «I» and its relation to remembering will be explored in more detail in later sections.

Augustine accepts the ontological separation between body and soul. For him, the soul is internal (*interius*) whereas the body is external (*exterius*)⁶. The soul, which is internal, is superior to the body⁷. The soul gives life to the body but bodies cannot give other bodies life, which explains why the soul is ontologically superior to the body⁸. In Augustine's hierarchy of ontology at this point in book 10, God is at the pinnacle, followed by the human *animus* (human soul or mind), followed by the *anima* of animals, followed by the body (*corpus*).

2.2 Pure and impure forgetting

Augustine provides many interesting and important insights about the relation between memory and forgetting in *Confessions* book 10. For the purposes of this paper, I will just focus on one distinction. He writes, «When we at least remember ourselves to

⁵ *Conf.* 10.16.25. «Et ecce memoriae mea vis non comprehenditur a me, cum ipsum me non dicam praeter illam.»

⁶ *Conf.* 10.6.9. «Et ecce corpus et anima in me mihi praesto sunt, unum exterius et alterum interius.»

⁷ *Conf.* 10.6.9. «Sed melius quod interius.»

⁸ *Conf.* 10.6.10. «Iam tu melior es, tibi dico, anima, quoniam tu vegetas molem corporis tui praebens ei vitam, quod nullum corpus praestat corpori.»

have forgotten, we have not totally forgotten. But if we have completely forgotten, we cannot even search for what has been lost»⁹.

Here I see an opportunity to draw a distinction between what I will call pure forgetfulness and impure forgetfulness. Pure forgetfulness is a complete oblivion of information, an entire loss of a person's ability to remember a piece of information. Impure forgetfulness is an awareness of something a person is aware that they once knew but cannot recall; it is a partial loss of memory. Impure forgetfulness applies to information that can be remembered, whereas pure forgetfulness applies to information that cannot be, and will never be, remembered. We will apply this distinction later in Augustine's discussions of remembering God.

2.3 God is in Augustine's memory and argument

Augustine's philosophical discussions about memory come to a climax in Chapter 25 of book 10. He writes, «See how widely I have ranged, Lord, searching for you in my memory. I have not

⁹ *Conf.* 10.19.28: «Neque enim omni modo adhuc obliti sumus, quod vel oblitos nos esse meminimus. Hoc ergo nec amissum quaerere poterimus, quod omnino obliti fuerimus.»

found you outside it»¹⁰. I take Augustine to mean here that God is clearly found within his memory; God is not beyond his memory.

He continues a bit later, «Since the day I learnt of you, I have never forgotten you. Where I discovered the truth, there I found my God, truth itself, which from the time I learnt it, I have not forgotten. And so since the time I learnt of you, you remain in my consciousness, and there I find you when I recall you and delight in you»¹¹. Thus, Augustine is, again, positively asserting here that God is found within his memory. God remains in Augustine's memory from the «day» or «time» he learned of God¹². In other words, he cannot purely forget God.

Now that he has clearly established that God can be accessed by memory and cannot be purely forgotten, Augustine continues looking for God in his mind and memory in a methodical way. He asks himself a mereological question, «In what part do you dwell?»¹³. He deeply introspects and self-reflects on the inner

¹⁰ *Conf.* 10.24.35: «Ecce quantum spatiatus sum in memoria mea quaerens te, Domine, et non te inveni extra eam.»

¹¹ *Conf.* 10.24.35: «Nam ex quo didici te, non sum oblitus tui. Ubi enim inveni veritatem, ibi inveni Deum meum, ipsam Veritatem. Quam ex quo didici, non sum oblitus. Itaque ex quo te didici, manes in memoria mea, et illic te inveno, cum reminiscor tui et delector in te.»

¹² Chadwick translates «ex quo», in note 11 above, by using the words «day» and «time». But how could God be learned at a specific time or on a specific a day if God is beyond time, as Augustine believes? See also *Conf.* 10.25.36: «Habitat certe in ea, quoniam tui memini, ex quo te didici, et in ea te inveno, cum recordor te.»

