The Purification of the Memory According to St. John of the Cross

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Introduction

The singular purpose of the writing of St. John of the Cross is the soul's union with God through love.[1] This desire for God (and God's desire for us: "it should be known that if anyone is seeking God, the Beloved is seeking that person much more" [F.3.28]) is expressed principally in his mesmerizing poetry—through images of a lover searching for his beloved, a journey of ascent up a mountain, and an intense, blazing fire. More than being descriptive, this poetry draws the reader to enter into the experience of God's love, an experience that purifies and transforms every aspect of one's life. John's commentaries on his own poems provide a more detailed explanation of this journey. Without diminishing any of the beauty and mystery found in his poetry, he maps out the spiritual journey from beginning to end.

This journey toward union is brought about through a process of active and passive purifications, or nights, of the soul which further conform it to God. These are two sides of the same transforming reality; one perspective focuses primarily on the ways in which a person cooperates with God in this process and the other perspective focuses principally on the work that God is doing.[2] Commentators generally point out two different phases in the spiritual life, a first phase which is more active and a second phase which is more passive.[3] However, John's

[1] All Spanish references to John of the Cross are taken from: San Juan de la Cruz, *Obras completes,* ed. Federico Ruiz and José Vicente Rodríguez (Madrid: Editorial de Espiritualidad, 2009). English references come from: John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1991). Abbreviations: A = *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*; N = *The Dark Night*; C = *The Spiritual Canticle*; F = *The Living Flame of Love*; and S = *The Sayings of Light and Love*. The levels of division (book, chapter, paragraph number or stanza, paragraph number) are separated by periods.

[2] "The active way, which will be the subject of the following counsels, comprises what one can do and does by oneself to enter this night. The passive way is that in which one does nothing, but God accomplishes the work in the soul while the soul acts as the recipient" (A.1.13.1).

[3] Marie-Eugène calls these "two very distinct phases" in *I Want to See God: A Practical Synthesis of Carmelite Spirituality,* vol. I, trans. Sister M. Verda Clare (Chicago: The FIDES Publishers Association, 1953), 138.

writings do not point to such an absolute division; instead, these are presented as two complementary ways that one enters into the night of purification.[4]

Besides these active and passive aspects of the spiritual journey, John distinguishes between the two parts of the soul in which these purifications take place: the senses (the bodily faculties that have material things as their object) and the spirit (the spiritual faculties that have nonmaterial things as their object). A clearer progression can be seen between these two nights than between the active and passive aspects. John explains that "The sensory night is common and happens to many. These are the beginners of whom we will treat first. The spiritual night is the lot of very few, those who have been tried and are proficient, and of whom we will speak afterward" (A.1.8.1). Thus, we have a fourfold division in which to represent the entire journey to God: the active purification of the senses, the passive purification of the senses, the active purification of the spirit, and the passive purification of the spirit. However, he insists that no matter how it is divided, it is all really "*una noche oscura*"—one united journey of purification to union with God (A.1.2.5).

Ultimately, for John, since God is immaterial, union with Him takes place principally through the union of the higher, spiritual part of a person's soul with God. This is effected through the union of the spiritual faculties (intellect, memory, and will) with God by means of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity (A.2.6). This union is exalted and extensive; thus, when united to God, "the intellect of this soul is God's intellect; its will is God's will; its memory is the memory of God" (L 2.34). For John, the spiritual journey is marked by this transformation of the spiritual faculties as one is further united to God.

[4] This is not to say that John denies this sort of general progression, only that it is not clearly defined in his writings. The very fact that John treats the active night first followed by the passive at least suggests this sort of progression in the spiritual life. He also points out the conclusive nature of the passive night, "it is by means of this passive night that union with God is wrought," which implies its postliminary place (A.3.2.14).

A proper understanding of these spiritual faculties is essential for explaining the way in which this union comes about. One must know what John means by intellect, memory, and will in order to understand the way in which these faculties are united to God through these active and passive purifications. This is straightforward enough concerning the intellect, the spiritual power for understanding, and the will, the spiritual power for choosing. However, what John means by memory is not so obvious. His notion differs considerably from the common conception of the word today and even significantly from the understanding of many thinkers in his own time. For John—developing and adapting the thought of Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and others—memory is much more than a storehouse for past experiences. As a spiritual faculty, the memory for John is not only concerned with the past but is also the means by which one experiences the present and anticipates the future.

This discrepancy in meaning has significant implications for grasping John's schema concerning the purification of the memory which is effected through hope. Eulogio Pacho points out that "the pairing of faith-intellect and love-will has had many antecedents in the spiritual tradition, under diverse points of view and in abundant applications. This has not been the case with the memory-hope diptych. The San Juanist coupling has been considered original and somewhat arbitrary, arguing that memory concerns the past and hope is for the future."[5] If memory is simply a storage bin for past sensory experiences, then this purification would be a matter of clearing out, or forgetting, everything in it since these sensory experiences are not God. This approach is as impractical as it is impossible. One cannot force oneself to forget something,

[5] "El emparejamiento fe-entendimiento y caridad-amor-voluntad ha tenido muchos antecedentes en la tradición espiritual, bajo diversos puntos de vista y en abundantes aplicaciones. No ha sucedido así con el díptico memoria-esperanza. El acoplamiento sanjuanista se ha considerado original y un tanto arbitrario, argumentando que la memoria afecta al pasado y la esperanza es de lo futuro." Eulogio Pacho, "Memoria" in *Diccionario de san Juan de la Cruz*, ed. Eulogio Pacho (Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2000), 776. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

and to wipe one's memory clean in this way would leave a person incapable of functioning in daily life. Instead, the purification of the memory for John of the Cross is not a process of forgetting but of true healing. The purification of the memory, effected through hope, is the freedom to let go of the inordinate attention one gives to anything that is not God—sins and psychological wounds as well as spiritual gifts and good works, past, present, and future—in order to rest completely in God's love.

This thesis will show that for John of the Cross, memory is not a storehouse for past sensory experiences but an active spiritual power that, when purified, turns the mind away from the finite and, through the virtue of hope, is united with God.

Status quaestionis

In 1929, Crisógono de Jesús Sacramentado's study of the work of John of the Cross initiated a period of interest on John's understanding of memory.[6] In considering the "Principios filosóficos fundamentales en el sistema de san Juan de la Cruz" in the second chapter, he discusses the degree to which John's thinking is in agreement with St. Thomas and other scholastics. Crisógono argues strongly that John is not simply a Thomist, but that he draws from a variety of sources leading him to a system that is significantly original. In particular, Crisógono examines John's thinking on the real distinction between the faculties of the soul which he argues departs from Thomas's ideas, particularly in his view of the memory which will be examined below.

The following year, in response to the work of Crisógono, Marcelo del Nino Jesus argues for the conformity between John and Thomas regarding memory in his *El tomismo de San Juan*

[6] Crisógono de Jesús Sacramentado, *San Juan de la Cruz, su obra científica y su obra literaria*, 2 vols., (Madrid: Mensajero de Santa Teresa y de San Juan de la Cruz, 1929).

de la Cruz.[7] He suggests that John's theological anthropology is completely in line with Thomas. It is the spiritual applications of this Thomistic anthropology that are innovative in the work of John. These two positions, defending John as a Thomist and arguing for the originality of his thought, encapsulate the status of the question over the next several decades. This myopic in-fighting likely led Baruzi to criticize the faculty psychology of John in his monumental work *Saint Jean de la Croix et le problème de l'expérience mystique*, although he does provide his own analysis of John's understanding on the topic in the same scholastic terms.[8] Despite Baruzi's critique, the same arguments continued over the next several decades with little development.

Finally, in 1971, André Bord broke into the stagnant echo chamber with his *Mémoire et espérance chez Jean de la Croix* which provided a revolutionary view of John's understanding of memory.[9] This work examines the sources of John's thought on the topic before arguing against the idea of memory as a sense faculty and claiming it to be exclusively a spiritual faculty of the soul. It then examines the consequences of such a claim for John's spiritual teaching on the purification of the memory, all of which will be discussed below. Surprisingly, Bord's work does not seem to have had much influence in the following decades, perhaps because by then, many people were bored with the monotonous argument that seemed so far removed from the practical implications of the spiritual life. Nevertheless, many scholars in recent decades seem to accept Bord's conclusions, unfortunately without providing much explanation or analysis.[10]

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[7] Marcelo del Niño Jesús, *El Tomismo de San Juan de la Cruz* (Burgos: El Monte Carmelo, 1930).
[8] Jean Baruzi, *San Juan de la Cruz y el problema de la experiencia mística*, trans. Carlos Ortega (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 1991), 515–21.
[9] André Bord, *Mémoire et Espérance chez Jean de la Croix* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1971).
[10] For example: Sam Hole, *John of the Cross: Desire, Transformation, and Selfhood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 78-79; Edward Howells, *John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila: Mystical Knowing and Selfhood* (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 2002), 24–6; and Steven Payne, *John of the Cross and the Cognitive Value of Mysticism* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990), 38–41.

The question of John's understanding of memory has seen a resurgence of interest in recent years.[11] Some writers have considered the topic as a small component in broader considerations of another theme such as mystical experience or epistemology.[12] Other writers have focused on the experiential ramifications of John's spiritual teaching on memory, but without delving into an examination of its anthropological foundations before trying to draw practical conclusions for the spiritual life.[13] Overall, apart from a single study disputing Bord's conclusions, there has not been an extensive look into John's teaching on the topic in recent decades.[14] This study hopes to fill in that gap by focusing directly on John's understanding of the memory and the role it plays in the path to union with God.

Outline

We will begin in chapter one by examining the sources of John's understanding of memory, namely Scripture, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and John Baconthorpe. This historical overview will reveal the ways in which the understanding of memory progressed theologically and how John's thinking aligns with, deviates from, and further develops this tradition. Next, in chapter two we will get an overview of John's theological anthropology to set the framework in which to understand the memory. Then, chapter three will explain what John means by memory and how this faculty fits into his anthropological system. Finally, in chapter four, we will turn to his teaching on the purification of the memory through hope, considering both the active and

[11] In 2019, an international congress at the Teresianum in Rome was devoted entirely to this topic of memory and hope in St. John of the Cross. See the proceedings in *Teresianum* 70 no. 2 (2019).
[12] This is the case for Howells, *Mystical Knowing and Selfhood*; and Payne, *Cognitive Value of Mysticism*.
[13] Such as Iva Berank, "St. John of the Cross – Hope for the Hopeless Places. Healing of Memories and the Places of Conflict," *Teresianum* 70, no. 2 (2019): 569–82; and Constance FitzGerald, "From Impasse to Prophetic Hope: Crisis of Memory," *CTSA Proceedings* 64 (2009): 21–42.
[14] See Elizabeth Wilhelmsen, "La memoria como potencia del alma en San Juan de la Cruz," PhD diss., (University of Nebraska–Lincoln, 1990).

passive components. Finally, we will briefly recapitulate the central role that memory plays in John's spirituality and consider some practical implications of his thinking.

Chapter One – John's Sources on Memory

Before considering John's conception of memory in detail, it will be advantageous to examine earlier sources that were influential to his thinking. No author writes in a vacuum, and John's theological system is noticeably marked by several sources. It is impossible to comprehensively determine the influences of any writer since these are vast and often inexplicit. However, five primary influences, representing a long span of history, can be explicitly observed in John's writings on memory: Scripture, Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and John Baconthorpe. A close look at these sources will reveal the ways in which John was inheriting a long tradition of thought on memory. At the same time, knowing his sources will make apparent the ways in which his thinking deviates significantly from his predecessors. These deviations ultimately do more to reveal John's own understanding of memory and how it fits into his larger theological system.

Scripture

Considering John's sources in the introduction to the English translation of the *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, Kieran Kavanaugh writes,

> In both structure and outline of thought, John's writings display the influences of Aquinas and the scholastics. Certain elements of the mysticism reflect Augustine and Neoplatonism. Some images and stages suggest both the German and Rhineland mystics and the themes, problems, and language of the earlier Spanish mystics. A susceptibility to sensual impressions and symbols characteristic of Spanish poetry in this period is obvious; there may also be symbolic and linguistic influences from Islam. But however much we speculate on all this, the only book that can be properly called a fount of John's experience and writings is the Bible.[1]

The single greatest influence in John's writings is Sacred Scripture. He explicitly references Scripture close to 1000 times throughout his extant works.[2] Nearly every page is scattered with

[1] Kieran Kavanaugh, "Introduction" in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1991), 35.
[2] Citation statistics taken from the "Scriptural Index" of *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*.

biblical references. At times he quotes them directly in Latin and other times he provides a Spanish translation. But what most gives away his mastery of the sacred text is the number of times that he merely alludes to or paraphrases the Bible, sometimes even slightly misquoting passages.[3] This shows that he is not scouring the Scriptures to look for proof texts to support his claims, but rather his writing comes forth organically alongside the biblical texts which are flowing through his mind.[4] John thinks biblically. The Scriptures are the framework of ideas, images, and language in which he forms his thoughts and puts them into writings.

Although the influence of Scripture in John's writings is obvious, its influence on his understanding of memory is much less apparent. Memory is a common theme in the Bible; references to the idea can be found in nearly every book. Cognates of the Hebrew *zikram* and *zakar* occur over 200 times in the Old Testament, and cognates of the Greek μνημονεύω and μνήμη can be found an additional 22 times in the New Testament.[5] However, most references are not concerned with memory as a mental or spiritual faculty but with the act of remembering or the resulting memories.

To remember in Scripture is much more than simple data recall. To remember involves a real relationship with the past which is brought into the present moment. For example, the Jewish understanding of Passover is not simply a remembrance of a past event, but a making present again the Exodus from Egypt in order to bring about transformation in one's life.[6] To remember is an act of worship (Exod. 20:8, Ps. 42:4) and a call to action (Num. 15:40, Ps. 103:18);

[3] For example, in F.2.31, John references Esther in claiming that the death of the Judeans represents the purification of the inordinate appetites. However, this metaphor is completely at odds with the scriptural text in which it is not the Jews who are killed, but the enemies of the Jews, for both Queen Esther and Mordecai are Jewish.
[4] "Todas estas libertades que inconscientemente se toma con el texto sagrado tienen su explicacion: recuerda o cree recorder (no en vano es su lectura favorita) el texto exacto de la Biblia, y esta es la causa de algunas confusiones que no por eso deben tildarse de negligencias" Jean Vilnet, *La Biblia en la Obra de San Juan de la Cruz* (Madrid: Editorial de Espirtualidad, 2007), 52.
[5] James Strong, *Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009).
[6] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 1363.

ultimately, it is relational. Thus, Scripture is full of references to God remembering His people (Exod. 2:24, Lev. 26:42, Esther 10:12) and of exhortations for the Jewish people to remember God and the good things He has done for them (Deut. 8:18, 1 Chron. 16:12, Neh. 4:14).[7] Nahum Sarna helpfully ties this all together: "In the Bible, 'remembering,' particularly on the part of God, is not the retention or recollection of a mental image, but a focusing upon the object of memory that results in action."[8]

This biblical understanding is clear in the verses that John quotes in reference to memory. He quotes only a few passages in Scripture that specifically refer to memory or remembering: Psalm 77:5, Psalm 88:5, Psalm 137, and Lamentations 3:20.[9] Obviously, these few, brief verses cannot account for John's entire concept of memory, but his choice in using these verses does say something about his understanding of the topic. Here we will not consider what John says about memory in relation to these passages, but instead, as sources for his understanding of the concept, we will examine what these particular verses say about memory in their own right.

First, Psalm 77:2–6, which John quotes twice in reference to memory, tells of searching for God in the midst of great suffering and anguish. The passage reads:

> In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; my soul refuses to be comforted. I think (*memor fui*) of God, and I moan; I meditate, and my spirit faints. You keep my eyelids from closing; I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I consider the days of old, and remember (*in mente habui*) the years of long ago. I commune with my heart in the night; I meditate and search my spirit.

[7] For more on the role of memory in connection to Old Testament worship, see Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb's High Feast: Melito, Peri Pascha and the Quartodeciman Passover Liturgy at Sardis* (Boston: Brill, 1998), 47-54.
[8] Nahum Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 56.
[9] Interestingly, only one of these references can be found in John's more thorough treatment of the memory in Book 3 of *The Ascent* where he references Lamentations 3:20 in 3.6.4. He refers to the same again verse in F.3.21. In the same work he also references Psalm 77:5 in 2.43. Psalm 88:5 is mentioned once in N.2.6.2. Finally, his poem "A romance on the psalm 'By the waters of Babylon,'" is a gloss on Psalm 137.

In this passage, the psalmist remembers two different things: the Lord and the days of old. In a time of trouble, the psalmist remembers God and, in so doing, finds consolation. The psalmist also remembers times past, looking back to a time before the current struggle, to a time when God seemed more present.

Psalm 88:5 speaks, in a way, of the opposite reality of Psalm 77. Rather than a person remembering God, it tells of God *not* remembering a person: "like those you remember no more, for they are cut off from your hand." To be forgotten by God is more than to no longer be consciously in his mind, it is to be completely cut off and abandoned into the depths of death. This psalm tells of a person in the midst of great distress who feels forgotten by God and cries out in order to be brought back to his memory.

Finally, Psalm 137 is a lament over the destruction of Jerusalem about which John wrote a poem while imprisoned in Toledo. In its short nine verses, the Psalm relates to memory in several different places by speaking of either remembering or forgetting. It begins, "By the rivers of Babylon—there we sat and wept when we remembered Zion" (v. 1). The psalmist finds himself exiled in a foreign land, longing for Zion (Jerusalem), his homeland. At first, this remembrance of Zion seems to be simply a remembrance of a physical place. Yet, it is clear from the great mourning of the psalmist that Zion has more meaning than simply a location. For the Israelites, Jerusalem represented the place of relationship with God; the loss of Jerusalem meant the loss of that relationship. Thus, the psalmist is mourning more than the loss of a physical place, but the seeming loss of God. In a spiritual sense, Babylon represents the exile of this world and Jerusalem represents heaven or union with God. The psalm shows the importance of remembering God in the midst of the exile of this life.

These three psalms give a general overview of the role of memory in Scripture. First, memory in these psalms is closely connected to thought. To remember God is to actively think about him. Yet, to remember is more than to simply recall something; its meaning is much deeper. It is not something momentary, but something that ought to be done continually. This type of continual memory is more than mere thought, it speaks of relationship. For persons to remember God and for God to remember them implies a mutual relationship: one of dependence on the part of creatures and one of love and care on the part of God. This relational element of memory will shine through in John's system in which memory is an important aspect of union with God.

Another important verse concerning memory that John references two times in his writings (A.3.6.4 and F.3.21) is Lamentations 3:20–21 which begins: "I will be mindful and remember, and my soul shall languish within me" (v. 20). The Latin and Spanish are particularly striking here: "Memoria memor ero," and "Con memoria me acordare": with memory I will remember.[10] The speaker remembers his immense affliction and suffering, yet in the midst of this torment does not despair. The subsequent verse recounts "But this [the Lord's steadfast love] I call to mind; and therefore I have hope" (v. 21). This connection between memory, particularly the memory turned to God, and hope will prove to be essential for John of the Cross, as we will see below.

Aristotle

John's anthropology can broadly be described as Aristotelean-Thomistic.[11] He cites Aristotle by name or as "*el Filósofo*" seven times in his works and references his teaching

[10] As quoted by John in F.3.21.
[11] Ciro Garcia, "Antropología sanjuanista" in *Diccionario de san Juan de la Cruz*, ed. Eulogio Pacho (Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2000), 92.

countless others.[12] Since Thomas's thinking is so heavily influenced by Aristotle, it is impossible to completely separate the two sources in John's writings.[13] It is not definitively known how much of Aristotle's corpus he would have encountered directly. In his philosophy studies in Salamanca, he would have at least studied the *Organon* as well as the *Metaphysics.*[14] References to several works can be found scattered throughout his writings, particularly the *Metaphysics* and *De Anima*. The latter, Aristotle supplemented with a collection of minor works that are known as the *Parva naturalia*. It is within this collection of essays that we find his *De memoria et reminiscentia*. While John's works contain no explicit reference to this work on memory, it is apparent that he was familiar with the *Parva naturalia*.[15] Even if he never encountered *De memoria et reminiscentia* directly, it is clear that his thinking on memory was significantly influenced by Aristotle's thought.

De memoria et reminiscentia is a short work with a two-part structure. The first half deals with memory proper (μνήμη) and the second half is concerned with reminiscence (ἀνάμνησις), although the two parts are not so neatly divided in the work.[16] The two types of memory can best be distinguished as retention (μνήμη) and recall (ἀνάμνησις), "holding something in your mind, which is what *mnêmê* does, and bringing something back to mind, which is the role of *anamnêsis*."[17] However, the fact that Aristotle often interchanges the two terms and does not

[12] A.2.8.6, 2.14.13; N.1.4.2, 2.5.3, 2.8.2, 2.16.4; C.38.10.
[13] "El aristotelismo asumido por la filosofía medieval, en especial por la tomista, impregna toda la obra sanjuanista." Eulogio Pacho, "Fuentes. Antecedentes" in *Diccionario de san Juan de la Cruz,* ed. Eulogio Pacho (Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2000), 491.
[14] Eulogio Pacho, "Salamanca" in *Diccionario de san Juan de la Cruz*, ed. Eulogio Pacho (Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2000), 1042.
[15] John occasionally states the axiom that "two contraries cannot coexist in the same subject" (A.1.4.2, 1.6.1, 2.5.4; N.2.9.2) which is a nearly exact translation of a phrase found in *De sensu et sensibilibus*, 7.
[16] "So Aristotle does not hold the two sharply apart. And, more significantly, memory has invaded even the official account of recollection" Julia Annas, "Aristotle on Memory and the Self," in *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, eds. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 298.
[17] Sophie-Grace Chappell, "Aristotle" in *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*, eds. Sven Bernecker and Kourken Michaelian (New York: Routledge, 2017), 403.

keep a strict distinction between parts reveals how interwoven the two are in his thought. Although John twice refers to reminiscence (*reminiscencia*) in his writings, he does so both times in conjunction with his broader understanding of memory.[18] A detailed analysis of *De memoria et reminiscentia* is not needed for our purposes here, but a few points on memory will prove helpful to highlight the similarities and differences in relation to John's understanding of memory.

