

Paige E. Hochschild, *Memory in Augustine's Theological Anthropology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012 (Oxford Early Christian Studies), 251 pp., ISBN 978-0-19-964302-8, £75.00.

Paige E. HOCHSCHILD's [= H.] book is divided into three parts. The first one ("Philosophical Tradition") deals with how the three greatest ancient philosophers – Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus – understood the human faculty of memory. The second part ("Augustine's Early Writings") consists of three chapters, devoted to several works written by Augustine during the last decade of the 4th century. The third part of the book ("*Confessiones* and *De Trinitate*") discusses his mature philosophical works in four chapters.

In the "Introduction" H. presents the main thesis of her study. Memory in Augustine is a factor mediating between the external, sensible world and the internal, spiritual one. It also mediates between what is changing and what is immutable. It is the image of God in us, but also something that makes us fully human. The author claims that Augustine's view of memory is strikingly original, especially because of its incarnational meaning. She also suggests that existing studies seem "abstract" and "not attentive to the context of Augustine's own writing" (p. 4). Her methodology, on the contrary, intends to be "appropriately historical, and largely exegetical" (*ibidem*).

In the first chapter ("Plato") H. discusses several of Plato's dialogues (the *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, *Meno*, *Theaetetus* and others), beginning with a suggestion that Augustine probably read at least some of them in Latin translation. In the second chapter ("Aristotle") she deals with the Stagirite's views, mostly in the *De memoria et reminscientia* and *De anima*. The chapter ends with a suggestion that Aristotelian thinking "charts out precisely the direction in which Augustine moves in his early writings" (p. 44). In the third chapter ("Plotinus"), H. writes about Plotinus, who as "it is generally thought, brings us closer to the spirit and teaching of Augustine" (p. 45).

Chapter Four ("The Cassiciacum Dialogues: *Contra Academicos*, *Beata vita*, and *De ordine*") opens the second part of the book, devoted to the earliest works of Augustine. Here H. discusses the three Cassiciacum dialogues, and her general conclusion seems to be that any definite treatment of memory in this period of Augustine's thought is "deferred". There is, curiously, virtually no discussion of Plotinus' influence on those early texts, and H.'s expression "Augustine allies himself with what he calls 'Platonism'" suggests some doubts as to whether Augustine was a real Platonist then (or ever?).

In Chapter Five ("The 'Middle Early' Dialogues: *Soliloquia*, *De immortalitate animae*, and *De animae quantitate*") H. deals with later dialogues and moves gradually towards her general thesis that Augustine understood memory as a faculty mediating between the sensible and the spiritual. The author claims that, since the soul is "not at home" with the sensible world, it is memory which makes possible its "habituation" here. In Chapter Six ("Recollection and Virtue: *De magistro* and *De musica*") she discusses (more briefly) *De magistro* and (in more detail) *De musica*. The focus is on the nature of numbers and their connection with the order of the whole creation. The conclusion is that even though "Augustine assumes the ontological superiority of intelligible reality" (p. 132), this Platonic conviction is transformed, in such a way that a more positive view of the sensible realm is proposed. H. claims both that memory (unlike in Plotinus?) is what links us to the sensible reality and that Augustine develops, already in this early period, an idea of a human person as a unity of the soul and the body.

Part Three begins with a discussion of Book Ten of the *Confessions* (Chapter Seven: "Introduction to Memory: *Confessiones* 10"). H. tries to show here that memory not only links us with the sensible, but also with God, yet she does not see any clear teaching of Augustine concerning how this can be. The next chapter ("The 'Problem' of Temporality: *Confessiones* 11") is focused on Book Eleven and the problem of time. The author argues that Augustine simultaneously emphasises the discrepancy between the human and the divine and introduces memory as

a solution to this. In Chapter Nine (“Time, Matter, and a *Scientia* of Scripture: *Confessiones* 12 and 13”) H. claims that for Augustine the solution to the problem of unity and multiplicity lies in the ideas of the Trinity and the Incarnation and of the conversion as *formatio*.

The last chapter of the book (“Perfection of Memory in the Vision of God: *De Trinitate*”) discusses the ultimate solution to the oppositions mentioned in the previous chapters through some elaboration on the subjects of the Incarnation and the Trinity. H. claims that, for Augustine, healing of the sinful soul is achieved through the experience of temporal things and in that sense it is incarnational. The author maintains that in early works memory functions as a factor unifying the sensible with the intelligible, while in the later work this unifying (of temporal and eternal) is completed by the concepts of Incarnation and the Triune God. Ultimately, however, memory proves not to be sufficient, so it “cannot have the final word” (p. 233), because the intellect and the will also have to play their role in the “triune soul”.

