

## Aquinas on Memory and Consciousness in St. Augustine

by Br. Dunstan Robidoux

As Bernard Lonergan translates the wording of Augustine's discussion as this exists in the *De Trinitate*, 10, 9, 12 (in Lonergan's *The Incarnate Word*, unpublished text, p. 182):

But when it is said to the mind: 'Know yourself,' then it knows itself in the very act in which it understands the word 'yourself'; and it knows itself for no other reason than that it is present to itself.

However, in the discussion which we find in Augustine, in the language or the conceptuality which we find in Augustine, nothing is said explicitly about consciousness. But, if we look at Augustine's language where he speaks about remembering oneself (as in *memoria sui*), we find a memory of self or a remembering of oneself which refers to an awareness of self that, in our own language, can be spoken about in terms which refer to consciousness and our acts of consciousness. In consciousness, in the consciousness which exists simply as a condition that is given to us, we have a primitive awareness of self that we may not often advert to or think about within our life pursuits although, as soon as we begin to notice it and to advert to it or, in other words, as soon as we become conscious of our conscious selves and our conscious acts, our consciousness shifts into a mode of apprehension which refers to a presence of self-consciousness. A consciousness that is now aware of itself refers to self-consciousness.

With respect to a shift that moves from memory to consciousness, if we attend to how St. Augustine speaks about memory, for instance, in his *Confessions* (ch.10), we will find a philosophy of memory which we can think about and which we can possibly translate into a philosophy of consciousness which uses a technical conceptuality which can be used to speak about the meanings that Augustine was trying to refer to (although in a manner which now is more precise, in a manner which had been unknown to St. Augustine). However, as we then shift into a discussion which we can find in Augustine's *De Trinitate*, if we notice (in 15:43) that Augustine refers to memory "as a storehouse of 'intelligible things,'" then, when we think about the restricted meaning which Augustine gives to memory, we can conclude that memory refers to a primitive awareness of self where this primitive awareness of self refers to an experience (a presence) of our "intellectual consciousness." Cf. Ormerod, *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2005), p. 80, citing Salvino Biolo, *La Coscienza Nel De Trinitate Di S. Agostino* (Rome: Analecta Gregoriana, 1969). In the human soul, in the human psyche, we find many different kinds of acts which can all refer to the experience which we have of our intellectual consciousness. Paraphrasing the kind of reasoning which we can find in Augustine (in a trajectory which points to the emergence of an intellectual psychological analogy that can be applied to how we can speak about the strange kind oneness which exists within the Christian Trinity), quoting Jean-Marc Laporte, *God One and Triune: Past and Present Approaches* (Toronto: Regis College, 1995), p. 72:

[From one's] self-awareness...explicit and focused knowledge...emerges. From the background of an elusive presence to myself, I sometimes am able to conceive and pronounce a word which not only captures that awareness but which conduces to self-acceptance and integration. This process which leads from "remembering" oneself to "knowing" oneself serves as a model for the generation of the Second Person from the First [God the Son from God the Father]. The resulting self-acceptance corresponds to the Spirit [the third person of the Blessed Trinity].

In turning then to how we might understand how Aquinas understands the relation which exists between acts of understanding and the proceeding of inner words from prior acts of understanding, it is not without point to note how Aquinas works with the Trinitarian theology of St. Augustine in the context of the *Summa Theologiae* in a way which differs from what we find in his earlier texts (principally in the *De Veritate* and the *Roman Commentary*, first positively identified in 1983). Cf. Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 221; William B. Stevenson, "The Problem of Trinitarian Processions in Thomas's Roman Commentary," *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 619-629. Where, in Book 10 of the *De Trinitate*, St. Augustine had spoken about an analogy which thinks in terms of *memoria*, *intelligentia*, and *amor* (a relation which joins "memory, understanding, and love" with each other), in the *Summa Theologiae* of Aquinas, instead of "memory, understanding, and love" or "memory, understanding, and will," what we find is *principium verbi*, *verbum*, and *amor* ("principle of a word, word, and love"). Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 93, aa. 6-8, as cited by Lonergan, *Verbum*, p. 221, n. 139; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, qq. 27-29, as cited by Stevenson, p. 628. See also Ormerod, *The Trinity*, p. 45. In the change which takes place, Aquinas transposes St. Augustine notion of memory: he puts it into an Aristotelian conceptuality which now speaks about an *intellectus in actu intelligens et dicens* ("an intellect actually understanding and uttering"). An intellect (or subject) that is understanding and uttering is the principle or the point of origin of a word that proceeds from this understanding as the term of a proceeding which, in Lonergan's language, we can properly refer to an act of conceptualization.

Then, further on, in a second distinct step, Aquinas takes the *intelligentia* or *notitia* (knowledge) of St. Augustine and, in its place, he speaks about *verbum* (*verbum* as an inner word) and this *verbum* specifically refers to the presence of a definition or a judgment that expresses what is given in one's prior understanding. Cf. *Verbum*, p. 221 & n. 139. With the proceeding of an inner word, we can begin to have an understanding about something which we can begin to talk about. One kind of intellectual act or term of intellectual act follows a prior kind of intellectual act and the term which properly belongs to it. In this species of transposition, it would seem that Aquinas is working with a selection of texts that belong to Book 9 in the *De Trinitate* of St. Augustine and not with texts belonging to Book 10 since in Book 9 we find language where Augustine speaks about "the procession of the word and of love from the word." Cf. Ormerod, *The Trinity*, p. 45; p. 81, citing Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 9, 12; 9, 13; 9, 15. See also Juvenal Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity: A Study in the Development of Aquinas' Teaching* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990), p. 32, as cited by Stevenson, p. 626, where Merriell cites text from Augustine's *De Trinitate*, 15, 20, 39 to the effect that memory, understanding, and love should be viewed not as potencies but as acts or activities that we do or experience as human subjects. Augustine does not use the conceptuality that we find in Aristotle and Aquinas. But, as we read his words, we should be able to notice that his language points to acts or activities as, for instance, in "recalled by memory, beheld by intelligence, embraced by love." Cf. *De Trinitate*, 15, 20, 39. The allusion to acts has been taken up by Aquinas and Augustine's meaning is put into a context that has been leavened by a kind of metaphysical analysis which Aquinas has adapted from the kind of analysis that we find in the thinking of Aristotle.