First, and very importantly for Aristotle, memory is of the past.[19] Concerning the future there is opinion (δοξαστὸν) and expectation (ἐλπιστόν), and concerning the present there is sensation (αἴσθησις) and conception (ὑπόληψις), but these are different from memory which necessarily involves the passing of time: "For of the present there is sensation, of the future there is expectation, and of the past there is memory."[20] This creates an important division between thinking and remembering. Aristotle presents memory as something distinct from sensation and, at the same time, distinct from thinking.

This raises the question of whether memory is a faculty of the body in the senses or of the soul in the mind. The fact that Aristotle considers memory not in *De Anima* but in the *Parva naturalia* already points to the answer. The former is concerned primarily with the soul and its capacities while the latter deals with capacities common to both the body and the soul.[21] Aristotle has already presented memory as something distinct from sensation and from thinking, but, at the same time it seems to be closely related to the two. In this context, he provides the closest thing to a definition of memory found so far in the treatise: "Memory, then, is neither sensation nor

[18] A.3.2.7, 3.14.1.
[19] Ἡ δὲ μνήμη τοῦ γενομένου (449b15).
[20] ἀλλὰ τοῦ μὲν παρόντος αἴσθησις, τοῦ δὲ μέλλοντος ἐλπίς, τοῦ δὲ γενομένου μνήμη (449b27–29). English translations from David Bloch, *Aristotle on Memory and Recollection: Text, Translation, Interpretation, and Reception in Western Scholasticism* (Boston: Brill, 2007).
[21] Bloch, *Aristotle on Memory*, 56.

conception, but a state of having one of these or an affection resulting from one of these, when some time elapses."[22]

However, Aristotle concludes that since memory is so closely connected with the awareness of time, it must belong to that same faculty, the common sense (κοινῆς αἰσθήσεως).[23] He discusses this common sense in *De Anima* where he explains it to be the sense that links together and categorizes different sensibles from the given senses.[24] For example, movement is perceived not from the sense of sight alone, but from a combination of sight, sound, and touch, for example. It is the common sense that combines these individual senses in order to perceive sensible things such as movement, magnitude, number, and in this case, time. Since memory is necessarily linked with time, he concludes that it must belong to this sense.

Aristotle provides further evidence that memory belongs to the senses by linking it to the imagination. He explains that thinking cannot happen except by means of images, which depend on the imagination. Insofar as the imagination images prior perceptions, it is linked to the memory. Since imagination belongs to the common sense, as he discussed in *De Anima*, so too must the memory. Bloch summarizes all of this and relates it to Aristotle's conclusion relating the memory to the senses: "Having stated that imagination and memory are essentially identical, and that they are both found in the common sense, that is, in the heart, it is easy for Aristotle to claim that memory is connected with sensation, not thinking."[25] However, Aristotle still retains the close connection that memory has with thinking. Thinking depends on images which depend on memory. So, although he concludes that memory is a faculty of the senses, he retains its

[22] Ἔστι μὲν οὖν ἡ μνήμη οὔτε αἴσθησις οὔτε ὑπόληψις, ἀλλὰ τούτων τινὸς ἕξις ἢ πάθος, ὅταν γένηται χρόνος (449b25–26).
[23] 450a11.
[24] *De Anima* 3.1.
[25] Bloch, *Aristotle on Memory*, 63.

proximity to the mind: "Thus, memory will belong accidentally to the mind, but essentially to the primary faculty of sense."[26]

Another important point from Aristotle's definition of memory is that it is a *state of having* (ἕξις). This translation of ἕξις is especially important for understanding memory for Aristotle.[27] Bloch helpfully describes it in this context as a state of having something, since "the memory-image is actually present and viewed internally by the possessor of the state."[28] This is significant because it shows that for Aristotle memory is not a thing that one has or some sort of sense organ by which one remembers, but it is a state of having something. Later he reiterates his earlier definition that memory consists in the *state of having* (ἕξις) a picture-like image or affection (πάθος) of a thing that is generated in the soul.[29]

But this definition raises a whole series of questions concerning the nature of memory. Is it the affection that one remembers, in which case memory would not actually be recalling anything absent, or is it the object from which the affection came to be that is remembered? If it is the object that is remembered, how is it that the affection brings forth the absent object? These questions can basically be boiled down to the following issue which Aristotle addresses: "How, then, will he remember what is not there?"[30] To answer this question he distinguishes between the image or affection in itself and the image or affection as a representation of something else. To elucidate this distinction, he gives the example of a painted picture on a board. The picture can be considered in two ways. First, exactly as that—as a picture; it has a specific size and

[26] ἡ δὲ μνήμη καὶ ἡ τῶν νοητῶν οὐκ ἄνευ φαντάσματός ἐστιν. ὥστε τοῦ διανοουμένου κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς ἂν εἴη, καθ᾽ αὑτὸ δὲ τοῦ πρώτου αἰσθητικοῦ (450a13–15).
[27] Sorabji translates ἕξις as "having" while Andriopoulos renders it as "habit" or "lasting state." See Bloch, *Aristotle on Memory,* 81–82.
[28] Bloch, *Aristotle on Memory,* 82.
[29] 450a29–31.
[30] Πῶς οὖν τὸ μὴ παρὸν μνημονεύει (450b19–20).

shape and color. However, the picture can also be considered as a representation of something else, namely, as a representation of the object pictured.[31]

Likewise, Aristotle concludes that in the soul "qua something in itself, the affection is a contemplation and an image, and qua being of something else it is something like a representation and a memory impression."[32] For example, if one sees a picture of a city they have never been to, the image produces a thought; however, if one sees a picture of a city they know well, the image brings them past the image and to the thing it represents which is a memory. Aristotle concludes the chapter in a rather definitive way, summarizing its most important points. He writes, "We have now stated what memory and remembering is, that it is the state of having an image, taken as a representation of that of which it is an image; further, we have stated to which of the parts in us it belongs, viz. that it is to the primary faculty of sense, that is, to that faculty by which we sense time."[33]

The second chapter of *De memoria et reminiscentia* considers reminiscence (ἀνάμνησις). Reminiscence is similar to memory in that it involves bringing forth something already known at some point in the past. However, from the beginning, Aristotle presents these as two distinct processes. He explained that memory proper is the "state of having an image," while now he says that reminiscence is "a search for an image."[34] On the surface, this difference may seem slight, but in practice it is rather significant. Bloch explains that "unlike the passive state of memory, reminiscence is a kind of active search."[35] Having the habitual knowledge of a thing in memory is very different from the ability to actively search for the knowledge of the thing through

[31] 450b18–25.
[32] ᾗ μὲν οὖν καθ᾽ αὑτό, θεώρημα ἢ φάντασμά ἐστιν, ᾗ δ᾽ ἄλλου, οἷον εἰκὼν καὶ μνημόνευμα (450b26–27).
[33] Τί μὲν οὖν ἐστὶ μνήμη καὶ τὸ μνημονεύειν εἴρηται, ὅτι φαντάσματος, ὡς εἰκόνος οὗ φάντασμα, ἕξις, καὶ τίνος μορίου τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι τοῦ πρώτου αἰσθητικοῦ, καὶ ᾧ χρόνου αἰσθανόμεθα (451a15–19).
[34] ἡ ἀνάμνησις ζήτησις ἐν τοιούτῳ φαντάσματος (453a15–16).
[35] Bloch, *Aristotle on Memory*, 72.

reminiscence. This difference is so significant that while animals and humans both have the power of memory, only humans can reminisce because reminiscence, although still connected to the sensible soul since it is a searching through sensible images, involves the use of the intellect.

For our purposes, this overview of *De memoria et reminiscentia* provides four helpful points in anticipation of the consideration of John's understanding. First, for Aristotle, memory is something distinct from senses and thinking. This will prove important for John when it comes to distinguishing memory as a separate faculty of the soul. To remember is not simply an act of thinking of something from the past, but its own specific process. Second, while memory is distinct from thinking, it is also intimately linked to thinking. Without memory, thinking would be impossible. For John, while the memory and intellect are distinct faculties, they are mutually dependent on one another in their functions. Third, for Aristotle, the word *memory* is not specifically referring to the object remembered or a sort of organ by which one remembers; instead, it is a state of having these images from past objects in mind. Likewise for John, memory is not static data of the past that is stored nor is it the name of a biological entity that remembers. Instead, memory is the dynamic act of remembering or holding something in mind. Finally, Aristotle's understanding of reminiscence as the deliberate power of recall closely aligns with John's concept of memory not as a merely passive corporeal function but as an active spiritual faculty.

John's concept of memory is also significantly different from Aristotle's in important ways. First, for John, memory is not simply connected to the past, but involves past, present, and future. Second, unlike Aristotle, he posits memory as a power of the immaterial soul, not of the bodily senses. Finally, John holds a stronger distinction between memory and imagination than is found in Aristotle's system. These ideas of John will be fleshed out more fully in chapter three,

but for now they reveal the substantial ways in which he builds upon and deviates from the thinking of Aristotle.

Augustine

Augustine's influence on John's spirituality is particularly important, especially in light of John's adoption of a triadic rather than dyadic spiritual anthropology. Aquinas, and most scholastics, present two faculties of the soul: intellect and will. However, John opts for a trifold schema of intellect, memory, and will, which finds its roots in the writings of Augustine. The addition of memory is noteworthy and can be directly linked to Augustine's thought.

Memory is a central concept in Augustine's writings. It is fundamental to Augustine's anthropology and epistemology and, therefore, to his entire theological system. Hochschild summarizes the central place that memory takes in Augustine's thought:

> For Augustine, it is through memory that mind meets the world. Things external to the body are intelligently apprehended by means of memory; intelligible objects, even the mind itself, are known by means of the mediation of memory. Most importantly, memory is at the heart of what it means to be constituted in the image of God. It declares a fundamental grounding of that which is changing in the unchanging. *In this relation Augustine finds the fulfilment of what it means to be human.*[36]

This last claim may seem exaggerated, especially considering the little attention that has been paid to this concept in the history of Augustinian scholarship.[37] However, Augustine uses the word *memoria* and its cognates over one-thousand times throughout his corpus, nearly a third of those times in his masterpieces the *Confessions* and *De Trinitate*.[38]

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[36] Paige E. Hochschild, *Memory in Augustine's Theological Anthropology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1. Emphasis added.

[37] In 1980, Mourant claimed that "with the exception of a few scholarly articles and some summary accounts and analyses, Saint Augustine's treatment of memory has not in my opinion been given the attention it clearly merits." The last few decades have seen a considerable increase in focus on this topic, however, it still isn't given a central place in Augustinian scholarship; John A. Mourant, *Saint Augustine on Memory* (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1980), 9.

[38] Lexicographical searches completed using Brepolis Library of Latin Texts; *Library of Latin Texts* (Turhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2005).

An analysis of this concept throughout his work reveals significant development of his thought throughout his life. In his early philosophical writings, his understanding of memory is marked particularly by Neoplatonic influence, closely resembling the concept of *anamnesis*. However, for our purposes here, we will focus on his more mature understanding of memory as found in his *Confessions* and *De Trinitate*. The *Confessions*, particularly the tenth book, is by far the most studied in terms of Augustine's understanding of memory.[39] As a whole, the book can be described as "une œuvre de mémoire."[40] The first nine books contain an account of Augustine's life, from his infancy in Book 1 to the death of his mother in Book 9. These are all an account of Augustine's memory. The tenth book moves from this practical application of memory to its more theoretical consideration. This lays the anthropological foundation for the subsequent books which treat of time, creation, and eternity. Le Blond presents a threefold structure to the work relating to the different functions of memory: "This [memory] obviously involves an evocation of the past, but it also implies the memory of oneself in the present, and the tension towards the future."[41] There is a progression from the personal memory of Augustine into the eternal memory of God. Thus, memory is a concept that provides unity to the *Confessions*.

In the first nine books, as is the case in his earlier writings, memory does not appear to be more than the storehouse of sense experiences, or an epistemological tool for relating perceptions to the mind. The references to memory in this section, which are relatively few compared to the over seventy found in Book 10, fall into two general categories: 1. Augustine's memory (or lack

[39] For a list of studies on the topic, see Hochschild, *Memory in Augustine*, 137 n. 1.
[40] Jean-Marie Le Blond, *Les Conversions de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Aubier, 1950), 6.
[41] "Celle-ci comporte évidemment l'évocation du passé, mais elle implique aussi le souvenir de soi dans le présent, et la tension vers l'avenir" (Le Blond, *Les Conversions*, 6).

thereof) of past experiences[42]; and 2. factual knowledge learned and stored in his memory.[43] These usages closely parallel Augustine's understanding of memory in his earlier philosophical works and significantly contrast with John's understanding of memory as an active spiritual faculty.

However, one thing stands out from these references compared to Augustine's earlier works. Throughout these books of the *Confessions*, Augustine often gives God agency over the work of memory. For example, in asking God to heal his sorrow at the death of his mother, he writes, "Yet, Thou didst not do it, commending to my memory, I believe, by this one proof the binding force of all habit."[44] Augustine is claiming that it is God who is placing things in his memory. Elsewhere he says, "Thanks be to Thee, O my God! Whence and whither hast Thou guided my recollection (*recordationem*), so that I might even confess these things to Thee which, though important, I had passed over in my forgetfulness (*oblitus*)."[45] Not only does God have agency in what is retained, but also in what is recalled. In his earlier *De musica* Augustine presented a theory of divine illumination to explain the presence of spiritual knowledge in the memory, but here Augustine is further developing this theory. God not only plays a role in what is contained in the memory, but also in the very action of the memory in recalling the knowledge stored there. This creates a close association of the work of memory with God Himself. God is somehow active in communicating and illuminating the soul with knowledge.

This leads to the important consideration of memory in Book 10 of the *Confessions*. In an upward ascent searching for God, Augustine says he will rise above all exterior things, all of

[42] *Conf.* 1.6.9–10, 1.7.12, 2.1.1, 2.7.15, 4.1.1.
[43] *Conf.* 1.8.13, 1.9.15, 1.13.22, 1.19.31, 4.3.6, 5.3.3.
[44] *Conf.* 9.12.32. The English translations, unless otherwise noted, are from *The Fathers of the Church* 21, trans. Vernon J. Bourke (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1953).
[45] *Conf.* 9.7.16.

nature, physical beauty, music, light, and even time, for although these are made by God and tell of God, they exclaim, "We are not Thy God; look above us."[46] Augustine then turns to himself, knowing that he is both body and soul, but acknowledging that it is to the interior that he must look, to the inner man (*homo interior*), the soul (*animus*). Even here, though, he continues to rise above the force (*uis*) which animates the body and above the force of the corporeal senses, for these powers are also shared by nonrational animals.

It is above these forces that he arrives at "the fields and broad palaces of memory (*grandis memoriae recessus*)," an image that strongly parallels John's deep caverns of the memory.[47] However, once again Augustine is describing the memory as a sort of storehouse for images, but he marvels at its capacity and power. He explores these "*grandis memoriae recessus*" noting all the images (*imagines*) coming from perceptions of the senses that are stored there. Yet, he points out that it is not only sense images that are stored in the memory, but also learned knowledge such as literature and logic *(doctrinis liberalibus percepta*). These things are stored "in an inner place which is not a place. Nor do I carry the images of these, but the things themselves."[48] Unlike sense knowledge, for which an image of the thing perceived is stored, when it comes to this type of learned knowledge, the thing itself enters and is stored in the memory.

This observation raises a central question in Book 10: If this type of knowledge is stored in the memory but does not come through the senses, how does it get there? Augustine concludes that this knowledge must have already been in the memory. He summarizes:

> Therefore, we find that to learn things of this kind—whose images we do not acquire through sensation, but which we discern in themselves within us, without images and as they are (*sine imaginibus, sicuti sunt*)—is nothing else than, by

[46] *Conf.* 10.6.9.
[47] *Conf.* 10.8.12.
[48] quasi remota interiore loco, non loco; nec eorum imagines, sed res ipsas gero (*Conf.* 10.9.16).

> cogitation, to make a kind of collation of the haphazard and unarranged contents of memory, and, through one's act of awareness, to command that they be placed close at hand, as it were, in this same memory, where they formerly lay scattered about and unnoticed, that they may eventually come easily to the attention of a mind already familiar with them.[49]

This theory of recalling learned knowledge applies similarly to the knowledge of principles such as numbers and dimensions (*rationes*).

Next, Augustine explains that the memory also contains knowledge of feelings or emotions (*affectiones*). This type of knowledge is peculiar because it is not stored as images like knowledge coming through the senses, but it also cannot be the thing itself that is stored, for to remember being sad is not the same as being sad. This is perplexing for Augustine since memory is not something separate from the mind: "*animus sit etiam ipsa memoria*."[50] The memory is not a storehouse outside of the mind into which it enters to find knowledge. Instead, Augustine presents the memory as something deep and interior within the mind: "*memoria quasi uenter est animi*."[51] Yet, he acknowledges that this analogy falls short because, being spiritual, the mind has no parts. Bourke explains, "For Saint Augustine, *memoria* is not a faculty of the soul, but the whole soul as conscious of itself and its contents."[52] As will be discussed below, this closely aligns with John's understanding of memory as an action of the soul that is closely connected to consciousness.

In the next several chapters Augustine considers the experience of forgetting (*obliuio*). The main questions he ponders are: How is the concept of forgetting stored in the memory? How do we remember that we have forgotten something? And how do we remember something

[49] *Conf.* 10.11.18.
[50] *Conf.* 10.14.21.
[51] *Conf.* 10.14.21.
[52] Vernon J. Bourke, trans., *Confessions*, in *The Fathers of the Church* 21 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 286 n. 55.

forgotten? For Augustine, these are not irrelevant epistemological speculations, disconnected from the ascent to God he began at the beginning of Book 10. No, these are the foundational issues underlying the search for God. Augustine acknowledges that it is necessary to rise even above the memory to find God, but that memory is essential in this search: "And how, indeed, may I find Thee, if I am without remembrance of Thee?"[53] There must be some knowledge of happiness, of truth, of God Himself, stored in the memory for a person to desire to seek these things. Yet, since these types of knowledge do not come through the senses, they are not stored as images in the memory; it is the thing itself that abides in the memory. Thus, Augustine concludes, that God must somehow dwell in the memory.

Important insights can be gleaned from Augustine's treatment of memory in the *Confessions*. In contrast to his earlier philosophical works, memory takes a more central place and plays a more significant role in the process of knowing. Moreover, memory is seen to have a fundamental part in a person's relation to God. Hochschild claims, "Memory in this great text is not simply the way in which the soul retains and meaningfully assimilates present perception and past experiences. Memory is the embodied soul's mode of approaching God."[54] This is significant development from Aristotle's conception of memory and is closely aligned with John's understanding. Augustine concludes that God must somehow dwell in the memory in order for a person to have knowledge of Him, but he has not yet explained how a finite soul can contain the infinite God. This further development he will make in *De Trinitate*.

Book 11 of *De Trinitate* is Augustine's most focused discussion of memory. The term *memoria* and its cognates appear over fifty times throughout its eleven chapters. However, as Augustine makes clear in the first chapter, his concern in this book is to find a vestige of the

[53] *Conf.* 10.17.26.
[54] Hochschild, *Memory in Augustine,* 139.

Trinity (*uestigium trinitatis*) in the outer (*exteriore*) man.[55] This book then is a thorough examination of memory in relation to the bodily senses, and is thus, largely, just a recapitulation of what has been said in his earlier works. Hochschild summarizes:

> Augustine describes memory as that which enables judgment, and therefore as the psychological foundation for knowledge. Memory confers unity on the data of what is mutable and 'becoming.' It is also representative of the extent to which the intellectual soul is bound by a discursive mode of knowing, since it demonstrates the dependence of mind on the body as a tool for filling the 'stomach' of the memory."[56]

One significant point from this book is that Augustine acknowledges the limited nature of memory. In Book 10 of the *Confessions*, he marveled at the incredible capacity of memory. However, here, in speaking of the memory in connection with sense perception, he points out that this capacity is limited. Although he says that the images contained in the memory are 'innumerably numerous' (*innumerabiliter numerosissima*), they are not infinite. This focus on the greatness of the memory in relation to the outer man is setting the stage for its even greater capacity in relation to the inner man.