¹³ *Conf.* 10.25.36: «...sed in qua eius parte maneat, hoc considero.»

contents and powers of his own mind. He «rises above» (*transcendi*) the parts of his memory which humans and animals share¹⁴. I call this MemoryA, animalistic memory, which includes the memories of physical objects. He reasons that God is not found in MemoryA because God cannot be located among the parts of the mind where physical objects are stored¹⁵. God is clearly non-physical for Augustine so God cannot be found in any physical part of the mind.

He does a similar self-search of God in the part of his memory where the emotions are stored. Again, Augustine answers in the negative when he asks if God is in these parts and the reason is that God is not a physical emotion. Augustine next enters into the «very seat of my mind» (*ipsius animi mei sedem*)¹⁶. God is also not here because God is not the mind itself. Rather, God is of the mind itself¹⁷.

In a pivotal moment of Chapter 25, Augustine writes that all the parts of his mind are mutable, even the very seat of his mind, but God is immutable (*incommutabilis*) above all these parts¹⁸. What

¹⁴ *Conf.* 10.25.36: «Transcendi enim partes eius, quas habent et bestiae, cum te recorderer, quia non ibi te inveniebam inter imagines rerum corporalium, et veni ad partes eius, ubi commendavi affectiones animi mei, nec illic inveni te.»

¹⁵ See note 15 above.

¹⁶ *Conf.* 10.25.36: «Et intavi ad ipsius animi mei sedem, quae illi est in memoria mea...»

¹⁷ *Conf.* 10.25.36: «...ita nec ipse animus es, quia Dominus Deus animi tu es...»

¹⁸ *Conf.* 10.25.36: «...et commutantur haec omnia, tu autem incommutabilis manes super omnia et dignatus es habitare in memoria mea, ex quo te didici.»

Augustine means by immutable here is that God is not subject to change, in contrast to physical objects in the temporal world which are subject to change. Yet God has deigned to dwell in Augustine's memory (*...et dignatus es habitare in memoria mea...*), which must mean that God is in the part of Augustine's mind that is beyond the physical, the part that is non-physical¹⁹.

Here we find an answer to the question motivating this paper, which is an important and implicit argument by analogy:

- (1) God is immutable and non-physical.
- (2) God is accessible by some part of the human mind via memory.
- (3) God is accessible by some part of human mind via memory only if this part is metaphysically analogous to God, namely, by having analogous properties of immutability and non-physicality.

Conclusion: The part of the human mind that is responsible for remembering God via memory is metaphysically analogous to God, namely, by having analogous properties of immutability and non-physicality.

I will call this Argument A. The conclusion of Argument A provides an answer to the question motivating our study, but we need

¹⁹ See note 19. I want to emphasize Augustine's use of the preposition *in* here.

to further examine Augustine's philosophy of memory to gain a clearer understanding of how the remembrance of God works.

2.4 The two parts of the mind

We see clearly that Augustine is upholding a dualistic ontology. There is the physical/mutable and the non-physical/immutable. When applied to the case of the human mind, there is the Mind_{physical} and the Mind_{non-physical}. It's not clear what the non-physical/immutable is here. Perhaps we can understand that this non-physical part of his mind is purely immaterial, mental, or spiritual. The point is that this non-physical part of his mind responsible for remembering God is immutable and thus it is ontologically distinct from the physical.

One could ask here, «What drives Augustine to remember God?» One good answer seems to be that Augustine's desire to remember his authentic happiness and Truth, which was discussed in 10.20.29-10.23.33 shortly prior to his discussions about God in memory in 10.24.35-10.26.37. Augustine is clear that when he seeks God, he is seeking the happy life²⁰. He thinks constantly seeking God *is* seeking the happiest possible life and writes, «Those who think the happy life is found elsewhere, pursue another joy and not the true one. Nevertheless, their will remains drawn towards some image of

²⁰ *Conf.* 10.20.29: «Cum enim te, Deum meum, quaero, vitam beatam quaero.»

the true joy»²¹. He continues later, «The happy life is joy based on the truth. This is joy grounded in you, O God, who are the truth, ‘my illumination, the salvation of my face, my God’ (Ps. 26:1; 41:12)»²².