H.’s book is a curious attempt to think of Augustine with virtually no reference to his Platonism. She finishes her book by invoking the authority of Goulven MADEC and pointing out that “a great deal of scholarship imports questions and problems foreign to Augustine’s texts and ‘esprit’”. This is manifestly true, and this book takes its methodological cue from this observation” (p. 225). In the footnote H. adds that there is “excessive preoccupation with Augustine’s ‘sources’, the *libri Platoniorum* in particular, and the resulting ideological commitments [...]”.

Of course, it is a matter of a debate to what extent the bishop of Hippo was influenced by Plotinus and to what extent he was original in his synthesis of Christian revelation with the philosophical, Pagan wisdom. But H. mostly ignores Neoplatonic aspects of Augustine’s writings. She indulges in a broad presentation of the three greatest ancient philosophers before Augustine in Part One and calls it a “history of ideas”, but she also suggests that their thinking influenced Augustine directly or indirectly. Her goal is to show “Augustine’s place within this philosophical trajectory” (p. 63). But it is far from clear what the purpose of the author really is here. Is she merely trying to give a context for Augustine’s thought (if so, is it necessary to devote so much room to it?) or is she trying to show the influence of those philosophers on Augustine? If so (it is unclear to me), then there is absolutely no sense in presenting those three philosophers in an equal manner, since Augustine probably read little of Plato and Aristotle, and did not give much thought to them, but he did read several important treatises of Plotinus and thought them through in a very profound way.

Another weakness of the book is that it is difficult to find links between H.’s analyses of the texts (in which she often just summarises portions of those texts, for reasons unclear) and her conclusions, which are always a repetition of her main thesis from the “Introduction”. She sees everywhere in Augustine the Incarnation or the Trinity (even if sometimes they are hardly mentioned), but she fails to show that those issues are actually always as important for Augustine’s argument as they are for her own argument. For a scholar who believes that her viewpoint is “manifestly true”, H. is not convincing enough in terms of textual analysis and she does not take opposing views seriously enough at least to discuss them.

H. declares that the majority of the secondary literature discusses “problems foreign to Augustine’s texts and ‘esprit’”, and yet she does at times ignore what is inconvenient for her argument. For instance, on p. 109 she states boldly that “there is no suggestion of a cosmic world-soul in these texts” (*scil.* In the *Soliloquia*, *De immortalitate animae*, *De animae quantitate*). Augustine himself, however, writes precisely in one of those texts: “The body subsists through the soul and exists by the very fact that it is ensouled (*animatur*), whether *universally*, as is the world [*italics mine*], or individually, as is each and every living thing (*animal*) within the world” (*Imm. an.* 24)¹. If this is not a “suggestion of a cosmic world-soul” for H., I do not know what is.

¹ English translation according to: Saint Augustine, *The Immortality of the Soul; The Magnitude of the Soul; On Music; The Advantage of Believing; On Faith in Things Unseen*, transl. by L. SCHOPP, New York 1946 (slightly modified).

Another example is that H. omits completely a broad discussion of the happy life (*beata vita*) in Book Ten of the *Confessions*, where Augustine wonders whether we were once happy and that is why we remember this and long for it. Yet there was nothing on this topic in the chapter devoted to Book Ten. Augustine himself, in *Conf.* X 20, 29, writes that “if it [happy life] is there [in our memory], we had happiness once. I do not now ask whether we were all happy individually or only corporately in that man who first sinned [...]. My question is whether the happy life is in the memory”. And a couple of chapters below: “Where and when, then, have I experienced the happy life for myself, so that I can remember and love and long for it? The desire for happiness is not in myself alone or in a few friends, but is found in everybody” (*Conf.* X 21, 31)².

To ignore this issue, as H. does, is incomprehensible in a study of memory in Augustine. Of course, it would force the author to deal with the Neoplatonic influence on the bishop of Hippo, which she conveniently reduced to something “foreign to Augustine’s ‘esprit’ ” and, strangely enough, to some vague “ideological commitments”. Her view of the Plotinian concept of memory as “negative” to the senses and Augustine’s as more “positive” to them is simply false³. Unfortunately, it is H.’s study that turns out to be, at least in several aspects, foreign to Augustinian “esprit” and selective in an analysis of the text, because of initial assumptions and resulting attempts to find in those texts only what is looked for.

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² English translation according to: Augustine, *Confessions*, transl. by H. CHADWICK, Oxford 2008.

³ See e.g. recently published: R. MORTLEY, *Plotinus, Self, and the World*, Cambridge 2013, reviewed by me in *Eos* CII 2015, pp. 385–388. She could not have read MORTLEY’s study, but a similar understanding of Plotinus’ attitude towards the sensible world was, of course, expressed much earlier.