Up to this point, Augustine's concept of memory, though well-developed, has been nothing entirely original. Most of what he has claimed can be found in his Latin and Neoplatonic sources. However, in Books 12 and 13 Augustine makes a significant turn, setting himself up for the more substantial and groundbreaking claims he will make about memory in Book 14. It is also here that he openly breaks with the Platonic theory of *anamnesis* as he sets the foundations for his own theory of memory. Instead of thinking there is an innate knowledge in man that is remembered throughout life, he states that "we ought rather to believe, that the intellectual mind is so formed in its nature as to see those things, which by the disposition of the Creator are

[55] *Trin.* 11.1.1.
[56] Hochschild, *Memory in Augustine,* 201.

subjoined to things intelligible in a natural order, by a sort of incorporeal light of a unique kind."[57]

At the beginning of Book 12, Augustine transitions from speaking about the outer man to the inner man, from the temporal to the eternal, from that which man shares in common with animals, to that which is shared with God. He makes an important distinction between knowledge (*scientiae*), which is concerned with human things, and wisdom (*sapientiae*), which is related to the divine.[58] Augustine is making a distinction between two ways of understanding in the inner man, or mind, one which is knowledge (*scientiae*) of created things, and one which is wisdom (*sapientiae*) of eternal things: "the intellectual cognizance of eternal things belongs to wisdom, but the rational cognizance of temporal things to knowledge."[59] Yet, he always insists that there is only one mind; there is only one memory, one intellect, and one will. They only function in different modes according to the object they are dealing with, what it is that one is remembering, understanding, or loving. Acknowledging that the intellectual cognizance of eternal things is to be preferred to the rational cognizance of temporal things, Augustine, continuing his ascent toward God, says that a trinity ought to be sought within this function of the inner man.

Here in the mind Augustine finds "*non solum trinitas sed etiam imago dei*."[60] Augustine is very clear that this *imago Dei* is trinitarian; it is *imago trinitatis*. It is important to note that Augustine more often speaks of *ad imaginem Dei* or *ad imaginem Trinitatis* instead of *imago Dei* or *imago Trinitatis*. Jesus is the *imago Dei*, but man (and woman, as Augustine emphatically

[57] *Trin.* 12.15. The English translations, unless otherwise noted, are from *The Fathers of the Church* 45, trans. Stephen McKenna (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1963).
[58] *Trin.* 12.14.
[59] *Trin.* 12.15.25.
[60] *Trin.* 12.4.4.

insists)[61] was created *ad* (to or towards) the image of God. This means that the idea of the *imago* for Augustine is not simply an intrinsic accomplished fact but is a dynamic concept that speaks not only of man's nature but also of his *telos*.

At the end of Book 13, Augustine considers whether this trinity in the inner man may be found in faith. He logically turns to faith here since faith is necessary in this life to know God.[62] However, he will ultimately conclude that there is a sort of trinity in knowledge of the ideas of faith, "*sed imago dei… nondum in ipsa est*."[63] This trinity cannot account for the *imago Dei* in man because faith is not eternal; it will pass away when the objects of faith are no longer believed but seen. Yet, to most closely resemble the Trinity, this trinity in man needs also to be eternal. Augustine continues his search saying, "we must find in the soul of man, i.e., the rational or intellectual soul, that image of the Creator which is immortally implanted in its immortality."[64] This eternity cannot be found in the soul remembering, understanding, and loving anything finite. Augustine concludes, "This trinity, then, of the mind is not therefore the image of God, because the mind remembers itself, and understands and loves itself; but because it can also remember, understand, and love Him by whom it was made."[65] He has finally arrived at the *imago Dei* within the human person. It is the mind remembering, understanding, and loving God that most closely resembles the Trinity in this life.

Here, memory clearly plays an essential role for it "has in this image of the Trinity, in proportion to its own small measure, a likeness of the Father, incomparably unequal, yet of some sort, whatever it be."[66] What is understood and what is loved except that which dwells in the

[61] *Trin.* 12.7.
[62] *Trin.* 13.7.10.
[63] *Trin.* 13.20.
[64] *Trin.* 14.4.6.
[65] *Trin.* 14.12.15.
[66] *Trin.* 15.23.42.

memory? Thus, memory, in so far as it is illuminated by God, is in some sense the source of this *imago Trinitatis*. Teske explains that "the primacy of memory for Augustine's account of human cognition is seen from its analogy with the Father who is first in the Trinity."[67] However, even this image is just that—it is only an image, an enigma. Thus, Augustine ends his work warning that a person "must not so compare this image thus wrought by that Trinity, and by his own fault changed for the worse, to that same Trinity as to think it in all points like to it, but rather that he should discern in that likeness, of whatever sort it be, a great unlikeness also."[68] Although John never so explicitly links memory with the Father, this Trinitarian connection is evident in his writings.

Augustine's understanding of memory, noticeably different from that of Aristotle, would have significant influence on subsequent thinkers. An entire Augustinian school inherited his triadic spiritual anthropology of memory, understanding, and will, including several thinkers important in shaping John's thinking such as Bernard, Bonaventure, Bernadino de Laredo, and Francisco de Osuna. Elizabeth Wilhelmsen notes, "Without being Augustinian in every aspect of his anthropology, the Carmelite saint adopts in a very explicit way the tripartite enumeration of the powers of the soul, thus connecting himself to a very long tradition."[69] Whether directly or indirectly, Augustine's prominent and innovative theology of memory impacted John's thinking on the subject more than any other thinker.

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[67] Roland Teske, "Augustine's philosophy of memory," in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine,* ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 157.
[68] *Trin.* 15.20.39.
[69] "Sin ser agustiniano en todos los aspectos de su antropología, el santo carmelita adopta de forma muy explícita la enumeración trimembre de las potencias del alma, entroncándose así en la larguísima tradición" (Elizabeth Wilhelmsen, "La memoria como potencia del alma," 90).

Thomas Aquinas

The teaching of St. Thomas, although enormously influential on John of the Cross, will only be examined briefly here because of its close resemblance to the understanding of Aristotle. As a master synthesizer, he concisely harmonizes the understanding of memory discussed above in Scripture, Aristotle, and Augustine. Although he is primarily clarifying and developing the teaching of Aristotle, Thomas does not hesitate to introduce new terminology and to put Aristotle's teaching in dialogue with Arabic philosophies, particularly Avicenna. He writes a commentary on *De memoria* which, O'Callaghan explains, "was written slightly after his *Commentary on Aristotle's De anima* and likely while Aquinas was composing question 78 of the first part of the *Summa* on the 'special powers of the soul,' the question in which he addresses the faculty of memory."[70] Thus, Thomas's treatment in q. 78 a. 4 can serve as an overview to his thought on the topic.

In q. 78 Thomas discusses the powers of the soul which are "praeambula ad intellectum."[71] His consideration of memory in this section, specifically in a. 4 on the interior senses, is already telling. For Aquinas, as for Aristotle, memory is intrinsically connected to the senses. However, he claims that it is the phantasy (*phantasia*) or imagination (*imaginatio*), not the memory, that is "a storehouse of forms received through the senses."[72] Instead, memory is the storehouse for intentions (*intentiones*), the nonsensible data connected to apprehensions.[73]

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[70] John O'Callaghan, "Thomas Aquinas," in *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*, eds. Sven Bernecker and Kourken Michaelian (New York: Routledge, 2017), 461–2.
[71] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1911–1925), I, q. 78, pr.
[72] thesaurus quidam formarum per sensum acceptarum (ST. I, q. 78, a. 4. co.).
[73] Black describes intentions as "cognitive objects distinct from the sensible qualities or 'forms,' that are immediately available to the five external senses." Avicenna often uses the example of the sheep's perception of the wolf as a predator. See Deborah L. Black, "Avicenna and Averroes," in *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory*, eds. Sven Bernecker and Kourken Michaelian (New York: Routledge, 2017), 449.

This is not to say that memory does not rely on the senses, but that it is not simply forms that are stored in the memory, but the intentions connected to apprehensions.

While this might seem to be in stark contrast to Aristotle, it is not an incompatible interpretation. Recall that for Aristotle, there was a difference between the image in itself and the image as a representation of something else. Thomas uses this distinction to explain the difference between phantasy and memory. The phantasy retains the image itself, but other nonsensible data such as time when it was experienced, feelings of attraction or revulsion, judgements regarding whether something should be pursued or avoided, etc. are the nonsensible intentions that are connected to the image and stored in the memory. Thomas, interpreting Aristotle, retains phantasy as the faculty of retaining sensible forms and reserves sensible memory for the further function for retaining intentions. These distinctions between memory, imagination, and phantasy will find parallels in John's thought as will be seen below.

Thomas also explains that the rational nature of man raises all of his sensible powers to a higher function, due to "a certain affinity and proximity to the universal reason, which, so to speak, overflows into them," even while they remain sensible in nature.[74] Thus, the sensible memory which retains the intentions of apprehensions has a different function in humans than in mere animals. Thomas writes, "As to the memorative power, man has not only memory, as other animals have in the sudden recollection of the past; but also 'reminiscence' by syllogistically, as it were, seeking for a recollection of the past by the application of individual intentions."[75] Concerning sensible memory for Thomas, animals have the power of retaining intentions, but

[74] aliquam affinitatem et propinquitatem ad rationem universalem, secundum quandam refluentiam (ST, I, q. 78, a. 4, ad. 5).
[75] Ex parte autem memorativae, non solum habet memoriam, sicut cetera animalia, in subita recordatione praeteritorum; sed etiam reminiscentiam, quasi syllogistice inquirendo praeteritorum memoriam, secundum individuales intentiones (ST, I, q. 78, a. 4, co.).

added to this animal power, humans have the ability to rationally recall things from the memory through reminiscence.

Apart from this sensitive memory, which seems to nearly parallel the understanding of Aristotle, Thomas also ascribes to man an intellectual memory, which is the power to retain the intelligible species of things in the intellect. In the philosophy of the mind this is an important and much disputed question. As nonsensible and universal, intelligible species cannot be retained in the sensible memory. Thus, thinkers such as Avicenna conclude that each time the soul wants to recall a universal, it returns to the particular, sensible memory of a thing and again abstracts the universal. As such, memory of the universal is really only an ease or habit which is attained by carrying out this process of abstraction many times.[76] However, Thomas, holding strongly to a hylomorphic understanding of the human person, does not want to posit such a division between the body and soul, between the sensible and intellectual. Instead, he claims that intelligible species are stored in the possible intellect. This habitual state of knowledge in the possible intellect is called intellectual memory.

In connecting intellectual memory with the possible intellect, Thomas claims that intellectual memory is "not another power from the intellect."[77] In considering this, he directly addresses Augustine's internal "trinity" of memory, understanding, and will. Lombard, in this Augustinian tradition, attributes three powers to the soul in his *Sentences*: *memoria*, *intellectus*, and *uoluntas*.[78] Thomas argues that in *De Trinitate* Augustine is not presenting memory as a power of the soul alongside intellect and will, but instead as "the soul's habit of retention."[79]

[76] Black, "Avicenna and Averroes," 451.
[77] Non ergo in parte intellectiva est alia potentia memoria ab intellectu (ST, I, q. 79, a. 7, s.c.).
[78] The English translation cites Lombard 3 Sent. D, 1, but the reference should be 1 Sent. D, 3.
[79] habituali animae retentione (ST, I, q. 79, a. 7, ad. 1).

Thus, for Thomas, memory is not a separate power of the soul, but is equated with the possible intellect's habit of retaining intelligible species.

Scholars call Thomas's understanding of intellectual memory "a distinctive position" and "un-Aristotelian."[80] However, it is clear that he sees his view as a faithful interpretation, or at least completely compatible with Aristotle's thought regarding the possible intellect in *De Anima* III.4.[81] This intellectual memory is the spiritual analogue to the sensible memory, for, "like sense memory, it is a 'repository' of forms, but of intelligible forms rather than sensible forms."[82] This point will prove important for later interpretations of John's understanding of memory. Does his thought align with this Thomistic framework of memory as a function of the intellect or is he positing something different? This important question will be examined in detail in the following chapters. Aquinas's understanding of intellectual memory is an important development from earlier thinkers that will significantly influence John of the Cross.

John Baconthorpe

John Baconthorpe (c. 1290 – c. 1348), known as *Doctor resolutus*, was an English Carmelite whose philosophy and theology had a direct influence on John of the Cross.[83] He

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[80] O'Callaghan, "Thomas Aquinas," 461; and Bloch, *Aristotle on Memory,* 205. Bloch elaborates saying, "True, in the *De anima* Aristotle famously calls the rational part of the soul the 'place of forms', but he does not define this kind of retention as memory, and he never relates the *De anima* passage to the *De memoria*. Therefore, even though Aristotle's general point in this part of the *De anima* is very obscure, Aquinas' interpretation is based on his own thoughts as regards memory, not Aristotle's explicit statements, and from Aristotle's point of view it is simply not correct, I believe, to define the intellectual retention of forms as memory" (Bloch, *Aristotle on Memory,* 206).

[81] Arguing against Avecenna he writes, "But this opinion is clearly opposed to the teaching of Aristotle. For he says (*De Anima* iii, 4) that, when the passive intellect 'is identified with each thing as knowing it, it is said to be in act,' and that 'this happens when it can operate of itself. And, even then, it is in potentiality, but not in the same way as before learning and discovering.' Now, the passive intellect is said to be each thing, inasmuch as it receives the intelligible species of each thing." ("Sed haec opinio manifeste repugnat dictis Aristotelis. Dicit enim, in III de anima, quod, cum intellectus possibilis sic fiat singula ut sciens, dicitur qui secundum actum; et quod hoc accidit cum possit operari per seipsum. Est quidem igitur et tunc potentia quodammodo; non tamen similiter ut ante addiscere aut invenire. Dicitur autem intellectus possibilis fieri singula, secundum quod recipit species singulorum" [ST, I, q. 79, a. 6, co.]).

[82] O'Callaghan, "Thomas Aquinas," 466.

[83] Biographical information taken from: Simon Nolan, "John Baconthorpe," in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed, (Detroit: Gale Group, 2003), 594–97.

studied in Oxford and Paris, before teaching in Paris and Cambridge and serving as provincial of the order in England. After his death, the order lauded Baconthrope as the figurehead of Carmelite scholasticism. The general chapter in 1510 instructed that all Carmelite monasteries acquire copies of Baconthorpe's works, and a chapter in 1524 decreed that his works be reprinted.[84] In 1548 another chapter declared that his doctrine be taught throughout the whole order.[85] John would have encountered Baconthorpe's teaching during his time of study at the Carmelite College of San Andres in Salamanca from 1564–68.[86]

Baconthorpe's teaching is particularly difficult because of his distinct style. In each question of his *Commentary on the Sentences* and *Quodlibetorum* he quotes other thinkers extensively, putting them all in dialogue with one another before stating his own opinions. However, he is often more concerned with analyzing the methodology of other thinkers than with coming to any sort of conclusions to the questions. Thus, it can be hard to distill his own thoughts amidst the proliferation of quotations and contrary opinions. Lyle Etzwiler explains that Baconthorpe "does not differentiate clearly between proving that one of the authorities or a colleague has not interpreted a doctrine correctly and proving the truth of a doctrine. In fact, the very ambiguity constitutes one of the salient features of Baconthorpe's thought."[87] It is this style that renders his teaching equally interesting and confounding. For example, in the prologue of his *Commentary on the Sentences* concerning the nature of theology, he is happy to disagree with

[84] Chrysogone du Saint-Sacrement, "Maitre Jean Baconthorp. Les Sources – La Doctrine – Les Disciples," *Revue néoscolastique de philosophie* 34 (1932): 362.
[85] Gabriel Wessels, ed., *Acta Capitulorum Generalium Ordinis Fratrum B. V. Mariae de Monte Carmelo: Vol. I (1318-1593)* (Rome: Apud Curiam Generalitiam, 1912), 429.
[86] Crisógono de Jesús Sacramentado, *The Life of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kathleen Pond (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1958), 35.
[87] Lyle Etzwiler, "John Baconthorpe's Relation to Averroism," PhD diss., (University of Toronto, 1969), 47.

Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, Godfrey of Fontaines, and Giles of Rome before coming to his own conclusion that somewhat harmonizes all four.[88]

While it is often difficult to determine Baconthorpe's own thoughts on certain issues, he did make important developments regarding the role of memory in the soul. The convergence of his position on two topics relevant to memory are consistent with the views of John of the Cross. First, he argues strongly for the existence of an intellectual memory.[89] While he takes seriously the position of Averroes who denies such memory, he argues that a proper interpretation of Aristotle allows for it, pointing to the third chapter of *De Anima*.[90] He explains that Averroes rejects the idea of an intellectual memory because the intellect is not concerned with singulars. Thomas's response to this is to claim that the intellectual memory only knows universal species. However, in his characteristic style, Baconthorpe disagrees with both and in coming to his own unique conclusion which in some ways harmonizes the two. He argues for the existence of the intellectual memory, saying that although the intellect cannot be concerned with materiality, this does not mean that it cannot be concerned with singulars in some sense.[91] Insofar as something is remembered as being at a particular time or in a particular place, it is concerned with singulars.[92] These attributes, although particular, are not material and can thus be an object of the intellectual memory.[93] Thus, for Baconthorpe, like for John of the Cross, memory is no longer simply a storehouse for universal intellectual species but a power concerned with particular realities.

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[88] Baconthorpe, 1 *Sent*., prol., q. 4, aa. 3–5.
[89] Baconthorpe, *Quodl*. I, q. 3, aa. 1–2.
[90] Secunda conclusio, quod istis non obstantibus, de Aristotle mihi videtur, quod in alio loco qui est magis auctenticus posuit memoriam intellectiuam, tertio de anima, loquitur de intellectu, ut distinguitur contra totam partem sensibilem (*Quodl*. I, q. 3, a. 1).
[91] per hoc quod singulare in extremo materialitatisest obiectu sensus, per hoc no excluitur quin uniuersale immateriale sub ratione alicuius singularis conditionis possit esse obiectum intellectus secundum aliqua eius virtutem (*Quodl*. I, q. 3, a. 2).
[92] tame memorari hoc fuisse in hoc tempore, et in hoc loco est actus circa singulare (*Quodl*. I, q. 3, a. 2).
[93] sic respectus praeteritionis, vel futuritionis, qui importatur per hoc, quod memoria intellectiua per habitum uniuersalem conuertit se ad obiectum uniuersale prius intellectum, est immaterialis, licet particularis, quia respectus

A second point important for Baconthorpe's understanding of memory is his rejection of the distinction between the substance of the soul and its powers. Citing Aristotle and Augustine, Baconthorpe concludes that "forma substantialis est immediatum principium suae operationi."[94] In this, he significantly departs from Thomas, who regards the substance of the soul and its powers to be distinct.[95] This idea, coupled with his understanding of intellectual memory, raises the role of memory to an entirely new level. Memory is no longer simply related to the senses, as it was for Aristotle, but to the intellectual soul. In addition to this, memory is no longer simply an external power of the soul, as for Thomas, but the very essence of the soul in action. These conclusions will prove to be important in the thinking of John of the Cross.

Conclusion

An overview of these sources reveals that John's understanding of memory does not come out of a vacuum. There is a long history of thought concerning memory, recounted experientially and relationally in Scripture and philosophically in the writings of Aristotle. Later thinkers such as Augustine and Thomas continued to develop this tradition in a more theological vein, each making significant contributions over the centuries. As we will see, John incorporates much of this thought into his own spiritual system. Like his references to Hebrew Scripture, John's understanding of memory is not simply about stored past data, but the active process of making the past a present reality; it is not simply about recall but relationship. Building on Aristotle, John sees memory as distinct from but closely related to thinking; it is not a storage place but a state of having something actively in mind. Augustine developed the concept of memory more than any other thinker, and his triadic spiritual anthropology of memory,

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inter extrema immaterialia est immaterialis: quia res sequitur naturam extremorum suorum; ergo est immaterialis (*Quodl*. I, q. 3, a. 2).

[94] II *Sent.* D 37, q. 1, a. 2.

[95] in anima aliud est essentia, et aliud virtus sive potentia (ST, I, q. 77, a. 1, s.c.).

understanding, and will is a clear influence on John's thought. Thomas's concept of an intellectual memory as a spiritual power is akin to John's understanding of memory although John departs from Thomas's classification of memory as merely a component of the intellect. Finally, John's thought is marked with Baconthorpe's expanded understanding of the intellectual memory and rejection of the distinction between the substance of the soul and its powers.

Overall, it is clear that John was influenced by these earlier thinkers but was still highly innovative in his understanding of memory, particularly as it relates to union with God. John deviates in significant ways from the sources that came before him. His thought is in part inherited from a rich tradition yet is still considerably original. Before diving into John's own understanding of memory, we will begin with a general overview of his theological anthropology.

Chapter 2: John's Theological Anthropology

Having examined John's sources on memory, it will be beneficial to give an overview of his anthropology in order to better understand where memory fits into this framework. We will begin by examining his understanding of the unity of the human person before examining each of the distinct aspects that he discusses in his work. Much ink has been spilled analyzing and dissecting John's understanding of the human person.[1] This project is especially difficult since there is no systematic anthropological analysis found in John's work. Instead, his thinking must be gleaned from partial and sometimes ambiguous references scattered throughout his writings. This is not to say that John does not have a complete and systematic understanding of the human person, only that he felt no need to provide a concentrated summary of his thought. He assumes that his reader has a basic understanding of the concepts and terms he uses without providing much of an explanation.[2] This may have been fine for the 16th-century Spanish audience he was writing for at the time, but it makes understanding his spiritual framework difficult for modern readers, even those trained in philosophy and theology, since the words he uses often have different connotations or even entirely different meanings today.

Apart from this assumption of a certain, basic theological understanding, John's lack of systematic treatment of his anthropology also discloses the angle from which he is approaching

[1] For an overview of the topic and a modest bibliography, see Garcia, "Antropología Sanjuanista," 92–105. Also see chapters 2 and 3 of Howells, *Mystical Knowing and Selfhood,* 15–59; and chapter 2 of Payne, *Cognitive Value of Mysticism,* 16–49.