Thus, for Augustine, when he is seeking God, he is self-consciously seeking the happy life and the truth at the same time. When Augustine seeks God in his mind and remembers God, he is remembering truth and the happy life simultaneously, which presupposes that both the truth and the happy life are also in his memory²³. Shortly later, he says that humans have more interest in things that make them miserable rather than things that make them happy and they only have a tenuous memory of the latter things. (*«Quia forties occupantur in aliis, quae potius eos faciunt miseros quam illud beatos, quod tenuiter meminerunt»*). In other words, given Augustine’s identification of God with truth and authentic

²¹ *Conf.* 10.22.32: «Qui autem aliam putant esse, aliud sectantur gaudium neque ipsum verum. Ab aliqua tamen imagine gaudii voluntas eorum non avertitur.»

²² *Conf.* 10.23.33: «Beata quippe vita est gaudium de Veritate. Hoc est enim gaudium de te, qui Veritas es, Deus, illuminatio mea, salus faciei, Deus meus.»

²³ There is an interesting quote at *Conf.* 10.23.33, where Augustine draws a connection between the happy life and memory: «They love the truth because they have no wish to be deceived, and when they love the happy life (which is none other than joy grounded in truth), they are unquestionably loving the truth. And they would have no love for the happy life unless there were some knowledge of it in their memory» («Amant enim et ipsam, quia falli nolunt, et cum amant beatam vitam, quod non est aliud quam de Veritate gaudium, utique amant etiam veritatem nec amarent, nisi esset aliqua notitia eius in memoria eorum»). Yet, despite their tenuous memory of the truth and what makes them truly happy, God, there is still a little light in humans («Adhuc enim modicum lumen est in hominibus...»). I take him to mean that humans in their Mind_{non-physical} continuously bear a non-physical memory with God in the content of the memory which can be actively remembered but is often impurely forgotten.

happiness, the tenuous memory he is mentioning here must be a non-physical memory with God in its content that is often neglected and impurely forgotten rather than actively remembered.

2.4.1 The «I» and the powers of memory

We saw in section 2.1 that the «I» (*ego*) is responsible for human remembering. Based on my interpretation of Augustine, there is a dualistic ontology of mind: a $\text{Mind}_{\text{physical}}$ and a $\text{Mind}_{\text{non-physical}}$. We can combine these insights into the following:

- $I_{\text{physically-remember}}$. Augustine uses this memorative power when the physical part of his mind remembers any of its previous physical images (Memory_A), emotions, and even its seat.
- $I_{\text{non-physically-remember}}$. Augustine uses this memorative power when the non-physical part of his mind brings forth a specific memory with God in its content thus bringing forth a specific memorative awareness of God.

I should note here that Augustine's mental state, as he remembers God, can take two forms. If God is actively and consciously remembered, then this is an occurrent mental state for Augustine. Clearly, Augustine is not constantly remembering God. When God is not actively and consciously remembered, God slips

into unconsciousness and is impurely forgotten. However, as we saw at 10.24.35, God cannot be purely forgotten because Augustine has always been able to remember God since he first learned of God.

2.4.2 The connection of the «I» with the two parts of the mind and an analytic example of Augustine's Memory_A

We can now make explicit the relations between the «I» (*ego*) and the mind (*animus*):

- $I_{\text{physically-remember}}$ power corresponds to the $\text{Mind}_{\text{physical}}$ (what we might call the brain). Memory_A is included in the $\text{Mind}_{\text{physical}}$ and accessed by the $I_{\text{physically-remember}}$ power.
- $I_{\text{non-physically-remember}}$ power corresponds to the $\text{Mind}_{\text{non-physical}}$ (what we might call the purely immaterial, mental, or spiritual part of the mind, the part that is non-physical).