[2] Eulogio Pacho explains concerning the soul, "Since it is a primary and universal concept in the religious world in which he moves, he does not need to explain it in particular; it is enough for him to assume it in the common sense among the readers to whom he addresses himself. That is why John of the Cross does not offer a complete and orderly treatise on the being, structure, and functions of the soul; all of these he takes to be known." "Por tratarse además de un concepto primario y universal en el mundo religioso en que se mueve, no necesita explicarlo en particular; le basta asumirlo en el sentido corriente entre los lectores a quienes se dirige. Por eso J. de la Cruz no ofrece un tratado completo y ordenado sobre el ser, la estructura y las funciones del alma; todo ello lo da por conocido" (Eulogio Pacho, "Alma humana," in *Diccionario de san Juan de la Cruz,* ed. Eulogio Pacho [Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2000], 44).

these spiritual topics. He is not overly concerned with the philosophical or theological particulars for their own sake.[3] Instead, his focus is eminently practical, concerned always with the goal of moving a soul further along the path toward union with God. John rightly understands that the philosophical and theological details are only useful insofar as they lead to this end. They are only tools, though necessary and extremely helpful, for achieving a practical goal. It is important to keep this in mind as we dive into the meticulous and often ambiguous examination of John's anthropology.

Because of the inherent difficulties in analyzing John's anthropology, there is a tendency to fall into one of two extremes. On the one hand, many scholars attempt to read him through a purely Thomistic lens.[4] He was certainly influenced by St. Thomas, but in trying to fill out John's practically oriented and, thus, nonsystematic treatment of human anthropology, it is tempting to fill in the gaps with a Thomistic understanding. Whenever John is not totally thorough or clear, Thomas's ideas are used to make his thought more complete and less ambiguous. This happens particularly in John's understanding of memory because it is at times vague and seemingly incomplete. We will see later the problems this causes for grasping the originality of John's thought, especially as it pertains to memory.

[3] Pacho makes this same point in discussing the ambiguity of memory in John's writings, "As in many other points, what interests the author is not the philosophical or theoretical approach, but the practical utility for his spiritual pedagogy. It is in this perspective that the problem of memory and its correlation with hope must be placed. The philosophical doctrine about memory only relatively conditions the practical application." "Como en tantos otros puntos, lo que le interesa al autor no es el enfoque filosófico o teórico, sino la utilidad práctica para su pedagogía espiritual. En esta óptica hay que colocar el problema de la memoria y su correlación con la esperanza. La doctrina filosófica sobre la memoria condiciona sólo relativamente la aplicación práctica" (Pacho, "Memoria," 776).

[4] Examples of this extreme, to greater or lesser degrees, include: Marcelo, *El Tomismo*; Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Christian Perfection and Contemplation according to St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John of the Cross*, trans. M. Timothea Doyle (St. Louis: Herder, 1937); Jacques Maritain, *Distinguish to Unite, or, the Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. Gerald B. Phelan (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); and Wilhelmsen, "La memoria como potencia del alma."

A second extreme would be to dismiss John's scholastic language as unimportant to his spiritual teaching. His technical language and tendency to dissect and analyze can be seen as an excessive influence from the scholasticism of his time which is unnecessary or perhaps even detrimental to understanding his spirituality. This also leads to significant problems for interpreting his anthropology. For example, Jean Baruzi is overtly critical of John's use of faculty psychology, but to critically dismiss such a foundational part of his anthropology makes it nearly impossible to understand the rest of his teaching that builds on this foundation.[5]

Both of these extremes fail to approach John of the Cross impartially and, thus, cannot grasp the originality of his thought. His system is unique, particularly his understanding of memory, and cannot be understood by reading one's own preconceptions and ideologies into his writings. It is necessary to read the saint carefully and to take him seriously within the context he was writing. If his writings are not read carefully, it is easy to fill in the gaps with concepts from other thinkers or to interpret the terms that John uses as they are used in other theological systems. It is a mistake to simply transfer an Aristotelian or Thomistic understanding of memory into John's writings each time he uses the term. Only a careful consideration of his thought frees one from these inherent biases. At the same time, it is also important to take John seriously within his own context. It is impossible to understand his thought while dismissing parts of his system as antiquated and unhelpful. These judgments can only be made after honestly encountering and fully understanding his teaching.

[5] Baruzi writes dismissively of the "schéma banal des trois puissances," (457), "armature qu'il ne se soucie pas de renouveler" (465), and the "irritante division de l'âme en puissances" (556); (Jean Baruzi, *Saint Jean de la Croix et le problème de l'expérience mystique* [Paris: Félix Alcan, 1929]).

The Unity of the Human Person

Before attempting to dissect and systematize John's understanding of the human person, it is imperative to stress the essential unity of the human person in his writings. His abundant anthropological divisions between body and soul, sense and spirit, exterior and interior, powers, faculties, and appetites, can make it easy to see the human person as a conglomeration of parts lacking any sort of real unity. With this perspective, it is possible to misinterpret certain passages from his writings. For example, at times he can seem rather dualistic, as though the body and soul are two totally separate and unequal parts of a person. In Book 2 of *The Ascent*, he writes that in this life the intellect is "in the prison of the body" (A.2.8.4). Elsewhere he seems to draw sharp divisions between the sensory and spiritual parts of a person, as though the spiritual is the only part of any true worth.[6] These ideas could lead to a harmful denial of the dignity of the human body, an unhealthy rejection of the emotions and affect, and a lack of appreciation for the beauty of creation.

But even a basic familiarity with the life of John of the Cross is enough to invalidate these false understandings. With great love and tenderness he cared for the bodies of the ill in hospitals as a young man and later for his own friars in his monasteries.[7] He showed intense emotion when he wept tears of deep sorrow as he recalled the suffering of his time imprisoned in Toledo and as he danced with joy with a statue of the child Jesus at Christmastime.[8] And how clearly John's love for creation comes out in his poetry which flows from his countless hours of admiring God's creation in his travels and times of prayer. There is a self-evident

[6] F.3.73–74; A.2.11.2; C.18.7.
[7] José Vicente Rodríguez, *San Juan de la Cruz: la Biografía* (Madrid: San Pablo, 2015), 411.
[8] Rodríguez, *la Biografía*, 349.

anthropological wholeness in the life of John of the Cross, and this unity can be seen clearly in his spiritual writings.

Unfortunately, many 20th-century critics missed this fundamental anthropological unity and instead read a problematic dualism into John's writings stemming from his neo-Platonic Augustinian influences.[9] Recently, scholars have answered these critiques by emphasizing his positive view of the body, emotions, and desires.[10] John himself claims that love of God "neither [disdains] anything human nor [excludes] it from this love" (N.2.11.4). However, the difficulty of interpreting John's at times radical language remains, especially among common readers. He is too often seen as a disembodied ascetic instead of an integrated spiritual shepherd.

John's anthropological unity can be seen first and foremost in the most fundamental term that he uses to describe the human person: *alma*. The word is used thousands of times throughout his corpus. John's overwhelming focus on the soul has led many critics to accuse him of a neo-platonic dualism, but this is an incomplete understanding of his conception of *alma*.[11] Although in contemporary parlance, soul typically refers to "the spiritual or immaterial part of a human,"[12] in his use of the term, John is not setting up a strict dichotomy between the material and immaterial, between the soul and body. Instead, as Payne explains, *alma*, "John's most common term for the human subject, ordinarily refers to the total person, but places the accent on his 'interiority and spirituality'; that is to say, for John the human subject's physical nature is also

[9] Mallory provides a helpful summary of the critics, herself trying to "extricate the mystical teaching of John of the Cross . . . from the dualistic Augustinian framework." Marilyn May Mallory, *Christian Mysticism: Transcending Techniques: A Theological Reflection on the Empirical Testing of the Teaching of St. John of the Cross* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977), 7.
[10] For example: Hole, *Desire, Transformation, and Selfhood*; Jorge L. Cabrera Marrero, "La Integración de los Deseos Dispersos en el Deseo de Dios según San Juan de la Cruz," S.T.L. thesis, (Universidad Pontifica Comillas, 2013); David P. Hahn, *Love's Mystery: A Mystical Theology of the Body according to St. John Paul II and St. John of the Cross* (Cumming, GA: St. Polycarp Publishing, 2019).
[11] For a discussion of these claims, see Payne, *Cognitive Value of Mysticism*, 17.
[12] *New Oxford American Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), s.v. "Soul."

included in the meaning of 'soul,' even though he considers the body to be of secondary importance."[13]

This unity can be seen most clearly in Stanza 28 of *The Spiritual Canticle* when John comments on the phrase "Now I occupy my soul and all my energy in his service." He explains that *energy* "refers to all that pertains to the sensory part of the soul," and that "the sensory part includes the body" (C.28.4).[14] *Alma*, then, is not in opposition to the body, but instead refers to the entire human person from a spiritual perspective. Thus, Garcia explains that in John's thought "man appears as a unitary being of body and soul, contrary to any dualistic conception, whether Neoplatonic or Augustinian."[15] The primary dichotomy in John's anthropology is not that of soul and body as one may expect,[16] but instead a dichotomy of sensory and spiritual.[17]

Sensory and Spiritual

The distinction between the sensory and spiritual parts of the soul is the fundamental dichotomy in John's anthropology and serves as the structural framework for *The Ascent* and *Dark Night*.[18] Returning to Stanza 28 of the *Spiritual Canticle*, John writes that "the sensory part [of the soul] includes the body with all its senses and faculties, interior and exterior, and all natural ability (the four passions, the natural appetites, and other energies)" which he

[13] Payne, *Cognitive Value of Mysticism*, 17–18.
[14] "Por todo su caudal entiende aquí todo lo que pertenece a la parte sensitiva del alma; en la cual parte sensitiva se incluye el cuerpo con todos sus sentidos y potencias, así interiores como exteriores, y toda la habilidad natural, conviene a saber."
[15] "aparece el hombre como un ser unitario en cuerpo y alma, en contra de toda concepción dualista, de cuño neoplatónico o agustiniano" (Garcia, "Antropología Sanjuanista," 95).
[16] Although John does use this dichotomy of soul and body in several places (A.1.12.4, 3.23.4; C.28.2, 28.8; F.2.31), it is not nearly as foundational for the structure of his writings as that of sense and spirit.
[17] This is especially important for understanding John's radical asceticism. He is not promoting a simplistic mortification of the body, an asceticism that he calls a "penance of beasts" (N.1.6.2), but instead a mortification of the sensory part of man which draws him away from God. In his teaching, any corporeal penances should be directed toward this end.
[18] From the very beginning of the *Ascent*, John explains that he will deal with the night of sense in Book 1 and the night of spirit, in so far as it is active in Books 2 and 3, and in so far as it is passive, in the fourth section (which refers to the *Dark Night*). Although he does not totally follow this outline, his division between the sensory and spiritual parts of the soul is foundational.

distinguishes from "the rational and spiritual part" (C.28.4). The distinction emerges not so much from within the soul itself (which would perhaps introduce a sort of dualism in John's thinking) but instead in reference to the types of objects with which these parts have the capacity to interact. The sensory part is "concerning creatures and temporal things" (A.2.4.2), while the spiritual part "is capable of communion with God" (C.18.7).

Despite the overall unity of the person, this difference reveals a strong distinction between these two parts of the soul. Spiritual things cannot be known by the sensory part, "the bodily sense is as ignorant of spiritual matters as a beast is of rational matters, and even more" (A.2.11.2), and the spiritual part cannot contain that which is purely material.[19] Thus, a clear hierarchy emerges between these two parts. Many times, John refers to the spiritual part of the soul as the "higher part" and the sensory part of the soul as the "lower part." Ultimately it is the spiritual part of the soul that has the infinite capacity necessary to be united to God.

Even in this dichotomy, however, there is a unity in John's anthropology. He is very clear that "these two parts form one suppositum" (N.1.4.2). There is one person, one *alma*, acting in two different capacities. The two parts are so interconnected that John explains that the purification of each one depends on the other: "The purgation of the principal part, that of the spirit, is lacking, and without it the sensory purgation, however strong it may have been, is incomplete because of a communication existing between the two parts of the soul that form only one suppositum" (N.2.1.1). This unity counters any presupposition of neo-platonic dualism in John's understanding of the human person. Pacho helpfully summarizes:

> Neither portion, superior nor inferior, forms an independent unity. In their being and in their working they come together in the formation of an indestructible unity which is the human suppositum or composite… Because of this substantial

[19] "The more exterior these corporeal objects and forms, the less profitable they are to the interior and spiritual part of the soul. This is due to the extreme distance and the lack of proportion between the corporeal and the spiritual" (A.2.11.4).

> unity there exists an absolute interdependence in the operation of all the powers and senses. The apparent Neoplatonic dualism is ultimately supplanted by the intrinsic unity of Aristotelian origin. In its psychic virtuality and in its ontic constitution, the human composite is not a simple juxtaposition, but a substantial unity.[20]

The Body

As mentioned above, John's lack of emphasis on the body has led some to accuse him of a sort of neo-Platonic dualism. Several quotations from his writings, when taken out of the context of his entire vision, seem to suggest this. For example, he writes that "the presence of the soul in the body resembles the presence of a prisoner in a dark dungeon" (A.1.3.3) and that "life in the mortal body can achieve so much as to hinder [the soul] from the enjoyment of a life so strong, true, and delightful as the one she lives in God" (C.8.3). On their own, such quotations suggest a considerably negative view of the body, as though the soul must somehow leave it behind in order to be united to God. However, elsewhere John calls the body "a worthy temple of the Holy Spirit" (A.3.23.4), and he has a lofty view of the degree it is called to share in union with God: "You were made wonderfully joyful according to the whole harmonious composite of your soul and even your body, converted completely into a paradise divinely irrigated" (F.3.7).

How can these two seemingly different views be harmonized? The answer lies in that John's view of the body, like that of the whole person, is not static. The body is not an evil collection of matter in which a soul is trapped for the duration of this life, but it is a dynamic aspect of the human person who, although fallen and corrupted by sin, is being purified and transformed. Thus, the quotations in which John seems to denigrate the body are speaking about

[20] "Ambas porciones, superior e inferior, no forman sendas unidades independientes. En su ser y en su obrar concurren a la formación de una unidad indestructible, que es el supuesto o compuesto humano . . . Por razón de esta unidad sustancial existe absoluta interdependencia en la operación de todas las potencias y sentidos. La aparente dualidad neoplatónica, queda suplantada en último análisis por el unitarismo intrínseco de origen aristotélico. En su virtualidad psíquica, y en su constitución óntica, el compuesto humano no es simple yuxtaposición, sino unidad sustancial" (Pacho, "Alma humana," 60).

the body only in so far as it has not yet been redeemed. This is apparent particularly in a verse from Wisdom which he references on three different occasions: "The body on account of its corruption is a burden to the soul."[21] It is the corruption of the body due to sin that causes it to be a hindrance to union with God, but this is not the end of the story. The fully purified and transformed body shares in the glories of the soul in union with God. It is this great capacity for glory that causes John to have an exalted view of the body.[22]

Exterior Senses

John's understanding of the exterior senses falls neatly in line with Aristotelean-Thomistic teaching. He enumerates the five exterior bodily senses in three different places in the *Ascent* as "sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch."[23] Although these senses are not themselves corporeal realities, each of them corresponds to a particular bodily organ which gives it its power. Being in the "lower part" of the soul, one may think that these senses are unimportant or perhaps even a liability for spiritual progress. However, following Aristotle and Thomas, John stresses the absolute necessity of the exterior senses for any sort of natural knowledge: "the soul is like a *tabula rasa* [a clean slate]. . . . Without the knowledge it receives through its senses it would be ignorant, because no knowledge is communicated to it naturally from any other source" (A.1.3.3). The exterior senses play an essential role, especially at the beginning of the spiritual journey.

[21] Wisdom 9:15; see A.2.1.2; C.19.1, 39.14; F.2.13.
[22] In fact, many scholars have shown that John's understanding of the human person is the basis for John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*. Michael Waldstein claims that the young Karol Wojtyla learned Spanish in order to read John in the original language, and that it was in John that he found "the spiritual and intellectual roots of his personalism" (Michael Waldenstein, introduction to *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, by John Paul II [Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006], 34).
[23] A.2.11.1, 2.23.2, 3.23.1.

Interior Senses

It is concerning the interior senses that we find the first major interpretative divergence in John's anthropology. These differences have significant implications for John's understanding of memory, and ultimately for his entire spiritual schema. The interior senses receive the forms and images received through the exterior senses: "These images enter the outskirts, the interior senses, through the gates of the exterior senses—hearing, sight, smell, and so on" (C.18.7). Following basic Aristotelian-Thomistic epistemology, the interior senses receive the material image from the external senses and extract the immaterial form to be received by the intellect.[24] While it is not clear from John's writings that he adopted the Thomistic epistemology absolutely, nothing that he says about natural knowledge seems to contradict this system. Kieran Kavanaugh points out that "An understanding of this theory is helpful in interpreting John, but the substance of his teaching is not dependent on any particular system of thought."[25]

The divergence among scholastics, and likewise among those interpreting John, arises particularly concerning the number and function of the interior senses. John is especially confusing in that in one place he seems to list three interior senses, at other times he names two, and often he refers to the singular *sentido interior*. Any of these choices would put John at odds with many of his scholastic predecessors. Baconthrope, following Al-Ghazali, names six internal senses (common sense, estimative sense, cognitive sense, imagination, phantasy, and memory).[26] The number is reduced to five in Avicenna by omitting the cognitive sense, and, in Thomas only four, by stating that the imagination and phantasy are the same.[27]

[24] See C.14&15.14.
[25] Kieran Kavanaugh, footnote in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, 175 n. 4.
[26] Baconthorpe, *Quodl.* I, q. 2 a. 1.
[27] ST I, q. 78 a. 4.

It is evident that John at least includes the imagination and phantasy among the internal senses, although he commonly refers to them in the singular *sentido interior*. André Bord explains that, for John, "there is an interior corporeal sense (*interior sentido corporal*) or common sense that is twofold: imagination and phantasy."[28] The phantasy works as the storehouse for the images received through the external senses. John describes it as "the archives or receptacle in which all the intelligible forms and images are received" (A.2.16.2). The imagination, on the other hand works discursively with the images received through the external senses and contained in the phantasy. John gives the example that "individuals may imagine palaces of pearls and mountains of gold—for they have seen gold and pearls" (A.2.12.4). The imagination imagines, or makes images present within a person, either simply those contained in the phantasy or combinations of them. These two interior senses are largely agreed upon among Sanjuanist scholars.

The disagreement lies in whether John posits more interior senses than only these two. Bord argues for two, saying that John is returning to a more simplified Aristotelian understanding of two interior senses.[29] Some have tried to read John in a more Thomistic light and seek to find evidence of five interior senses in his writings.[30] However, a straightforward reading of the text makes it clear that John posits only two interior senses. He names the imaginative power and the phantasy as the interior senses many times throughout the *Ascent*.[31]

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[28] "Pratiquement, il y a un sens corporel intérieur (*interior sentido corporal*) ou sens commun qui est double: imaginative et fantaisie" (Bord, *Mémoire et Espérance*, 83).
[29] See Bord, *Mémoire et Espérance*, 82. However, the number of interior senses in Aristotle, or if there are any at all, is highly debated. See Seyed N. Mousavian and Jakob Leth Fink, eds., *The Internal Senses in the Aristotelian Tradition* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2020).
[30] Sanson even reads the cognitive and estimative senses into John's writings; Henri Sanson, *L'esprit humain selon Saint Jean de la Croix* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953), 55.
[31] A.2.12.1, 2.12.2, 2.12.3, 2.16.4, 2.17.4 (in this last occurrence we see a Thomistic bias in the English translation which renders "*los sentidos corporales interiores… como son imaginativa y fantasia*" as "the interior bodily senses… such as the imagination and phantasy," when a better translation would read "the interior bodily senses… which are the imagination and phantasy").

Although he often refers to the two together in the singular, *sentido interior*, he makes it clear that he has two in mind: "We are speaking of two interior bodily senses: imagination and phantasy… For our discussion there will be no need to differentiate between them. This should be remembered if we do not mention them both explicitly" (A.2.12.3). These texts seem to make a system of two interior senses evident, but a major interpretive difficulty arises when, in one place, John adds a third interior sense, the memory.

All of this may seem to be splitting hairs, for John himself seems unconcerned with the exact details of the interior senses for his purposes. However, whether or not John holds the memory to be an interior sense will have significant implications for the interpretation of his spiritual itinerary. If John is positing the memory as only a faculty, or power, of the sensory part of the soul (the part concerned with created, temporal things), then it is necessarily finite and does not have the capacity for God. If John is positing two memories, one that is a faculty of the sensory part of the soul and the other that is a faculty of the spiritual part of the soul, then it is necessary to determine which of these he is referring to in the first fifteen chapters of the third book of the *Ascent* when he discusses the purification of the memory. We will wait until the next chapter, when we discuss the memory more particularly, to discuss this question of the nature of the memory in John's thought.

Substance of the Soul

The spiritual part of the soul, which John calls the higher part, the rational part, and the part capable of communion with God, is what is of primary importance in John's writings. While he is concerned with the entire human person, his focus is on the spiritual part, as his use of the word *alma* reveals. Apart from the three faculties of intellect, memory, and will that John refers to in his discussion of the spiritual part of the soul, he also frequently mentions the *sustancia del*

alma. Amid the obscurity of these references, it is tempting to avoid any attempt to define what he means by the substance of the soul. While it is true that for his purpose, "John of the Cross was not particularly interested in scholastic disputes about the relationship between the soul and its faculties," the fact that he used the phrase nearly fifty times in his works reveals that it was not an insignificant idea in his spiritual system.[32] Moreover, a consideration of the substance of the soul here will prove helpful in our further consideration of memory since at times, as will be examined in the final chapter, John appears to merge the two concepts.

In *The Living Flame* John writes that "it should be known that God dwells secretly in all souls and is hidden in their substance, for otherwise they would not last" (F.4.14). This is the substantial union that he talks about in *The Ascent*: "God sustains every soul and dwells in it substantially, even though it may be that of the greatest sinner in the world. This union between God and creatures always exists. By it he conserves their being so that if the union should end they would immediately be annihilated and cease to exist" (A.2.5.3). The substance of the soul, then, is the deepest part of the human person which is always united to God who holds the person in being.[33] This is the place of the most intimate and pure communication between the soul and God (F.1.9). It is the place that is wounded with God's touch and delights in his glory.

Scholastic theologians, interpreting Aristotle, often debated whether the faculties of the soul were distinct from its substance. Some have argued that John took a more Thomistic line in affirming this distinction over that of Lombard who identified the soul with its faculties.[34] Whether or not he holds for this distinction, his use of the concept maintains a complete unity of

[32] Payne, *Cognitive Value of Mysticism*, 43.
[33] Thus, John's substance of the soul has close parallels with the anthropological centers in other spiritual writers such as Augustine's *abditum mentis* and Eckhart's *grunt*.
[34] For example, regarding this question, Crisógono states strongly, "en esto san Juan de la Cruz permanece fiel a las doctrinas de la *Summa*" (Crisógono, *su obra científica y su obra literaria*, 1:79). For Thomas's discussion on the question, see ST I, q. 77, a. 1 and *Commentary on the Sentences* I, d. 3, q. 4, a. 2.

the soul. He explains in *The Living Flame* that the soul "insofar as it is a spirit, does not possess in its being high and low, deeper or less deep, as do quantitative bodies. Since it has no parts, there is no difference as to inward and outward; it is all one kind and does not have degrees of quantitative depth" (F.1.10). The faculties of the soul, then, cannot be independent *things* or *parts* of the soul completely separated from its substance. Instead, for John, the faculties of intellect, memory, and will, are simply the operations of the one soul; the intellect is the soul's capacity to understand, the memory is the soul's capacity to remember, and the will is the soul's capacity to love.

We see this unity in the interdependence between the three faculties. Not only do they all rely on one another for their operation, but they are also purified and united to God concurrently. After discussing the purification of the intellect in Book 2 of the *Ascent*, John explains at the very beginning of Book 3 that "if spiritual persons direct their intellects in faith according to the doctrine given them, it is impossible for them not to instruct their other two faculties simultaneously in the other two virtues, for these faculties depend on one another in their operations" (A.3.1.1). Despite John's scholastic tendency to distinguish and dissect, he holds an overall unity within the spiritual part of the soul. Each power is integrally connected to every other power. Thus, it will be beneficial to briefly examine the role of the intellect and will before investigating the role of the memory in John's spiritual itinerary.

Intellect

Among the spiritual faculties, John always lists the intellect first. The intellect is the soul's faculty of understanding. John does not explain this epistemological process in detail, but his thinking seems to be significantly influenced by Aristotle and Thomas. For example, as mentioned above, he references "scholastic philosophers" regarding the way the soul is like a

tabula rasa to which all knowledge comes through the senses (A.1.3.3). He once again refers to scholastic philosophers in explaining the way in which the process takes place: "The intellect knows only in the natural way, that is, by means of the senses. If one is to know in this natural way, the phantasms and species of objects will have to be present either in themselves or in their likenesses; otherwise one will be incapable of knowing naturally. As the scholastic philosophers say: *Ab ojecto* [sic] *et potentia paritur notitia* (Knowledge arises in the soul from both the faculty and the object at hand)" (A.2.3.2).

In this scholastic epistemology, apprehensions are received by the internal senses through the external senses. John then explains that the work of the intellect "is to form the concept by removing the iron of sensible species and phantasms" (A.2.8.5). The intellect must strip away everything material from the sensible species in order for it to be received into the spiritual part of the soul. This is the work of the agent, or active, intellect (*intellectus agens*), which he says "works on the forms, phantasies, and apprehensions of the corporal faculties" (C.39.12). Through this process of abstraction, the agent intellect brings forth the nonmaterial or intellectual species formed from the sensible apprehension. The remaining intellectual species is then "given to the intellect that philosophers call the passive or possible intellect, and the intellect receives it passively without any effort of its own" (C.14.14).

In less technical terms, for John, the process of understanding is ultimately one of receiving a concept into the intellect. Corporeal images received through the senses cannot be received into the immaterial soul. Thus, all that is accidental to the apprehension must be stripped away until only the nonmaterial form remains. Then, the remaining concept can be received into the intellect such that it is understood by the person. This process of abstracting and receiving the concept is the work of the intellect. This process can be likened to a sort of sight

within the soul. John himself uses analogy many times, calling the intellect the "eye of the soul."[35] Through the intellect a person comes to see or understand the things experienced through the senses.

There are many nuances to this scholastic epistemological theory, the details of which John is not overly concerned with. However, he largely seems to subscribe to this general framework. This is a natural process by which knowledge comes to the intellect either from images received directly from the senses or from the recalling and/or combining of images previously received through the senses. Thus, John claims with the scholastics that "knowledge is acquired through the senses" (A.2.17.3). However, John acknowledges another way in which the intellect can come to receive knowledge: supernaturally. Apprehensions can be presented to the soul in a way that circumvents the exterior senses: "It is noteworthy that the intellect can get ideas and concepts in two ways, naturally and supernaturally. Natural knowledge includes everything the intellect can understand by way of the bodily senses or through reflection. Supernatural knowledge comprises everything imparted to the intellect in a way transcending the intellect's natural ability and capacity" (A.2.10.2). These supernatural apprehensions come to the intellect without the use of the exterior senses, through spiritual visions, revelations, locutions, and spiritual feelings.

One might think that this spiritual knowledge imparted by God through supernatural knowing is the summit of intellectual activity and the goal of the spiritual journey. However, John is very clear that even this type of knowledge has limitations: "If we speak of supernatural knowing, insofar as one can in this life, we must say that the intellect of its ordinary power . . . is neither capable of nor prepared for the reception of the clear knowledge of God" (A.2.8.4). God

[35] For example, A.2.14.10 and A.2.23.2.

is infinite and thus cannot be known through the natural operation of the intellect. However, John maintains the incredible potentiality of the intellect, which he describes as a cavern of infinite capacity, capable of union with God (F.3.18). Yet, this union cannot be reached by the natural operation of the intellect, but only by the supernatural virtue of faith.

Will

Although John discusses the will last among the spiritual faculties, it is arguably the most important in his system. He often portrays union with God, the ultimate purpose of all of his teaching, in terms of union of the will with God: "the entire matter of reaching union with God consists in purging the will of its appetites and emotions so that from a human and lowly will it may be changed into the divine will, made identical with the will of God" (A.3.16.3). This is because of the will's connection to the theological virtue of charity, which, for John, is the paramount. He often explains the goal of the spiritual life to be "union with God through love,"[36] and he even writes at the end of *The Spiritual Canticle* that "the ultimate reason for everything is love (which is seated in the will)" (C.38.5).

This emphasis on the will has led some critics to accuse John of voluntarism.[37] However, the above discussion of the intellect, as well as the great interdependence of all the spiritual faculties shows this accusation to be groundless. In fact, John discusses the intellect first in *The Ascent* and then declares that his treatment of the will and the memory will be brief since "it is not necessary to enlarge so much in our treatise on these faculties, since in the instructions given for the intellect… we have covered a great portion of the matter" (A.3.1.1). He does seem to give some primacy to the will in claiming that "the intellect and other faculties cannot admit or deny

[36] A.2.8.5; N.P, 1.8.1, 2.5.1, 2.16.14, 2.21.12, 2.23.1, 2.23.13, 2.24.1; C.24.3.
[37] In an extreme example of this, Don Cupitt writes very starkly, "John of the Cross is a voluntarist," (Don Cupitt, *Taking Leave of God* [New York: Crossroad, 1981], 139).

anything without the intervention of the will" (A.3.34.1). However, he will just as readily claim that the will depends on the intellect and memory and the memory on the intellect and will, "for these faculties depend on one another in their operations" (A.3.1.1).

The will, for John of the Cross, is the soul's capacity to love, which involves not only desire but also volition or choice. John explains that "the will directs these faculties, passions, and appetites" of the soul (A.3.16.1). It is like a command center for the soul, for "all this strength [of the soul] is ruled by the will" (A.3.16.2). In the beginning of John's treatment of the will, he explains that he will discuss individually the will's relationship to the four passions of the soul: joy, hope, sorrow, and fear (A.3.16.3). However, in the remaining thirty chapters of *The Ascent*, he only discusses the first passion of the will, joy, before abruptly ending the work. He says that joy "is nothing else than a delight of the will in an object esteemed and considered fitting" (A.3.17.1). From this we can extrapolate to the other three passions to see how the will relates to objects. The faculty of the will, then, is the soul's power to find joy, hope, sorrow, and fear in things.

It is by means of the will that attachments arise, whether they be to material or spiritual things. John explains that "it is well known from experience that when the will is attached to an object, it esteems that object higher than any other, even though another, not as pleasing, may deserve higher admiration" (A.1.5.5). The attachments of the faculties and appetites find their root in the passions of the will. John explains the great harm that this can bring to the soul: "wherever one of these passions goes the entire soul (the will and the other faculties) will also go, and they will live as prisoners of this passion" (A.3.16.6). Like the intellect, the natural operation of the will is limited and cannot attain God. Only by the supernatural virtue of charity can the will be united to God.

Conclusion

A key to understanding the three spiritual faculties, and to understanding John's teaching on the memory that will be considered in detail in the next chapter, is to recognize that they are not so much *objects* as *actions*. The intellect, memory, and will are not literally parts of the soul, but the soul's capacities to understand, possess, and love. Thus, union with God, which takes place through these faculties, is not a process of destroying or replacing a part of the soul, but instead of uniting the actions of the soul to the action of God. This is why John of the Cross can say that in this union, "the intellect of this soul is God's intellect; its will is God's will; its memory is the memory of God" (F.3.24). Through this union the soul becomes God, not essentially, but through participation in his understanding, possessing, and loving:

> As a result [of this union] all the operations of the memory and other faculties in this state are divine. God now possesses the faculties as their complete lord, because of their transformation in him. And consequently it is he who divinely moves and commands them according to his divine spirit and will. As a result the operations are not different from those of God; but those the soul performs are of God and are divine operations (A.3.2.8).

We see in John's anthropology an incredible unity, despite his scholastic tendency to dissect and analyze. Undoubtably there is a hierarchy within the human person that places the spiritual above the sensory because it is primarily by means of the spiritual capacity of the soul that union with God is possible. However, it is precisely because of the exalted nature of the spirit and the integrated unity of the human person that body and senses are raised to an incredible dignity. In John's anthropology the body and senses are not necessarily an impediment to union with God, and they are not simply dragged along for the ride. They play an essential part in the spiritual life and are necessary aides to the spirit. The ultimate goal of the spiritual journey is not the destruction of any part of the human person, but complete transformation—

body, soul, and spirit—in union with Him. Next we will consider more precisely John's understanding of memory and how it fits into this anthropological system.

Chapter 3: John's Understanding of Memory

Having laid out John's basic understanding of the human person, we will now turn explicitly to his teaching on memory. Before discussing the specific functions of the memory according to his writings, it is first necessary to address two important questions regarding how memory fits into the anthropological schema laid out in the previous chapter: first, is memory a sensory or spiritual faculty, or does John, like Thomas, posit both a sensory and spiritual memory? And second, is memory a faculty distinct from the intellect? Both of these questions have been discussed at length, particularly by 20th-century scholars, and in the midst of the debate, it can be easy to begin to wonder if the answers are of consequence. We will examine why these questions are necessary to understanding John's thinking without getting too caught up in the abstract minutiae and losing sight of the ultimate practical goal of union with God. Then we will show that memory for John is not a static storehouse of past experiences before considering the different types of knowledge with which the memory is concerned. Finally, we will examine the specific functions of memory and argue that it is the soul's power to actively possess knowledge as a sort of passageway through which the objects of knowledge enter the soul.

Is Memory a Sensory Faculty?

The first question, which has already been implicitly answered in the last chapter, is whether memory is a sensory or a spiritual faculty, or does John posit both a sensory and a spiritual memory? The concern here is whether, when John talks about memory, he is talking about a natural faculty whose proper objects are "creatures and temporal things" (A.2.4.2), or he is talking about a spiritual faculty which is "capable of communion with God" (C.18.7). Recall that for Aristotle, memory is considered in the *Parva naturalia* which discusses human capacities

connected to the body. He posits that memory is a power of the common sense and is therefore a sensory faculty, even though he claims that the active searching of reminiscence involves the use of the intellect. Thomas, building on the work of Aristotle, speaks of both a sensory memory and an intellectual memory. The sensory memory is concerned with particular material objects while the intellectual memory is concerned with universal immaterial forms.

Most commentators assume that John has this same schema of two memories in his works.[1] However, a few more recent scholars, led by the work of André Bord, deny the concept of sensory memory in John's anthropology.[2] This may seem like an inconsequential quibble, but the answer to this question has significant implications for the understanding of John's writings. In the first fifteen chapters of Book 3 of *The Ascent* which deal with the active purification of the memory, what exactly is John talking about? Each time he writes *memory* in those chapters, is he referring to a sensory faculty, a spiritual faculty, or is it sometimes one and sometimes the other?

Practically, this matters since the purification of the two are different. In the first book of *The Ascent*, when John talks about the purification of the senses, he does not call for a complete cessation of the sensory faculties—we do not stop seeing, hearing, imagining, etc. when we are united to God. Besides this making it impossible for one to function in the world, this would be a destruction of the nature of a person, and John would certainly agree with the scholastics that grace does not destroy but perfects nature.[3] Instead, he calls for detachment from the "inordinate

[1] Examples include: Crisógono, *su obra cientifica y su obra literaria*, 1:79; Baruzi, *el problema de la experiencia mística*, 536; Efrén de la Madre de Dios, "La esperanza según san Juan de la Cruz," *Revista de Espiritualidad* 1 (1942): 256; Alberto de la V. del Carmen, "Naturaleza de la memoria espiritual según S. Juan de la Cruz.—Cuestión filosófica previa a su doctrina sobre la unión de las potencias con Dios," *Revista de Espiritualidad* 12 (1952): 438; Eulogio de la V. del Carmen, "La antropologia sanjuanistica," *El Monte Carmelo* 69 (1961): 69; and Wilhelmsen, "La memoria como potencia del alma," 105-16.

[2] See Hole, *Desire, Transformation, and Selfhood*, 78–9; Howells, *Mystical Knowing and Selfhood*, 24-6; and Payne, *Cognitive Value of Mysticism*, 38–41.

[3] "Gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit" ST I, q. 1, a. 8, ad. 2. John writes in *The Spiritual Canticle* how God raised human nature, and by means of it all of creation, through the Incarnation: "Not only by looking at them did he communicate natural being and graces, as we said, but also, with this image of his Son alone, he clothed them in

sensory appetites and imperfections" that underly these sensory faculties (A.1.1.1). However, in these chapters on memory in Book 3 of *The Ascent*, John is very clear in stating that "there is no way to union with God without annihilating the memory as to all forms," and that "this union cannot be wrought without a complete separation of the memory from all forms that are not God" (A.3.1.4). Among other terms, he says that the memory must be emptied, disencumbered, annihilated, stripped, and purged.

Thus, to claim that John is talking about sensory memory in these chapters of Book 3 has considerable consequences. It might suggest that his teaching is harmful to the human person,[4] or else force a person to minimize his teaching by claiming he is merely speaking hyperbolically. There could be a temptation, amidst the confusion, to claim that precision in interpreting John is not important to understanding his message. Some writers suggest that John himself was not very concerned with the systematic details in his practical approach.[5] However, these approaches fail to take John seriously as a theologian and as a writer. Ultimately, these are ways to justify overlooking the more perplexing passages of his writings in order to fill in one's preferred interpretation, whether that be Thomistic, Jungian, or something else. Instead, John's work must be read carefully to see what he actually says about memory. Is it a spiritual faculty or a sensory faculty?

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beauty by imparting to them supernatural being. This he did when he took on our human nature and elevated it in the beauty of God, and consequently all creatures, since in human nature he was united with them all… And in this elevation of all things through the Incarnation of his Son and through the glory of his resurrection according to the flesh not only did the Father beautify creatures partially, but, we can say, he clothed them entirely in beauty and dignity" (C.5.4). See also A.3.2.7.

[4] This is the type of thinking that leads to accusations of Neo-Platonism in John's writings. Bendiek claims that John of the Cross "condemned" (*verurteilt*) human nature (Johannes Bendiek, "Gott und Welt nach Johannes von Kreuz," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 79 (1972): 100.

[5] For example, Marcelo credits the apparent imprecision in John's writing to the fact that he did not intend to write philosophy but spirituality (Marcelo, *El tomismo*, 112–116).

John considers memory in the first fifteen chapters of Book 3 of *The Ascent*. According to his framework, this is the part of the work when he is discussing the Night of the Spirit. He clearly gives us the outline he intends to follow at the beginning of Book 1: "The first night or purgation, to which this stanza refers and which will be discussed in the first section of this book, concerns the sensory part of the soul. The second night, to which the second stanza refers, concerns the spiritual part. We will deal with this second night, insofar as it is active, in the second and third sections of the book" (A.1.1.2). However, John does not always follow the course he has laid out for himself. He leaves both *The Ascent* and *The Dark Night* unfinished and occasionally follows lengthy digressions in his writing. Yet, a clear shift can be seen from the end of Book 1 to the beginning of Book 2 in the *Ascent*. John has transitioned from considering the Night of the Senses to the Night of the Spirit: "The first night pertains to the lower, sensory part of human nature and is consequently more external. As a result the second night is darker. The second, darker night of faith belongs to the rational, superior part" (A.2.2.2). Thus, the framework within which John considers the memory already reveals that he considers the memory to be a spiritual faculty. Books 2 and 3 are discussions of the Night of the Spirit in which he treats the purification of the intellect, memory, and will.

If this framework is not enough evidence to show John's consideration of memory as a spiritual faculty, he says it outright several times in his works. In Book 2 Chapter 6 of *The Ascent* he lines up the intellect, memory, and will with the three theological virtues and then writes, "As we outlined for the sensory night a method of emptying the sense faculties, with regard to the appetite, of their visible objects so that the soul might leave the point of departure for the mean, which is faith, so for this spiritual night we will present, with divine help, a way to empty and purify the spiritual faculties of all that is not God" (A.2.6.6). Despite this, Wilhelmsen

inexplicably claims that "la memoria nunca aparece como 'potencia del espíritu.'"[6] While it is true literally that John never calls the memory a *potencia del espíritu* in the singular (something he never does regarding intellect and will either), he plainly lists it with the intellect and will as "las potencias espirituales" in the plural in all but one of his major works.[7] Furthermore, he lists memory in the triad with the other two spiritual faculties, intellect and will, dozens of times throughout his corpus. It is indisputably evident from his own words that John considers the memory a spiritual faculty.

Is it possible that in writing about memory John is discussing both a sensory and a spiritual faculty? This is the line taken by many 20th-century authors, especially those attempting to interpret John within a Thomistic framework.[8] For example, Wilhelmsen argues that John is talking about sensory memory in the first thirteen chapters of Book 3 of the *Ascent* and then that he turns to discussing spiritual memory in the fourteenth chapter.[9] She concludes that "in the doctrine of St. John of the Cross there are two faculties of memory which correspond precisely to his concepts of 'soul' and 'spirit.'"[10] There is a sensory memory, a natural power with material objects, and there is a spiritual memory, a spiritual power with nonmaterial objects. This structure corresponds with the thinking of Thomas.

This is a tempting solution, but it is met with several difficulties. First, John himself never uses the term *memoria sensitiva*, an important point that these scholars never mention. Most often, he simply refers to *la memoria*, and he never refers to the faculty in the plural. If in some places he has a sensory memory in mind and in others a spiritual memory, this would

[6] Wilhelmsen, "La memoria como potencia del alma," 114.
[7] A.2.14.6; C.16.10; F.3.69.
[8] See Crisógono, *su obra científica y su obra literaria*, 1:79; Baruzi, *el problema de la experiencia mística*, 536; Efrén, "La esperanza," 257-8; and Sanson, *L'esprit humain*, 240.
[9] Wilhelmsen, "La memoria como potencia del alma," 114.
[10] "en la doctrina de San Juan de la Cruz se dan dos facultades memorativas, que responden con precisión a sus conceptos de 'alma' y 'espíritu'" (Wilhelmsen, "La memoria como potencia del alma," 114).

suggest great imprecision in his writing. He never feels a need to distinguish what type of memory he is talking about which would certainly be necessary were he suggesting two different memories.