Augustine's Memory_A can be illustrated in an analytic and clear example. If Augustine is remembering his hometown of Carthage, we can represent this in the following way: « $I_{\text{physically-remember}}$ -Carthage» from time t_1 – t_2 , where t_1 represents when the memory started appearing to his mind's ability to internally perceive it and t_2 when he is no longer actively remembering Carthage and it

disappears from his mind's internal perception. Steps (i) – (iv) illustrate this:

- (i) At t_0 , Augustine wants to remember Carthage.
- (ii) At t_1 , he activates the $I_{\text{physically-remember}}$ power and searches the recesses of his mind for an image of Carthage.
- (iii) At t_2 , an image of Carthage appears in his mind; he successfully remembers this image of Carthage dwelling in the $\text{Mind}_{\text{physical}}$ (brain).
- (iv) At t_3 , the image of Carthage disappears from Augustine's internal mental perception and Augustine is no longer remembering an image of Carthage

To summarize, Augustine can say, « $I_{\text{physically-remembered-Carthage}}$ » from time t_2 - t_3 . The time between t_2 and t_3 is the time in which the image of Carthage is present in his $\text{Mind}_{\text{physical}}$ before disappearing at t_3 .

2.5 What exactly is the content of Augustine's memorative awareness of God dwelling in his $\text{Mind}_{\text{non-physical}}$ as he actively remembers God?

In *Conf.* 10.24.35 - 10.26.37, Augustine is clear that God is found in his memory, but here he does not exactly describe the

content of his memory of God. However, in book 7, there appear to be clues. He says that the books of the Platonists (*Platonicorum libros*) admonished him to go within himself²⁴. He writes, «I entered and with my soul's eye, such as it was, saw above that same eye of my soul the immutable light higher than my mind»²⁵. We should note the importance of the word saw (*vedi*) here, as it indicates a visual internal mental perception which then provides a basis for later visual remembrance.

He continues a bit later, «It was superior because it made me and I was inferior because I was made by it»²⁶. He also writes, «The person who knows the truth knows it, and he who know it knows eternity. Love knows it»²⁷. This clearly shows that God is still perceptible within Augustine's mind, even though God is above his soul's (or mind's) eye and above his mind (...*supra eumdem oculo animae meae, supra mentem meam...*)²⁸. He also describes God as

²⁴ *Conf.* 7.9.13: «...procurasti mihi per quemdam hominem immanissimo typho turgidum quosdam Platonicorum libros ex Graeca lingua in Latinam versos...» See also 7.10.16. «Et inde admonitus redire ad memet ipsum intravi in intima mea duce te et potui, quoniam factus es adiutor meus.»

²⁵ *Conf.* 7.10.16: «Intravi et vidi qualicumque oculo animae meae supra eumdem oculum animae meae, supra mentem meam lucem incommutabilem...»

²⁶ *Conf.* 7.10.16: «...sed superior, qua ipsa fecit me, et ego inferior, quia factus ab ea.»

²⁷ *Conf.* 7.10.17: «Qui novit veritatem, novit eam, et qui novit eam, novit aeternitatem. Caritas novit eam.»

²⁸ See note 26.

an immutable light (*lucem incommutabilem*), truth (*veritatem*), and eternity (*aeternitatem*)²⁹.

We can immediately make a connection to 10.23.33 because there Augustine identifies God with truth (*Veritas*), light (*illuminatio*), and the happy life (*Beata quippe vita*)³⁰. However, as he reasoned in 10.25.36, God is not a physical emotion, so claiming that the memory with God in its content carries the physical emotions of happiness and love along with it seems unfeasible unless these emotions could somehow be non-physical.

In book 7, Augustine writes some additional comments after his mystical vision at Milan that are worth consideration. He writes, «But with me there remained a memory of *you*...»³¹. He continues a bit later, «...my weakness reasserted itself and I returned to my customary condition. I carried with me only a loving memory and a desire for that of which I had the aroma but which I had not yet the capacity to eat»³². Again, a loving memory (*amantem memoriam*) of God would seem to contradict 10.25.36 when he says God is not located in the mind where physical emotions are located unless the love tied to his memory of God is somehow non-physical.

²⁹ See notes 26 and 28. He also says that Love (*Caritas*) knows the truth, but it is unclear if he is explicitly identifying God with love here.

³⁰ See note 23.

³¹ *Conf.* 7.17.23: «Sed mecum erat memoria tui...»