There is one significant text where John lists memory among the interior senses: “The "outskirts" of Judea (and Judea, we said, refers to the lower or sensory part of the soul) are the interior senses (memory, phantasy, and imagination) in which the forms, images, and phantasms of objects gather and reside” (C.18.7). This passage seems to clearly point to a sensory memory. However, every other time John lists the interior senses he mentions only two, and he reminds us of their relation to one another: “We are speaking of two interior bodily senses: imagination and phantasy… For our discussion there will be no need to differentiate between them. This should be remembered if we do not mention them both explicitly” (A.2.12.3).[11] In light of this disparity, Payne suggests that the one reference made to memory as an interior sense “is apparently only a slip,” and Bord even questions the authority of the text since not all of the extant manuscripts contain the word *memoria*.[12] Whatever the explanation might be, an overwhelming majority of the texts that discuss the interior senses do not include memory.

There is also one place in *The Ascent* where John calls the memory a sense: “To conclude the discussion of the memory, then, it will be worthwhile to delineate briefly a general method for the use of spiritual persons that they may be united with God according to this sense” (A.3.15.1). Wilhelmsen points to this as further evidence for a sensory memory in his system.[13] However, this use of sense does not seem to be a defining statement. Claiming that by means of the memory a person “may be united with God” more convincingly suggests its status as a

[11] See also A.2.12.1, 2.12.2, 2.16.4, 2.17.4.
[12] Payne, *Cognitive Value of Mysticism*, 21; and Bord, *Mémoire et Espérance*, 312–15.
[13] Wilhelmsen, “La memoria como potencia del alma,” 114.

spiritual faculty rather than a sensory one. Besides, John also names the intellect among a list of senses elsewhere in *The Ascent* and there is no doubt about it being a spiritual faculty (A.2.4.4). Furthermore, he frequently calls the intellect, memory, and will collectively the *sentido del alma* in *The Living Flame* (F.3.69). An unbiased examination of the texts, freed from an excessively Thomistic lens, reveals memory as a spiritual and not a sensory power in John's anthropology.

Is Memory Distinct from the Intellect?

Having determined that for John memory is a spiritual faculty, a second question to consider before examining the function of memory more properly is if memory is a distinct faculty from the intellect. Recall that according to Thomas, memory is not a distinct faculty from the intellect but is a power of the passive intellect.[14] The Augustinian tradition, on the other hand, presents memory as a distinct faculty alongside intellect and will. In 1929 Crisógono strongly argued that "St. John of the Cross departs here decisively from St. Thomas and even from all the scholastics to proclaim memory as a power truly distinct from the intellect."[15] This claim set forth a fiery debate about the question among Sanjuanist scholars.[16] Marcelo, Efrén, and Wilhelmsen have since defended the Thomistic structure in John's work, rejecting memory as a faculty *realmente distinta* from the intellect due to the two faculties having the same objects.[17]

Much ink has been spilled in this debate which raises the question, why does it matter? Does the answer to this question have significant ramifications for understanding John's spirituality or is this debate merely frivolous intellectual bickering? Fundamentally what is at

[14] ST I, q. 79, a. 8.
[15] "San Juan de la Cruz se aparta aquí decididamente de santo Tomás y aun de todos los escolásticos para proclamar la memoria como una potencia realmente distinta del entendimiento" (Crisógono, *su obra científica y su obra literaria*, 1:79).
[16] For a helpful summary of the historical debate see Wilhelmsen, "La memoria como potencia del alma," 129–137.
[17] Marcelo, *El Tomismo*, 123–24; Efrén, "La esperanza," 268–72; Wilhelmsen, "La memoria como potencia del alma," 139.

stake here is the originality of John's teaching concerning the operation of the memory and its purification. If the memory is simply a function of the passive intellect, John's connecting it to the theological virtue of hope is, as Pacho points out, somewhat arbitrary.[18] In fact, Crisógono bases his argument for memory as a distinct faculty on the connection John makes between memory and hope: "To make memory the subject of hope supposes, then, that in the mind of the master [John] it is not a modification of the intellect; and not being a modification of the intellect it must be a distinct power."[19] John's distinction between intellect and memory also opens the door for further dialogue with contemporary philosophy. A less singular focus on the intellect in terms of human experience invites a more wholistic understanding of knowing as something more than mere understanding. Also, memory as a distinct faculty intersects with contemporary discussions on consciousness, some of which will be mentioned below.

An unbiased look at John's writings leaves little question about the distinction between the memory and intellect. Nothing that John says in the work suggests that memory is a function of the passive intellect. Those who argue that it is are attempting to force John into a Thomistic framework. The argument that the intellect and memory have the same objects is not compelling. John writes "the theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity [are] related to these faculties as their proper supernatural objects" (A.2.6.1). What makes these virtues theological is the fact that they have God as their object.[20] So, in a sense, it is true that the intellect and memory (along with the will), as spiritual faculties, do have the same ultimate object: God himself. Yet this does not

[18] Pacho, "Memoria," 776.
[19] "El hacer a la memoria sujeto de la esperanza, supone, pues, que en la mente del maestro no es una modificación del entendimiento; y no siendo una modificación del entendimiento tiene que ser una potencia real" (Crisógono, *su obra científica y su obra literaria,* 1:80).
[20] "Only faith, hope, and charity (according to the intellect, memory, and will) can unite the soul with God in this life" (A.2.6.1).

mean that they are not distinct since the three spiritual faculties are different modes of attaining to God in this life through understanding, remembering, and loving God.

After an analysis of memory in each of John's major works, Alberto de la Virgin del Carmen comes to the following conclusions:

> 1. Nowhere in his works does the Master say that the memory is really distinguished from the intellect. 2. With insistence he affirms that the spiritual powers of the soul are three. 3. He assigns to them different natures, different acts, different functions, and different objects. 4. To explain all this, the Saint uses different symbols, examples, and applications of scripture. 5. The architecture of his work, especially of *The Ascent,* requires a real distinction between the memory and the intellect. . . . 6. Consequently, the real distinction between intellect and memory is something that is palpable in all the texts of St. John; it is intuited in his mind and language.[21]

Memory, for John, is a distinct spiritual faculty on the same level as the intellect and will. Next we will turn to consider the function of memory within this anthropological framework.

Memory is Not a Storehouse

Perhaps the most expected function of memory, found clearly in thinkers from Augustine to Aquinas, is that of a storehouse of past experiences. Until recently, most scholars read John of the Cross with this presupposition. As we have seen, there were disputes about what kinds of things memory stored, whether only material images as a sensory faculty or also immaterial species as a spiritual faculty, but there was no question about this function of memory in John's anthropology. In several places John seems to make this abundantly clear: "Do not store objects of hearing, sight, smell, taste, or touch in the memory, but leave them immediately and forget them" (A.3.2.14). However, Bord's monumental study upended this entire understanding and

[21] "1.ª En ninguna parte de sus obras el Maestro dice que la memoria se distingue realmente del entendimiento. 2.ª Con insistencia afirma que las potencias espirituales del alma son tres. 3.ª Les señala distinta naturaleza, distintos actos, funciones y objetos distintos. 4.ª Para explicar todo esto, el Santo echa mano de símbolos, ejemplos y aplicaciones de la Escritura distintos. 5.ª La arquitectura de su obra, sobre todo de la «Subida», exige la distinción real de la memoria del entendimiento. . . . 6.ª En· consecuencia, la distinción real entre entendimiento y la memoria es algo que se palpa en todos los textos sanjuanistas; se intuye en su mente y lenguaje" (Alberto, "Naturaleza de la memoria," 449–50).

convincingly shows that for John, memory is not a storehouse for past experiences. A close look at the texts reveals why this must be the case for John's spirituality.

In a few passages, John explicitly names where the objects of memory are stored: in the phantasy and in the soul itself. Most importantly, in *The Living Flame*, he lays out the parallel process of corporeal versus spiritual knowledge with their respective objects:

> All these things are received and seated in this feeling of the soul which, as I say, is its power and capacity for experiencing, possessing, and tasting them all. And the caverns of the faculties administer them to it, just as the bodily senses go to assist the common sense of the phantasy with the forms of their objects, and this common sense becomes the receptacle and archives of these forms. Hence this common sense, or feeling, of the soul, which has become the receptacle or archives of God's grandeurs, is illumined and enriched according to what it attains of this high and enlightened possession (F.3.69).

He tells us that the phantasy is the storage place for the forms of corporeal objects and that the *sentido del alma* serves as the storage place for the forms of spiritual objects.

In another passage, in Book 3 of *The Ascent*, John names the same two receptacles for objects of memory. Here he is turning from discussion of corporeal knowledge to that of spiritual knowledge in the memory. He explains concerning this spiritual knowledge that the soul "does not remember this through the effigy or image left in the corporeal sense faculty, for since it is a corporeal sense faculty the phantasy has no capacity for spiritual forms. But it remembers intellectually and spiritually through the form impressed on the soul (which is also a formal or spiritual form, idea, or image), or through the effect produced" (A.3.14.1). Once again, we see that the corporeal, sensible objects are stored in the phantasy, and the immaterial, spiritual objects are stored in the soul itself.

One final passage from *The Ascent* confirms the same structure when John explains how some supernatural apprehensions are stored in the phantasy and others are stored in the soul itself. He writes concerning these more interior apprehensions, that "the figures producing such

effects are vividly impressed on the soul, for they are not like other images and forms preserved in the phantasy. The soul has no need of recourse to this faculty when it desires to remember them, for it is aware that it has them within itself as an image in a mirror" (A.3.13.7). He says subsequently that "it is difficult to discern when these images are impressed on the soul and when on the phantasy" (A.3.13.8). From these passages it is apparent that the objects of memory are stored in the phantasy or in the soul itself.

The clearest evidence that the memory is not the storehouse of past experiences relates more directly to its purification. John speaks repeatedly of the necessity of the memory being completely emptied and yet these objects of memory are not lost. Bord explains, "If the memory can be completely emptied without the memories being lost, it is because they are stored outside this power."[22] That these memories are not truly lost is seen in the description that John gives of a purified memory. He writes, "Then, owing to the union, the memory is emptied and purged of all knowledge, as I say, and remains in oblivion, at times in such great oblivion that it must occasionally force itself and struggle in order to remember something" (A.3.2.5). Although the memory is purged of all knowledge, it is still capable of remembering something because the objects of memory are not gone but are stored elsewhere. For the memory to be empty is for this spiritual faculty to be free from these objects of memory, but it does not mean that these objects are eradicated from the person.

On a practical level, it is evident that this must be the case. For a person to be united to God does not mean they walk around in a state of oblivion, disassociated from any knowledge of their past. Such a person would be unable to perform basic human functions such as navigating through their city or recognizing their loved ones. John tells us that "it should not be thought that

[22] "Si la mémoire peut se vider complètement sans que les souvenirs soient perdus, c'est qu'ils sont conservés en dehors de cette puissance" (Bord, *Mémoire et Espérance,* 81).

because she remains in this unknowing she loses there her acquired knowledge of the sciences" (C.26.16). This would certainly be the destruction of what is natural, as can be seen from the great suffering of those with Alzheimer's and other neurological disorders. Instead, John's understanding of the purification of the memory must still allow for the retention of the objects of memory. The storehouse of these objects is not the memory, but the phantasy and the soul itself.

This understanding aligns with what was said earlier about John's concept of the spiritual faculties. The intellect, memory, and will are not so much objects but powers or capacities of the soul. As such, they are not substances in which anything can truly be stored. This storehouse, then, must be something substantial such as the phantasy and the soul itself. The phantasy, as a sensory power intrinsically linked with the body, has the capacity to store the material objects of memory. Likewise, the soul itself, as a spiritual substance, has the capacity to store the immaterial objects of memory. This leaves the memory, as itself a capacity of the soul, free from the necessity of storing these objects, and open for be united to God in its action. The specifics of this purification and union will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter.

Classification of the Knowledge of Memory

If memory is not the storehouse for past experiences, then what does it do? Before jumping into the specific functions of memory, it will be helpful to examine the different types of objects with which the memory is concerned. At the very beginning of Book 3 John gives a division of the apprehensions he will consider in the chapters on memory: "La cual podremos sacar de la distinción de sus objetos que son tres: naturales, imaginarios y espirituales; según los cuales, también son en tres maneras las noticias de la memoria, es a saber: naturales y sobrenaturales e imaginarias espirituales" (A.3.1.2). This double tripartite framework seems

confusing at first glance, and the English and French translations are not entirely faithful to the Spanish text.[23] John is making a distinction between three types of objects—natural, imaginary, and spiritual—and the three types of knowledge that these objects produce in the memory—natural, imaginative supernatural, and imaginative spiritual. Why these two groupings? Because there can be natural knowledge produced supernaturally or imaginative supernatural knowledge produced naturally. This will be made clearer as we proceed. John does not stick strictly to either of these frameworks, but for our purposes here we will stay with the second: natural, supernatural, and spiritual.[24]

Natural Knowledge

Beginning with natural knowledge of the memory, John writes, "I include under this heading all that can be formed from the objects of the five corporeal senses (hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch), and everything like this sensory knowledge that the memory can evoke and fashion" (A.3.2.4). Thus, this natural knowledge (from John's second tripartite framework) can come from two types of objects (from John's first tripartite framework), natural and imaginary. The first type (natural knowledge known from natural objects) includes

[23] "We form this division from the three different objects of the memory: natural, imaginative, and spiritual. In accord with these objects the knowledge of the memory is also of three kinds: natural, supernatural imaginative, and spiritual." "Or ces distinctions nous pouvons les tirer des objets mêmes de la mémoire, qui sont au nombre de trois, à savoir: naturels, surnaturels imaginaires, et spirituels; d'après ces trois objets, il y a aussi trois sortes de connaissances pour la mémoire: les naturelles, les surnaturelles imaginaires et les spirituelles" (André Bord, trans., *Oeuvres complètes de saint Jean de la Croix* [Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2016]). These translations fail to render the Spanish *imaginarias espirituales* as imaginative spiritual and instead opt for plainly spiritual knowledge. Part of the confusion in translation may lie in the interesting structure of the sentence. Instead of saying "naturales, sobrenaturales, e imaginarias espirituales," (as he often does when he wants to list three things) John says "naturales y sobrenaturales e imaginarias espirituales. This structure suggests that the adjective imaginarias goes with both sobrenaturales and espirituales (although technically it could be that the adjective espirituales goes with both sobrenaturales and imaginarias, but this distinction would not make sense). We use this similar structure in English as well. Instead of saying the boy, the girl, and the happy dog (in which case only the dog is happy) we can say the boy and the happy girl and dog (in which case both the girl and dog are happy).

[24] Notice that the only type of spiritual knowledge that John deals with here is imaginary. This will be important since ultimately, nonimaginary spiritual knowledge, which John defines as contemplation, cannot be known by the memory.

apprehensions received through the five exterior senses. John explains that these objects are compiled by and stored in the phantasy: "the bodily senses go to assist the common sense of the phantasy with the forms of their objects, and this common sense becomes the receptacle and archives of these forms" (F.3.69). Thus, whether objects currently being experienced by the exterior senses or those apprehended in the past, these are stored in the phantasy.[25] The second type of natural knowledge is that which is known imaginatively. The imagination can combine and reconstruct images received through the exterior senses and stored in the phantasy.

Thus, there are two kinds of natural knowledge that the memory can receive. For example, it can receive an apprehension of a mountain from the phantasy, whether that mountain is presently being experienced by the external senses or whether it was previously experienced. Or it can receive an apprehension of a gold mountain that is compiled by the imagination from the images of mountain and gold previously received through the exterior senses and stored in the phantasy.[26]

Supernatural Imaginative Knowledge

To explain supernatural imaginative knowledge it is first necessary to understand what John means by supernatural and what he means by imaginative. John writes that "supernatural knowledge comprises everything imparted to the intellect in a way transcending the intellect's natural ability and capacity" (A.2.1.2). This supernatural knowledge can be either corporeal or spiritual, and the corporeal can be either known through the senses or through the imagination. John is not limiting this classification of supernatural knowledge strictly to that which comes

[25] John does not so clearly distinguish between present and past apprehensions. For him, they are both present insofar as the apprehension is being currently presented to the memory in both cases. Interestingly, John never uses the word past in his discussion of memory in *The Ascent.*

[26] John uses this example of a gold mountain (which is also found in ST, I, q. 78, a. 4, co.) when describing the work of the intellect in A.2.12.4.

from the imagination however, since he is including visions and locutions which are known through the exterior senses. By imaginative here, he must mean all knowledge that is known by means of images whether that is directly through the exterior senses or as a construction of the imagination.

Thus, this supernatural imaginative knowledge can be known through apprehensions of two types of objects, natural and imaginary. Natural supernatural apprehensions sound like a contradiction, but what John has in mind here is knowledge of a natural object received in a supernatural way. This would include a physical vision or locution. The object of the supernatural apprehension, such as the thing seen or heard, is naturally seen by the eyes or heard by the ears. Thus, the object received (the image seen or the voice heard) is natural even though it was imparted in a supernatural way. The second kind of supernatural knowledge is imaginative. This would include a vision or locution not seen physically by the eyes or heard physically by the ears but imparted directly to the imagination. John explains this type of apprehension back in Book 2 saying: "You should know that by this term 'imaginative vision' we are referring to everything supernaturally represented to the imagination under the category of image, form, figure, and species. All the apprehensions and species represented naturally to the soul through the five bodily senses and impressed upon it can be represented to it supernaturally without the intervention of the exterior senses" (A.2.16.2).

Interestingly, John says that these supernatural apprehensions are sometimes stored in the phantasy and sometimes stored in the soul itself: "The figures producing such effects are vividly impressed on the soul, for they are not like other images and forms preserved in the phantasy. The soul has no need of recourse to this faculty when it desires to remember them, for it is aware that it has them within itself as an image in a mirror" (A.3.13.7). At first glance this seems

problematic, for how can a material image be preserved in the immaterial soul? However, a little further on John explains what he means. He calls this image a "formal apprehension" meaning that it is not material but immaterial (A.3.13.8). Thus, while the imaginative apprehension itself produces a material image, it at the same time impresses an immaterial image on the soul.

Spiritual Imaginative Knowledge

Finally, the third and last type of knowledge of the memory that John presents is spiritual. John explains that these apprehensions "do not have a corporeal image and form" (A.3.14.1). This type of knowledge is impressed directly onto the soul. Thus, John explains that the soul "does not remember this through the effigy or image left in the corporeal sense faculty, for since it is a corporeal sense faculty the phantasy has no capacity for spiritual forms" (A.3.14.1). This type of apprehension is entirely spiritual, and thus consists of no material image to be experienced through the exterior or interior senses.

However, John importantly includes the adjective imaginative to describe this type of knowledge. How can something be at the same time both spiritual and imaginative? This harkens back to the idea of a formal image as was mentioned in the previous section. The forms of these images are impressed directly on the soul such that they are known without any use of the interior or exterior senses. John goes into a further detail regarding this type of apprehension in Chapter 23 of Book 2 when he describes this knowledge as a type of spiritual seeing. He explains that "the intellect derives knowledge or spiritual vision from all these communications, without the apprehension of any form, image, or figure of the natural imagination or phantasy. For these experiences are bestowed immediately upon the soul by a supernatural work and by a supernatural means" (A.2.23.3). He then goes on to discuss each type of spiritual apprehension in

further detail in the remaining nine chapters of the book. Thus, this spiritual imaginative knowledge is immaterial, yet contains a formal image that is impressed directly on the soul.

Nonimaginary Spiritual Knowledge

Although John does not provide for it in his original framework, he devotes one paragraph at the end of the chapter on spiritual knowledge to discuss nonimaginary spiritual knowledge.[27] This, he says, is spiritual knowledge of the Creator which he calls touches and spiritual feelings of union with God. These are left out of the framework because they are not, directly speaking, objects of memory. John writes that "the memory does not recall these through any form, image, or figure that may have been impressed on the soul, for those touches and feelings of union with the Creator do not have any. It remembers them through the effect of light, love, delight, spiritual renewal, and so on, produced in it" (A.3.14.2). Back in Book 2, John explains that this type of knowledge "cannot be seen by means of this light derived from God, but by another, higher light, called the light of glory," and thus "these visions do not occur in this life, unless in some rare cases and in a transient way" (A.2.24.2–3). John is not concerned with them here in Book 3 since, being imageless, they cannot be held by the memory. Being imageless, they can only be known through the effect they produce.

In conclusion, of all of these different divisions concerning the objects of the memory, only one distinction is of ultimate significance for John's consideration of the purification of this faculty. This distinction regards those objects which are received externally, from outside the soul through the senses, and those that are received directly into the soul itself. Natural knowledge, John's first category, is knowledge received from outside the soul by means of the exterior and interior senses. Likewise, the second, supernatural imaginative knowledge, is

[27] A.3.14.2.

knowledge received from outside the soul by means of the interior senses, although sometimes a formal image will be impressed within the soul itself. The last, spiritual imaginative knowledge, being without a material image, is not received through the senses but is impressed directly into the soul. This important distinction will be the basis for John's treatment of how a person ought to respond to each kind of knowledge which will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter.

Memory as the Active Possession of Knowledge

Now that we have determined that memory is not a storehouse for past experiences, we return to examine the actual function of the memory. Ultimately, as a distinct, spiritual faculty, the memory for John is the capacity to possess or hold knowledge within the spiritual soul. However, this holding is not one of passive, perpetual storage but instead of current activation. It is the difference between a place of storage and the state of actively accessing what is stored there. In this sense, the memory is like a tunnel or gateway through which knowledge is brought into the soul, although we still want to avoid any spatial connotations since the memory is not a place but a capacity. Memory is the power to bring and to hold something in mind; and conversely, it is the power to turn away from and reject something from the mind.

It is difficult to point to any passages in which John makes this function of memory explicitly clear since he never systematically discusses its role. However, he spends a majority of the chapters in this section on memory explaining the harms that come to the soul through the memory. From these phenomenological descriptions we can get a clearer sense of John's understanding of memory. For example, he begins discussing the first harm stating: "The first, coming from the world, involves subjection to many evils arising from this knowledge and reflection, such as: falsehoods, imperfections, appetites, judgments, loss of time, and numerous

other evils engendering many impurities in the soul" (A.3.3.2). These evils come to the soul by means of the knowledge brought into the soul by the memory.

Memory as a Door or Passageway

Thus, in this chapter John likens the memory to the doors of the soul: "Distractions would result if, on closing the door to reflections and discursive meditation, we opened it to thoughts about earthly matters. But in our case we close the memory to all things—from which distractions and evils arise" (A.3.3.5). The memory is like a door that can be opened or closed to different types of knowledge. Referencing the Gospel of John, he states that "The soul should remain closed, then, without cares or afflictions, for he who entered the room of his disciples bodily while the doors were closed and gave them peace, without their knowing how this was possible, will enter the soul spiritually without its knowing how or using any effort of its own" (A.3.3.6). The memory, then, is the power to open the soul to this knowledge or to shut it off. It is the power to bring it into the soul or to keep it out. In discussing the harms that the devil produces by means of the memory he writes, "If the memory is darkened as to all this knowledge and annihilated through oblivion, the door is closed entirely to this kind of diabolical harm and the soul is liberated from these things" (A.3.4.1).

In other places John uses language relating memory to a passageway through which knowledge enters the soul. Again, in discussing the harms of the devil he explains that "all the greatest delusions and evils he produces in the soul enter through the ideas and discursive acts of the memory" (A.3.4.1). Likewise, he uses the word "through" in several other places in describing the function of the memory. The memory, he says, is the "entry for evils, distractions, fancies, or vices—all of which enter through the wandering of the memory" (A.3.3.5). Similarly, in one of the *Dichos* John states, "See that you do not interfere in the affairs of others, nor even

allow them to pass through your memory; for perhaps you will be unable to accomplish your own task" (S.61). Thus, the memory acts as a passageway or entryway through which different types of knowledge come into the soul.

In this function of a door or passageway, the memory turns to the phantasy or to the soul itself to draw knowledge. These are the storehouses from which the memory can access knowledge. Bord explains that "memory is not a repository, it is a welcoming power, at the crossroads. It receives its information from the phantasy, or from the soul itself."[28] This process happens differently depending on where the knowledge is coming from. Knowledge received through the senses is received by the memory into the soul. This includes knowledge from the exterior senses such as a mountain or knowledge from constructed by the interior senses such as a golden mountain. This also includes supernatural imaginative knowledge such as visions, locutions, etc. These types of knowledge are presented to the memory through the phantasy to either be accepted or rejected into the soul.

However, spiritual knowledge, received directly from God and implanted into the soul, so long as it is imaginative (meaning that it has an image), can also be accessed by the memory. However, in this case the memory is not bringing the knowledge into the soul since the knowledge is already there. Instead, it is bringing the knowledge from the soul into its consciousness: "After the soul receives knowledge of this sort it can freely bring that knowledge back to memory. It does not remember this through the effigy or image left in the corporeal sense faculty, for since it is a corporeal sense faculty the phantasy has no capacity for spiritual forms. But it remembers intellectually and spiritually through the form impressed on the soul (which is also a formal or spiritual form, idea, or image)" (A.3.14.1). In these cases, the memory is

[28] "La mémoire n'est pas un dépôt de conservation, c'est une puissance d'accueil, à la croisée des chemins. Elle reçoit ses informations de la fantaisie, ou de l'âme elle-même" (Bord, *Mémoire et Espérance,* 96).

working in the opposite direction. Instead of bringing the knowledge from without inside, it is bringing the knowledge from within outside.

Memory and Consciousness: Linking Past, Present, and Future

John frequently describes the function of memory with the phrase "to pay attention to."[29] In this way, memory is closely linked to consciousness. It either accesses knowledge from the subconsciousness of stored sense experiences in the phantasy and brings it to consciousness in the mind or it accesses knowledge from the depths of the soul itself and brings them to the consciousness of the mind. Bord explains that in this sense, "It is only a potential receptacle that can possess or detach, fill or empty itself, that actualizes memories by bringing them from the subconscious to the conscious."[30] This relates closely to the act of bringing something to mind or holding something in mind. These are actions that experientially differ from analytically thinking about something or making judgements about it. Instead, the work of the memory is to possess or hold knowledge in the mind such that it can then be understood by intellect and loved by the will.

Thus, memory is not exclusively concerned with the past. It is the point of intersection between past, present, and future. Memory makes past experiences present realities. To remember a past experience is to bring those past objects to mind again in the present moment. At the same time, any meaningful interaction with the present would be impossible without memory. Without memory, each moment of experience would be a fleeting instant, unconnected from anything that came before or after. No meaningful thought or reflection could take place without the ability to retain something in mind over a period of time. Each present experience is

[29] "Consequently, if the memory desires to pay attention to this knowledge it is hindered from union with God" A.3.11.1. See also 3.3.4, 3.10.2, 3.12.2, 3.13.1, 3.13.6, 3.15.2.
[30] "Elle est seulement un réceptacle en puissance qui peut posséder ou se détacher, se remplir ou se vider, qui actualise les souvenirs en les ramenant du subconscient à la conscience" (Bord, *Mémoire et Espérance*, 96).

imbued with countless knowledge, ideas, and feelings from that past which make the present experience intelligible. A conversation with a friend is shaped and molded by one's unique history with the person, as well as thousands of other concepts, ideas, and feelings based in one's past. The objects of memory are the lens through which the present is experienced and understood. Memory also involves the future. To make plans or to have desires for the future involves memories of places, people, and things. Plans for a future vacation would be impossible without knowledge of the possible choices of what could or could not take place. Memory is much more than a storehouse of past experiences, it is the spiritual power by which human experience of the past, present, and future are conditioned.

This understanding, while deviating from both Augustine and Thomas, is more in line with both Scripture and with Aristotle. Recall that in Scripture and in Aristotle, memory does not refer to a part of the soul or a sort of organ by which a person remembers, but rather it is the spiritual state of having something in mind. Rather than memory being a storehouse of past experiences, it is the active possession of the past in the mind, making the past a present reality. For John, as for these sources, memory is not a passive, static place but an active, dynamic capacity. Memory is a noun that names the power, the verb, to remember; and to remember is not the state of having something passively in the storehouse of one's subconscious, but to actively recall the past and to hold it in mind as a presently possessed reality.

Reinterpreting Difficult Passages

With this understanding, it becomes more apparent how to interpret the passages in which John seems to be saying that memory is a storehouse for past experiences. For example, the passage mentioned above states, "Do not store objects of hearing, sight, smell, taste, or touch in the memory, but leave them immediately and forget them" (A.3.2.14). Freed from the

preconception that memory is the permanent storage place of objects of knowledge, it becomes clear that this passage is referring to the temporary storage or attention to these objects in the memory. He instructs the person to "leave them immediately," to turn their attention from them, and not to remain fixated on them. This passage does not necessarily mean that the memory is a place of permanent storage but that it is instead a place which temporarily holds these objects and is free to hold them in mind or to turn away from them without entirely obliterating their memory.

Likewise, in another place John writes, "This interior sense, the phantasy, together with the memory, is for the intellect the archives or receptacle in which all the intelligible forms and images are received" (A.2.16.2). This does not necessarily imply that the memory is the permanent place of storage but instead that it is the means by which the objects stored in the phantasy are brought to the intellect. The word *received* suggests that the memory is the passageway through which these objects are received by the intellect from the archive of the phantasy. That the phantasy is the storehouse is clear from the subsequent sentence which says, "this faculty contains them within itself" (A.2.16.2). *This faculty* is singular, referring to the phantasy from the previous sentence. The phantasy is the storehouse which, with help of the active power of the memory, supplies the intellect with these objects. This interpretation is consistent with the other passages mentioned above in which John is very clear that the phantasy is the storehouse.

While these interpretations are not entirely self-evident, they are at the very least plausible. In the end, it is impossible to get rid of all ambiguity concerning John's understanding of memory. Commenting on attempts to argue for Thomistic versus Carmelite readings of John on the memory, Doyle soberly points out: "I do not believe it is possible to adjudicate between

these conflicting global interpretations, for each must, at some critical point, make excuses for those parts of the text that simply do not fit their attempt to give a coherent interpretation."[31] Faced with the totality of the evidence, the conclusion that the memory is not the storehouse of past experiences but instead the active possession of knowledge resolves more of the contradictory passages and is the more satisfying interpretation.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored John of the Cross's innovative understanding of memory. His thought builds on that of earlier sources but is original in the prominence of memory in his theological framework and its centrality in the journey to union with God. John grants memory the status of a spiritual faculty, an action of the soul, distinct from the faculties of intellect and will. It is not simply a passive place of storage for objects of knowledge, but the dynamic power or capacity to bring those objects into the soul or to turn away from them. Memory thus links the past and future with the present moment, the place of conscious experience and knowledge.

In some sense, the soul's faculties of intellect, memory, and will—not only the intellect—are all capacities for knowledge. Knowledge, particularly that of another person (or a personal God), is more than mere intellectual understanding. Howell's explains that "in 'natural knowing,' the intellect has priority over memory or will," but in spiritual knowledge the three are entirely integrated.[32] They are the three infinite caverns by which the soul is united to God. To truly know something is not only to understand but to possess it and ultimately to be united to it so as to, in some sense, become it. As John relates the intellect to seeing, the memory can

[31] Dominic Doyle, "From Triadic to Dyadic Soul: A Genetic Study of John of the Cross on the Anthropological Basis of Hope," *Studies in Spirituality* 21 (2011): 220.
[32] Howells, *Mystical Knowing and Selfhood*, 23.

similarly be related to holding and the will to tasting. This is the means for union with God: the intellect, the supernatural power to see or understand God, the memory, the supernatural power to hold or possess Him, and the will, the supernatural power to taste or love Him. And by these three powers, one ultimately becomes God by participation. With this understanding of memory, the connection John makes between memory and hope in the journey to union with God no longer seems arbitrary, but entirely compelling as will be demonstrated in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: The Purification of the Memory

As mentioned at the beginning of this study, the sole purpose of John's writing is to lead the soul to union with God. All of his anthropological discussion is found in this context. Everything that John says about memory, then, is within the context of its purification, a purification that, he explains, takes place through hope. With a better understanding of his anthropological system, and particularly his concept of memory as an active spiritual power, we will now examine his teaching on this process of purification.

First, we will give a basic overview of John's understanding of the entire spiritual journey to set the framework for the purification of the memory. Then, we will see the harms that the unpurified memory causes the soul and its need for purification. Next, we will explore John's understanding of the virtue of hope which is the means of uniting the memory to God and then see how this purification of the memory takes place in its active and passive components. We will conclude by examining the purified memory united to God, particularly in regard to the memory and eternity.

The Harms of Memory

More than half of the chapters in which John discusses memory are concerned with the harms that the unpurified memory causes a person. It is through this treatment that the brilliance of his teaching and his psychological genius shine through. He lays out the phenomenological harms caused by the different types of knowledge possessed by the memory. Through this experiential recounting, it quickly becomes apparent to readers the ways that they suffer from their unpurified memory and their own need for purification.

These harms are wide-ranging and ubiquitous, from "falsehoods, imperfections, appetites, judgments, [and] loss of time" to "sorrow, or fear, or hatred, vain hope, vain joy, or

vainglory" (A.3.3.2&3). They also include "pride, avarice, anger, envy . . . unjust hatred, vain love, and many kinds of delusions" (A.3.4.1). And these are only some of the harms mentioned in the eight chapters on this topic. With an understanding of the memory as a storehouse, these harms seem rather arbitrary and uncontrollable. However, knowing the memory to be the active possession of the objects of memory, John's teaching on these harms comes into focus. Ultimately, since the memory is the gateway by which knowledge enters the soul, all harms can be traced back to it. John writes that "disturbances never arise in a soul unless through the apprehensions of the memory" (A.3.5.1) and that "evils, distractions, fancies, or vices—all [. . .] enter through the wandering of the memory (A.3.3.5). These harms are met by turning one's mind to things other than God.

Natural and Supernatural Knowledge

First, concerning natural knowledge, a person turning their mind to the things of the world can cause a host of problems. Let us take as an example a person ruminating over a past argument with their spouse. How easily can they fall into unnecessary judgment of the other. The replaying of the argument does not ameliorate a person's emotions, but rather further enflames their anger. After enough time, the recounting of the argument can take on a life of its own such that what the person remembers is no longer entirely faithful to what actually happened, and they are deluded as to the truth of what their spouse said. Perhaps the person is filled with pride about some astute point that they made or lament that they could have responded in a different way to a particular point of the other. And of course, the hours that the person spends rehashing this argument over the next several days take a lot of time away from focusing on other tasks.

Such harms do not necessarily come from bad memories such as the example above. Good memories can be equally harmful, such as being incited to lust over the memory of an

encounter with an attractive person or led to pride over the memory of a compliment received by another. Even the presence of neutral knowledge in the memory, such as recalling one's views on a political matter, can lead to pride and judgment, can further entrench one in their narrow views, and can be a significant waste of time. Such knowledge of the memory is not necessarily the recalling events from the past, either, but is bringing to mind any natural knowledge, past present, or future.

Likewise, supernatural knowledge can lead to another long list of harms such as delusion, presumption, vanity, pride, spiritual gluttony, and base and improper judgements about God.[1] Take for example, a person who is recalling a powerful experience they had in prayer. The continual recalling of this experience can lead them to pride, thinking they have received this favor due to their own holiness. They can become attached to such experiences and begin to rely on them in order to feel consoled in prayer. Perhaps they will misinterpret the experience, thinking that God is asking something of them which he is not. Finally, the recalling of these supernatural experiences can also be a waste of time in that a person can remain in the past instead of being present to the graces that God is seeking to give them in the present moment. Whether natural or supernatural apprehensions, the memory is the entryway by means of which these objects enter into the soul and cause harm.

The Present Moment

What is at stake here for John is not simply a harmful relationship to the past. Ultimately, he is concerned with the present moment, which is the place of encounter with God. Whether a person is living in the past by constantly replaying past experiences in their mind or whether they are living in the future by always thinking about what is to come, they are unable to experience

[1] See A.3.8–12.

God in the present moment. This relation to the past could be negative or positive, reliving past harms or reminiscing over past joys, just as this relation to the future could be negative or positive, anxiously worrying about or excitedly anticipating what is to come. Either way, a person is failing to live in the present moment where God is active. As they continue to replay these past memories or rehash these future desires, they begin to find their identity more in them than in their own reality. They associate themselves more with what they have done or what has been done to them, or what they will do or what will be done to them instead of finding their identity in God.

Similarly, one's relation to the past and future can be harmful for the way in which they encounter the present. Past experiences give a person preconceptions about present experiences whether they be positive or negative. Often past experiences cause a person to make rash judgments about someone or a situation. Similarly, desires or hopes for the future, again whether negative or positive, affect the way in which one experiences the present. A person can fail to listen carefully to what someone is actually saying because they have already concluded what it is they think the person is going to say or because they are already planning what they are going to say or do next. This all comes down to imposing one's own limited understanding on an encounter instead of being passive and receiving what God wants to give us through the experience. Constance FitzGerald explains that "we project these images onto our vision of the future, we block the limitless possibilities of God by living according to an expectation shaped, not by hope, but by our own desires, needs and past experiences."[2] This is the reality of the memory that must be purified in the night of the spirit through hope.

[2] FitzGerald, "From Impasse to Prophetic Hope," 32.

However, recounting these harms is not to say that John has an entirely negative view of memory. There are many good things that can come from turning one's mind to these things, both the natural and the supernatural. Through recounting an argument, a person can be led to repentance and the desire to reconcile. Remembering a compliment can help a person grow in self-esteem and be encouraged in a moment of doubt. Thinking deeply about a political point can help one to further understand the issue and to be moved to act in an appropriate way. Likewise, the memory of supernatural graces can encourage a person in their spiritual life and can incite them to greater love of God. John acknowledges these goods that come through the memory and takes them into consideration in his treatment of its purification which will be discussed below. However, in his discussion, the harms of memory certainly predominate. The memory is the source of so much harm and so many temptations in the spiritual life. Reading these chapters, the need for the purification of the memory becomes abundantly clear.

Overview of Spiritual Journey

Night of Sense

Before examining the purification of the memory proper, we will give a general overview of the entire spiritual journey as envisioned by John of the Cross. At the beginning of Book 1 of *The Ascent*, he explains his division of the spiritual journey into purgations, or nights, which correspond to his primary anthropological dichotomy of sense and spirit (A.1.1.2). Ultimately these nights are one night in which the person is purged of all that is not God in order to be filled with God. The night of sense takes place on the level of the senses and is "a privation and purgation of all sensible appetites for the external things of the world" (A.1.1.4). However, later on John clarifies that this is not the destruction of all sensible appetites but of those that are

voluntary and inordinate, namely, those that lead a person to sin and prevent them from union with God.[3]

He writes that "this first night is the lot of beginners, at the time God commences to introduce them into the state of contemplation" (A.1.1.3). Marc Foley helpfully explains "John's term beginner can be misleading. It suggests a person who has just begun to embark on the spiritual road. However, John's beginners have already traveled several miles along the purgative way. They have established spiritual disciplines in their lives; they have progressed in overcoming vices; they are growing in the virtues; and they practice discursive prayer."[4] Thus, John is addressing here those who are responding to God's invitation to commit themselves more deeply to him and begin a new phase of the spiritual journey.

The night of sense has two components, one active, in which a person, always with the help of God's grace, brings about this purification through their own efforts, and the other passive, in which a person abandons themselves to the work that God is doing within them. John discusses this night of sense, insofar as it is active, in Book 1 of *The Ascent* and insofar as it is passive, in Book 1 of *The Dark Night*. The active night is the work of the person to free themselves from their inordinate attachments to created things (food, comfort, physical pleasure, material possessions, etc.). The passive night is God's work of detaching a person from their enslavement to these consolations.

This purification is not a mere athletic asceticism, for at its center is an intense love for Christ. In Chapter 13 of Book 1 of *The Ascent*, John finally tells how one is to enter this night of

[3] John makes this qualification most clearly in Chapter 11 of Book 1: "I am speaking of the voluntary appetites because the natural ones are little or no hindrance at all to the attainment of union" (A.1.11.2). This chapter is extremely important for understanding the night of sense, which is not a destruction of what is natural but of what is sinful.

[4] Marc Foley, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel: Reflections* (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 2013), 14.

sense, and his first instruction is that a person "have habitual desire to imitate Christ in all your deeds by bringing your life into conformity with his" (A.1.13.3). From this love of Jesus flows the renunciation of all the sensory appetites that keep a person from him. Yet, this detachment must be complete, for "it makes little difference whether a bird is tied by a thin thread or by a cord. Even if it is tied by thread, the bird will be held bound just as surely as if it were tied by cord; that is, it will be impeded from flying as long as it does not break the thread" (A.1.11.4). This night of sense "is common and happens to many" and is the preparation for and the beginning of the work that God will do in the night of the spirit (N.1.8.1).

Night of the Spirit

The night of the spirit is a purification that takes place in the spiritual part of the soul. It is a continuation and deepening of the night of sense. Marie-Eugène explains that the imperfections of the soul "driven back from the domain of sense by the first night, are still active in the domain of spiritual goods," and that "these vices, appearing externally in a more or less attenuated form… must be attacked and destroyed in their deep roots."[5] John explains that "The second night or purification takes place in those who are already proficients, at the time God desires to lead them into the state of divine union" (A.1.1.3). Affecting the more essential part of the human person, this night is more intense and disorienting. John explains that this night "is darker and more interior because it deprives this part of its rational light, or better, blinds it" (A.2.2.2). The faculties of the soul—intellect, memory, and will—must desist in their natural operations in order to work supernaturally through union with God.

It is here that John links the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity to the spiritual faculties respectively as the means to this purification: "These virtues, as we said, void the

[5] Marie-Eugène, *I Am a Daughter of the Church: A Practical Synthesis of Carmelite Spirituality*, vol. II, trans. M. Verda Clare (Chicago: The FIDES Publishers Association, 1955), 471.

faculties: Faith causes darkness and a void of understanding in the intellect, hope begets an emptiness of possessions in the memory, and charity produces the nakedness and emptiness of affection and joy in all that is not God" (A.2.6.2). Through an increase in these virtues, the spiritual faculties are dispossessed of all that is not God in order to be united to Him.

Like the night of sense, this night of spirit also has two components, one active and one passive. In the active night, the person does all that they can (always with the help of God's grace) to leave behind the natural operations of their spiritual faculties: the natural way of understanding with their intellect, of remembering with their memory, and of loving with their will. The soul must remain "in darkness and emptiness in respect to all things" (A.2.7.5). A person must not cling to anything except God alone—no thought, feeling, or desire, for these things, no matter how good and holy they may be, are not God Himself. In the passive night, God Himself leaves the soul in darkness in the natural operations of their faculties in order to be united to Him: "This dark night is an inflow of God into the soul, which purges it of its habitual ignorances and imperfections… God teaches the soul secretly and instructs it in the perfection of love without its doing anything or understanding how this happens" (N.2.5.1).