³² *Conf.* 7.17.23: «...et repercussa infirmitate redditus solitis non mecum ferebam nisi amantem memoriam et quasi olefacta desiderantem, quae comedere nondum possem.»

Nevertheless, these quotes show Augustine identifying God in the content of a specific memorative act.

2.6 Analytic example of Augustine's remembrance of God and argument A'

We can now also provide a clear and analytic example of Augustine remembrance of God. When Augustine is remembering God, he is using his $I_{\text{non-physically-remember}}$ power accessing his $\text{Mind}_{\text{non-physical}}$ part (pure mind or spirit). When Augustine is remembering God, we can represent this by writing, « $I_{\text{non-physically-remember}}$ God» at time $t?$; a question mark (?) is used to signify that the object of Augustine's memorative act, God, is atemporal and thus does not have a time constraint. Steps (a) – (c) illustrate this:

- (a) At t_0 , Augustine wants to remember God.
- (b) At $t?$, Augustine is remembering God by using $I_{\text{non-physically-remember}}$ power accessing the $\text{Mind}_{\text{non-physical}}$ part³³.

³³ On my interpretation, as he is remembering God, he is mentally seeing an unchangeable light, eternity, and truth. It seems that the $I_{\text{non-physically-remember}}$ power is also a dormant power activated by a desire to remember God. Thus, the $I_{\text{non-physically-remember}}$ power presupposes a desire to remember God. His desire to seek the happy life and the truth, as we saw in *Conf.* 10.20.29-10.23.33, could be spurring Augustine's desire for remembering God. Additionally, Augustine seems to have self-reflexive awareness as he is remembering God so his $I_{\text{non-physically-remember}}$ power presupposes reflexivity.

(c) At t_1 , Augustine's $I_{\text{non-physically-remember}}$ power is no longer activated and he is no longer actively remembering God

Through the insights and ontological distinctions explicated in this paper, we can now modify argument A for greater clarity. We can call this argument A':

(1) God is immaterial and non-physical.

(2') God is accessible by the $\text{Mind}_{\text{non-physical}}$ via the $I_{\text{non-physically-remember}}$ power.

(3') There must be metaphysical consistency between the content of a memory and what the memory dwells in (i.e. physical memory goes in the $\text{Mind}_{\text{physical}}$, non-physical memory goes in the $\text{Mind}_{\text{non-physical}}$).

Thus, God must be a content of non-physical memory in the $\text{Mind}_{\text{non-physical}}$. We can further explain Argument A' with the following claims:

(c1) The $\text{Mind}_{\text{non-physical}}$ contains several non-physical, purely mental powers such as desiring, knowing, and remembering (the lattermost is the $I_{\text{non-physically-remember}}$ power)³⁴.

³⁴ Thus, there are the $I_{\text{non-physically-desire}}$ and $I_{\text{non-physically-know}}$ powers too.

(c2) The remembrance of God presupposes accurate and successful remembrance of God, not misremembrance³⁵.

(c3) The remembrance of God presupposes a mental act of recognizing what is remembered is God and not something else non-physical (such as a Platonic Form)³⁶.

The conclusion of Argument A' gives a clear answer to the question posed at the beginning of this paper. Claims (c1-3) create a more complete picture of the $Mind_{non-physical}$ and they provide better conceptual understanding for how Augustine's remembrance of God works.

2.6.1 Returning to Book 10

Now that we are clearer about the content of Augustine's remembrance of God, we now return to an important moment of

³⁵ Successful and accurate remembrance requires that the $I_{non-physically-remember}$ power brings forth Truth from immateriality and non-physicality in the $Mind_{non-physical}$. Augustine identifies God with Truth at *Conf.* 10.23.33, so Augustine thinks that if he is remembering God, he is also remembering Truth.

³⁶ A non-physical power in the $Mind_{non-physical}$ would be responsible for producing a mental act of recognition of God. Perhaps the $I_{non-physically-know}$ power interacts with the $I_{non-physically-remember}$ power in the $Mind_{non-physical}$ to produce this act of recognition. Augustine discusses recognition at *Conf.* 10.18.27 where he mentions a Biblical story (*Luke*, 15:8) of a woman looking for her lost coin. Augustine shows that she could not recognize her lost coin unless the coin was in her memory. Augustine could be hinting at another implicit argument: just like the woman could not recognize her coin unless it was in her memory, God could not be recognized if God was not already in memory.

Conf. 10.26.37. Augustine writes, «You were not already in my memory before I learnt of you. Where then do I find you so that I could learn of you if not in the fact that you transcend me? There is no place, whether we go backwards or forwards; there can be no question of place»³⁷.

This quote suggests that Augustine had a specific, first instance of learning of God that was outside of time, not within a specific time and/or at a specific place. The reason for this is because Augustine clearly thinks God is not a body³⁸. Bodies are located in space and time, but God is non-physical, eternal, higher than the physical world, and immutable. These properties of God would seem to indicate that Augustine's first instance of learning of God was also above the physical world; God is found above (*supra*) him and not in a physical space (*Et nusquam locus*)³⁹. We might say that his first instance of learning of God was an instance of atemporal learning that is impossible to be purely forgotten.

2.7 Questions, objections, and replies

³⁷*Conf.* 10.26.37: «Neque enim iam era in memoria mea, priusquam te discerem. Ubi ergo te inveni, ut discerem te, nisi in te supra me? Et nusquam locus, et recedimus et accedimus, et nusquam locus.»

³⁸ *Conf.* 10.6.10: «Veritas enim dicit mihi: 'non est Deus tuus terra et caelum neque omne corpus.'»

³⁹ See note 38.

I will now briefly note some questions, objections and replies⁴⁰.

- (1) What is the dividing line between the *animus* and *mens*?

I am working with Chadwick's translation and I follow him in translating «animus» as the «human mind», though he occasionally uses the word «soul». My distinction between the $\text{Mind}_{\text{physical}}$ and $\text{Mind}_{\text{non-physical}}$ is meant to apply to the human mind when Augustine is clearly referring to mental activities like like remembering, desiring, or knowing. The words *animus* and *mens* are two different words referring to the same entity, the human mind, in these cases.

- (2) Is the $I_{\text{non-physically}}$ remember power reliable? How do we know it is reliable?

The reply to this objection will bring in Augustine's views about God as Truth at 10.23.33. Augustine thinks God is Truth. If Augustine is remembering God, and if God is Truth, then Augustine is self-consciously remembering Truth as well. In other words, Augustine thinks that Truth rides with God as God is remembered. Truth entails reliability, so that there cannot be a misremembrance of God. Thus, the $I_{\text{non-physically}}$ remember power must be a vehicle for

⁴⁰ I am grateful to the audience in Porto, Portugal during the «Doing Philosophy in the History of Philosophy» conference in February 2025 for asking these questions and raising these objections. I should note that the paper I presented was an earlier and less developed version of this paper.

Truth because the I_{non-physically} remember power brings God, and so Truth, out of impure forgetfulness and into active remembrance.

- (3) If God is immutable and the Forms are immutable, then isn't God a Form?

Based on what I could surmise from studying *Confessions* book 10, God is not a Form. Augustine thinks God is the creator and above (*supra*) everything. God is immaterial, non-physical, immutable, and beyond time – just like the Forms. But since God is the creator and originator of the physical as well as the non-physical, this means that God also created whatever is non-physical including the Forms. God bestowed existence on the Forms, and the Forms have the property of being bestowed existence. So even though God and the Forms have the properties of immutability and non-physicality, God is still superior to the Forms because they would not exist without God bestowing them existence.

3. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to answer the question: how can Augustine claim to remember God if God is atemporal? I have aimed to show, through an analytic methodology, Augustine's answer to this question in a clear way by presenting argument A and by drawing various ontological distinctions in his philosophy of memory. When he is reasoning through the different parts of his

mind in which God could dwell in his memory at 10.25.36, he subjects these parts to penetrating ontological analysis⁴¹.

Based on my interpretation of important passages in 10.25.36 and an understanding that *animus* can be translated as «human mind», the implicit Argument A emerged. This argument concluded that the part of the mind responsible for remembering God is metaphysically analogous to God, namely, through its immutability and non-physicality. A distinction needed to be drawn between the physical part of the mind (Mind_{physical}, the brain) and a non-physical part (Mind_{non-physical}, the purely immaterial, mental, or spiritual part of the mind). The Mind_{physical} part contains all physical and animalistic memory (Memory_A). The Mind_{non-physical} part contains a non-physical memory with God in its content.

According to my reading of key parts of book 7, Augustine is having an atemporal mental vision of truth, immutable light, and eternity when he is remembering God. The non-physical memory of God dwelling in the Mind_{non-physical} is unconscious and impurely forgotten until activated by a desire to remember Truth (and the happy life) and then brought to conscious remembrance via the I_{physically-remember} power. We modified Argument A' and provided additional claims (c1-3) to give a more complete and clear answer to

⁴¹ See notes 14-19.

the question asked at the beginning of this paper. Some objections and replies were included.

There are many interesting philosophical implications and further questions to be asked. At death, it seems that the $\text{Mind}_{\text{physical}}$, the $\text{I}_{\text{physically-remember}}$ power, all physical memory, emotions, and even the seat of the mind all perish. The $\text{Mind}_{\text{non-physical}}$ and the $\text{I}_{\text{non-physically-remember}}$ power will not perish and are thus immortal. However, how can the $\text{Mind}_{\text{non-physical}}$ part and its corresponding $\text{I}_{\text{non-physically-remember}}$ power even exist as part of the physical world, which is conditioned by time and change? It's not clear here, but perhaps Augustine is influenced by Plotinus's *Enneads*, and could hold that this non-physical part of the human soul or mind remains undescended in the realm of atemporal Forms⁴².

Christians like Augustine believe in the resurrection of the body after death. What is the status of the mind and memory after the resurrection of the body? Wouldn't the resurrected body also include any physical memories, emotions, etc.? What is the will's

⁴² Plotinus writes in *Enneads* 4.3.12: «The souls of men, seeing their images in the mirror of Dionysus as it were, have entered into that realm in a leap downward from the Supreme: yet even they are not cut off from their origin, from the divine Intellect; it is not that they have come bringing the Intellectual Principle down in their fall; it is that though they have descended even to earth, yet their higher part holds for ever above the heavens.» See also *Enneads* 4.8.8: «...even our human Soul has not sunk entire, something of it is continuously in the Intellectual Realm...» – cf. Plotinus, *The Enneads*, transl. S. MacKenna, intro. Paul Henry SJ, and foreword by E.R. Dodds, Faber and Faber, London 1957. 2nd edition.

relation to the $\text{Mind}_{\text{physical}}$ and $\text{Mind}_{\text{non-physical}}$? How is atemporal, non-physical, and purely memory even possible⁴³? Is God the only thing or being that is remembered using the $I_{\text{non-physically-remember}}$ power? Or are there other non-physical, atemporal, unchanging entities also remembered using the $I_{\text{non-physically-remember}}$ power as well, such as Plato's Forms?

Augustine gives answers to these questions throughout his corpus, and they raised immense debate throughout the Middle Ages which continues to the present day. Additional research from the analytic perspective needs to be conducted for deeper and clearer understanding of Augustine's philosophy of memory⁴⁴.

⁴³ Aristotle writes in *On Memory and Reminiscence* 449b25-30: «As already observed, there is no such thing as memory of the present while present, for the present is object only of perception, and the future, of expectation, but the object of memory is the past. All memory, therefore, implies a time elapsed; consequently only those animals which perceive time remember, and the organ whereby they perceive time is also that whereby they remember» (ed. R. McKeon, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Random House, New York 1941, pp. 607-617). Thus, for Aristotle, only the $\text{Mind}_{\text{physical}}$ can remember and there is only animalistic, physical memory (what I called Memory_A). For Aristotle, atemporal memory is a contradiction and therefore impossible.

⁴⁴ I am grateful to Professors John Marenbon, Anna Marmodoro, and Paula Oliveira e Silva for comments on earlier versions of this paper.