It is crucial to keep in mind that John is speaking about a specific phase in the spiritual life when referring to the night of the spirit. What he says in these sections of *The Ascent* and *The Dark Night* are not to be applied universally to all people at all times but only to those who God is beginning to introduce into this stage of purification: "Remember that I am now especially addressing those who have begun to enter the state of contemplation" (A.2.6.8). To apply his teaching here on emptying the faculties to beginners would be harmful to the individual, asking a person to turn one's back on the very thing aiding the soul in growth at that stage. However, eventually the soul reaches a state in which it must begin to let go of these aids in order to

receive God Himself. In his teaching on the purification of the spiritual faculties, John is speaking to those in whom God has begun to intervene in a supernatural way through the gift of contemplation. It is these that must desist in the natural operations of their intellects, memories, and wills, in order to receive God supernaturally.

When this purification of the spirit is complete, a person has reached the goal of the spiritual life: union with God: "the intellect of this soul is God's intellect; its will is God's will; its memory is the memory of God . . . it has become God through participation in God, being united to and absorbed in him" (F.2.34). It is within this context of the night of the spirit that John discusses more specifically the purification of the memory through hope.

Hope

John tells us that the memory is purified in the night of the spirit by means of the virtue of hope. In chapter one we noted a loose correlation between memory and hope found in Lamentations 3:20–21, a verse which John quotes in his discussion of memory (F.3.21). This explicit association between memory and hope seems to be original to John, even though Bord points out a sermon by Bernard of Clairvaux which makes this connection.[6] Sam Hole states that "there is no evidence, however, that John had read this. Rather, the association seems more likely to be John's own creation."[7] Even if he gleaned this association from some outside elsewhere, he is certainly the first to develop a robust spiritual schema based around this connection.

But what is John's understanding of hope? It is no doubt much more than the common contemporary usage, "I hope it doesn't rain today." First, it is important to distinguish between when he refers to hope as a passion (alongside joy, fear, and sorrow), and when he refers to hope as a theological virtue (alongside faith and charity). The former is natural while the latter is

[6] Bord, *Mémoire et Espérance*, 234–236.
[7] Hole, *Desire, Transformation, and Selfhood*, 154.

supernatural. John commonly refers to both, but it is the theological virtue that he relates to memory. It is supernatural hope as a theological virtue that is the proper supernatural object of the spiritual faculty of memory (A.2.6.1).

John gives no systematic treatise on the theological virtues, but it is safe to assume that he is in agreement with the standard theological consensus. What is primary for Thomas Aquinas about the theological virtues is that "their object is God, inasmuch as they direct us aright to God."[8] John's concern, always imminently practical, is the capacity these virtues have to unite the soul to God. He explains that "only faith, hope, and charity (according to the intellect, memory, and will) can unite the soul with God in this life" (A.2.6.1). What is unique about John's understanding of the theological virtues is his focus on their negative or privative aspect. He connects them to the spiritual night and explains the ways in which they cause "emptiness and darkness in their respective faculties… Faith causes darkness and a void of understanding in the intellect, hope begets an emptiness of possessions in the memory, and charity produces the nakedness and emptiness of affection and joy in all that is not God" (A.2.6.1–2).

Hope is very often discussed in this context of possession, or rather, the lack of possession. He gives his fullest discussion of the virtue in Book II of *The Ascent* saying,

> Hope always pertains to the unpossessed object. If something were possessed there could no longer be hope for it. St. Paul says *ad Romanos: Spes quae videtur, non est spes; nam quod videt quis, quid sperat?* (Hope that is seen is not hope, for how does a person hope for what is seen—that is, what is possessed?) [Rom. 8:24]. As a result this virtue also occasions emptiness, since it is concerned with unpossessed things and not with the possessed object (A.2.6.3).

Hope is the desire or longing for something that is not yet possessed. Thus, it is concerned with the future, a future in which the desired object might be possessed. And hope, as a theological virtue, has God as its object, such that it is God Himself who is desired but not yet possessed.

[8] ST I-II, q. 62, a. 1, c.o.

The Purification of the Memory

The purification of the memory, then, is the process of the spiritual power of the memory being dispossessed of all that is not God and being filled with hope of the future possession of Him. John explains the goal of this process:

> Our aim is union with God in the memory through hope; the object of hope is something unpossessed; the less other objects are possessed, the more capacity and ability there is to hope for this one object, and consequently the more hope; the greater the possessions, the less capacity and ability for hoping, and consequently so much less of hope; accordingly, in the measure that individuals dispossess their memory of forms and objects, which are not God, they will fix it on God and preserve it empty, so as to hope for the fullness of their memory from him (A.3.15.1).

The reason that the memory must be emptied in this way is because "no supernatural knowledge or apprehension can serve as a proximate means for high union with God through love. Everything the intellect can understand, the will enjoy, and the imagination picture is most unlike and disproportioned to God" (A.2.8.5). These things, both the natural and supernatural are limited and, thus, cannot unite the soul to God. The memory must be emptied of these finite things in order to be filled with the infinite: "There is no way to union with God without annihilating the memory as to all forms. This union cannot be wrought without a complete separation of the memory from all forms that are not God" (A.3.2.4).[9]

Since memory is not a storehouse of past experiences, this annihilation is not one of permanently wiping out all knowledge of them. This would leave a person unable to function in daily life which is certainly not what John has in mind. The fact that he qualifies that a person can turn their mind to these things "for the understanding and fulfillment of their obligations" shows that this knowledge is not completely lost, but only turned away from except insofar as is

[9] Once again, it is helpful to remember here that John is not applying this teaching to all people at all times, but only to those God has begun to introduce into the night of the spirit through contemplation (A.2.6.8).

necessary (A.3.15.1). The habitual knowledge of these things remains even when the memory is empty. Instead, it is the passageway into the soul which is emptied so that the soul gives no attention to these things but is free to encounter God. Bord explains, "by placing the reserves of memories outside of the faculty of memory, by showing that if the faculty of memory tarries in retaining certain memories in the consciousness it stiffens and freezes and loses its flexibility and purpose, by showing that non-attachment is a condition of its good functioning, John considers the faculty of memory in action and not as the static archives of past experiences."[10]

John breaks this purification into its active and passive components. He discusses the active purification of the memory in Book 3 of *The Ascent*. He plans to write about the passive purification of the memory in *The Dark Night*, but he never makes it to that point in the work. However, his basic teaching on this passive component can be deduced based on his treatment of the active component and his discussion of the passive night in general.

Active Purification of the Memory

Recall that the active component of the dark night refers to what it is that a person can do (always in cooperation with God's grace) to bring about this purification. John summarizes how this active purification takes place in the memory:

> What souls must do in order to live in perfect and pure hope in God is this: As often as distinct ideas, forms, and images occur to them, they should immediately, without resting in them, turn to God with loving affection, in emptiness of everything rememberable (A.3.15.1).

What is called for here is not the complete elimination of this knowledge but a turning away from these things in order to turn to God. John presents this as something that a person can freely

[10] en plaçant les réserves des souvenirs en dehors de la mémoire; en montrant que si la mémoire ; en montrant que si la mémoire s'attarde à garder dans la conscience certains souvenirs, elle se raidit et se fige et perd sa souplesse et sa finalité, en montrant que le non attachement est condition de bon fonctionnement, Jean considère la mémoire en acte, et non point les archives statiques des souvenirs (Bord, *Mémoire et Espérance*, 96).

choose to do. Whenever a thought, image, or memory comes, they can choose to leave it behind and turn their attention back to God.

The radicality of this instruction seems as though it would make daily life impossible. How can a person function in work, studies, and relationships if they are constantly turning away from any distinct knowledge and turning their attention to God. John addresses this difficulty and qualifies what appears to be an absolute statement everywhere else in his treatment:

> They should not think or look on these things for longer than is sufficient for the understanding and fulfillment of their obligations, if these refer to this. And then they should consider these ideas without becoming attached or seeking gratification in them, lest the effects of them be left in the soul (A.3.15.1).

John is saying that it is acceptable to allow things into the memory insofar as it is necessary for one's obligations. He is not saying to not remember to care for your children or to pay your bills.

However, his instruction is still rather extreme. How much of the day do we spend allowing our minds to wander from one thing to another or fixated on things that are not necessary for our duties? And these thoughts can be good and helpful. As mentioned above, John is not naïve to the benefits that can come from turning the mind to these things. However, he still concludes that the good obtained from avoiding the harms that come through these things makes it worth the loss of the good things that might come through remembering them: "Although [Even if] the good derived from this void is not as excellent as that arising from the application of the soul to God, by the mere fact that such emptiness liberates us from much sorrow, affliction, and sadness—over and above imperfections and sins—it is an exceptional blessing" (A.3.4.2).[11]

[11] aunque no se siguiera tanto bien de este vacío como es ponerse en Dios, por sólo ser causa de librarse de muchas penas, aflicciones y tristezas, allende de las imperfecciones y pecados de que se libra, es grande bien (A.3.4.2).

This is the active work of a person regarding the purification of the memory. John explains that "it must journey, insofar as possible, by way of the denial and rejection of natural and supernatural apprehensions. This is the task now with the memory. One must draw it away from its natural props and boundaries and raise it above itself (above all distinct knowledge and apprehensible possession) to supreme hope in the incomprehensible God" (A.3.2.3). It must turn away from all of the preconceptions, judgements, and limited understandings contained in the knowledge of the memory, for these things are not God. Instead, a person must leave these all behind in order to encounter God as He truly is, free from these finite limitations. Bord explains that "it is not a question of eliminating the useful work of the memory, its function of recall (which will be dulled, however). But it is necessary to avoid the freezing of the memory in its present capacity by an attachment to any particular thought, which would confine it in its natural function and above all would prevent it from expanding infinitely, by means of theological hope, and from tending towards God."[12]

Passive Purification of the Memory

As mentioned above, John never formally covers the passive purification of the memory. However, he does make some comments relevant to it in both *The Ascent* and *The Dark Night*. The passive purification of the memory is the work that God does to free a person's memory from all possessions in order to be united to Him. This is not something completely separate from the active work a person does through their own agency but is another component of the one process of purification. Just as the active purification does not take place apart from the

[12] Il n'est pas question de supprimer le jeu si utile de la mémoire, sa fonction de rappel (qui sera au contraire assouplie). Mais il faut éviter que la mémoire ne se fige dans sa capacité actuelle par une attache à un quelconque souvenir, ce qui la raidirait pour sa fonction naturelle, ce qui surtout l'empêcherait de se dilater infiniment, grâce à l'espérance théologale, et de tendre vers Dieu (Bord, *Mémoire et Espérance*, 123).

grace of God, so too God's work in the passive purification does not take place without the cooperation of the person being purified.

John tells us that this passive purification takes places primarily through contemplation: "The Lord works all of this in the soul by means of a pure and dark contemplation" (N.2.3.2) which "passively causes in the soul this negation of self and of all things" (N.1.1.1). The active component of the night consists in what a person can do to empty their soul in order to receive this gift. The passive component consists in the reception of this gift which drives out anything else that remains in the soul. For, John explains, "contemplation is nothing else than a secret and peaceful and loving inflow of God" (N.2.5.1). This is the nonimaginary spiritual knowledge that was left out of schema of different types of knowledge known by the memory above—the loving knowledge that is simply God Himself.

Thus, in the passive purification of the memory, God flows into the soul, purging from the memory all finite knowledge. John summarizes this experience, "[God] therefore binds the interior faculties and leaves no support in the intellect, nor satisfaction in the will, nor remembrance in the memory. At this time a person's own efforts are of no avail, but are an obstacle to the interior peace and work God is producing in the spirit through that dryness of sense" (N.1.9.7). What before was a difficult labor, to turn the mind away from all that is not God, is now done by the power of God while the soul remains passive. The memory is left empty from any natural or supernatural objects; thus, the soul is freed from the anxieties, judgments, distractions, and other harms that come by means of their possession.

This experience can leave a person disoriented and bewildered, especially at the beginning since we are so accustomed to relying on the finite knowledge in our memories. John explains that such persons "frequently experience such absorption and profound forgetfulness in

the memory that long periods pass without their knowing what they did or thought about, and they know not what they are doing or about to do, nor can they concentrate on the task at hand, even though they desire to" (N.2.8.1). It is as if a person is unable to turn their attention to anything other than the obscure and elusive attention to God. This is somewhat like the star-gazed lover who can focus on nothing else but their beloved.

However, what John is describing is even stronger than this. It is not that a person is forgetful of other things because they are thinking about the one they love, but because they are actually present with their beloved. John explains,

> Thus in the beginning, when this union is in the process of being perfected, a person cannot but experience great forgetfulness of all things since forms and knowledge are gradually being erased from the memory. Owing to the absorption of the memory in God, a person will show many deficiencies in exterior behavior and customs, forgetting to eat and drink or failing to remember if some task was done, or a particular object seen, or something said (A.3.2.8).

This is like the lovers who are so absorbed in one another's presence as the day goes by that they lose track of time and forget to eat or sleep. As a person becomes more and more absorbed in God, they may occasionally forget things related to their obligations because their memory is not yet perfectly united to God. Yet, this state of forgetfulness is only a temporary imperfection and is not the end that is being sought. This deficiency will be rectified as a person is further united to God and begins to participate in His eternal memory.

The Purified Memory

By means of this night of the spirit, the memory, which by its natural power is incapable of possessing God, is infused with the virtue of hope which has God as its object. Filled with hope, the memory is raised to a supernatural capacity capable of the possession of God. In *The Living Flame* John calls the spiritual faculties "deep caverns" explaining, "The capacity of these caverns is deep because the object of this capacity, namely God, is profound and infinite. Thus in

a certain fashion their capacity is infinite" (F.3.22). Insofar as they are filled with the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, their faculties are infinite in that they participate in the understanding, possessing, and loving of God.

John explains that in the incredible results of this union with God, "el entendimiento de esta alma es entendimiento de Dios; y la voluntad suya, voluntad de Dios; y su memoria, memoria eterna de Dios" (F.2.34). There is an oddity in the English translation of this phrase which reads, "the intellect of this soul is God's intellect; its will is God's will; its memory is the eternal memory of God." Dominic Doyle notes how Kavanaugh softens this in his translation:

> The translator, perhaps sensing the inadequacy of John's position, renders the unambiguous Spanish ambiguously to suggest an objective genitive (i.e., 'memory of God' = the person's remembering God, the object of a human person's memory) instead of a subjective genitive (i.e., 'God's memory' = God, the subject, who has a memory and who remembers), which latter meaning the Spanish clearly intends.[13]

Doyle is right that God, being outside of time, does not have a temporal memory, but this does not suggest an inadequacy in John's thought.[14] This would be the case if memory were only a storehouse of past experiences, because for God there is no past. Instead, memory is a present possession, in which case, John's thought is completely coherent. God's memory is an eternal memory; it is an eternal presence or attention to all things at once. Thus, to participate in the memory of God is to enter into eternity: "And the memory, which by itself perceived only the figures and phantasms of creatures, is changed through this union so as to have in its mind the eternal years mentioned by David [Ps. 77:5]" (F.2.34).

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[13] Doyle, "From Triadic to Dyadic Soul," 237.

[14] Doyle argues enticingly that John beings to replace the concept of memory with the substance of the soul as a person in united to God. He points to F.1.26 as his central evidence, but if John were replacing memory with substance here, substance would most likely come between intellect and will, for he almost always lists the faculties in this order. Plus, John commonly mentions substance alongside the faculties, typically after them such that the order of intellect, will, and substance suggests, at most, a silence about memory and not a replacement. John does occasionally omit memory from the faculties, but these omissions are incidental and insignificant in the face of all the times he includes memory along with intellect and will. See Doyle, "From Triadic to Dyadic Soul," 219–241.

Memory is intimately linked to time, for it is only through memory of finite things that a person in time has any awareness of its passing. Without memory of finite things, each moment would be its own isolated experience, unrelated to anything before or after. Thus, as a person's memory is emptied of finite things, they begin to experience a loss of time: "Sometimes this forgetfulness of the memory and suspension of the imagination reaches such a degree—because the memory is united with God—that a long time passes without awareness or knowledge of what has happened" (A.3.2.6). However, John is clear that this loss of time is an imperfection that will eventually be overcome. The memory is voided, such that a person is not aware of the passage of time, yet the person is not yet united to God so as to participate fully in eternity, in which all things are known in an eternal present. Yet, as a person is further united to God, this begins to change: "the soul that loves God lives more in the next life than in this, for a soul lives where it loves more than where it gives life, and thus takes little account of this temporal life" (C.11.10). Through the purification of the memory, a person, in a sense, escapes the bounds of temporality and lives in eternity.

John often connects two or more of the concepts of memory, hope, possession, glory, and eternity.[15] Hope frees the memory from possession of temporal things and gives it possession of God which is the glory of eternal life. In explaining the transformation of the faculties united to God, John writes, "The memory, too, was changed into presentiments of eternal glory." Throughout his works, glory refers to heaven, or the life the soul is destined to in eternity: "the Bridegroom whom she desires to possess in this life through the special grace of divine union with God, as we said, and in the next life through the essential glory, by which she will rejoice in

[15] For example, "Since Christians have the light of faith in which they hope for eternal life and without which nothing from above or below will have any value, they ought to rejoice in the possession and exercise of these moral goods only and chiefly in the second manner: that insofar as they perform these works for the love of God, these works procure eternal life for them" (A.3.27.4). See also C.38.6.

him not in a hidden way, but face to face [1 Cor. 13:12]" (C.1.11). Yet, this eternal glory is not something limited merely to the life to come but is something that is experienced, albeit in an inchoate way, even in this life.

Ultimately, this is a possession of, or participation in, the life of the Trinity. This is best expressed in *The Romances* where John writes,

> The Word is called Son; / he was born of the Beginning / who had always conceived him, / giving of his substance always, / yet always possessing it. / And thus the glory of the Son / was the Father's glory, / and the Father possessed / all his glory in the Son. / As the lover in the beloved / each lived in the other, / and the Love that unites them / is one with them, / their equal, excellent as / the One and the Other: / Three Persons, and one Beloved / among all three.

This eternal glory is the very substance of God which is shared among the three Persons of the Trinity. For the memory to possess presentiments of eternal glory is for the soul to experience even now the glory of heaven which is a participation in this Trinitarian life. Although this is a participation in God's very being, John is clear that "the substance of this soul is not the substance of God, since it cannot undergo a substantial conversion into him" (F.2.34). Yet, the soul participates in the Trinity in a way analogous to the union between the Father and the Son. Souls are united to God "through the union of love, just as the Father and the Son are one in unity of love. Accordingly, souls possess the same goods by participation that the Son possesses by nature. As a result they are truly gods by participation, equals and companions of God" (C.39.5–6). This is the goal of all of John's writings; this is the goal of the spiritual life.

The memory absorbed in the eternal memory of God no longer possesses any finite thing. How can such a person function in normal life? How can they recognize their loved ones or navigate through their cities? The complete purification of the memory does not imply that a person no longer knows anything finite, only that they know finite things in an entirely new way: "The soul knows creatures through God and not God through creatures" (C.4.5). It is God alone

that is possessed by the soul, but God is intimately linked to all things by means of being their creator. John explains, "This amounts to knowing the effects through their cause and not the cause through its effects. The latter is knowledge *a posteriori*, and the former is essential knowledge" (C.4.5). Thus, a person obtains essential knowledge of created things, knowing them in the same manner that God does, from the perspective of eternity.[16]

What does this look like practically in a person's life? John gives us a basic sketch: "These souls, consequently, perform only fitting and reasonable works, and none that are not so. For God's Spirit makes them know what must be known and ignore what must be ignored, remember what ought to be remembered—with or without forms—and forget what ought to be forgotten, and makes them love what they ought to love, and keeps them from loving what is not in God" (A.3.2.9). Such a person no longer finds their identity in their past experiences such as their wounds or their joys. They no longer impose their own limited understandings and judgements on their present experiences. They no longer turn their minds to the things of the world based on their own whims or distractions. They are no longer limited by their own narrow preconceptions, plans, and hopes for the future. Instead, they are perfectly guided by God in each and every internal movement. The memory no longer operates in a natural, but a supernatural way, moved by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the actions of such souls are truly divine and always efficacious (A.3.2.10).

John presents Mary as an example of this: "Such was the prayer and work of our Lady, the most glorious Virgin. Raised from the beginning to this high state, she never had the form of any creature impressed in her soul, nor was she moved by any, for she was always moved by the

[16] Howells helpfully explains how this new way of knowing through God is not a disembodied replacement of natural knowledge, but a transformation and integration of it such that "the distinction of sense and spirit is now included in the soul's union with God, without being dissolved" (Howells, *Mystical Knowing and Selfhood*, 58).

Holy Spirit" (A.3.2.10). Perfectly united to God, Mary's memory was purified from possession of finite things in order to contain God alone. Her actions, her prayers were always efficacious and aligned with God's eternal will. However, even if such souls always act in harmony with God's will, this is not to limit their freedom. It is a cooperation, not an annihilation. Thus, even Mary gave her *fiat* so that God's will would be done through her. The soul united to God is still substantially distinct from Him, and thus its works, even though done supernaturally with His power, are still truly its own free activity.

Conclusion

Humanity's understanding of memory has transformed enormously in the last few decades. There is no longer a practical need to memorize myriads of facts when they can be accessed instantly with the smartphone in a person's pocket through the internet which is estimated to hit 175 zettabytes, that is 175,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 units of data, by 2025. Young people have simply lost the ability to memorize information, an aptitude that was once considered central to a proper education.[1] Yet, in response to this crisis of memory, there has in recent years been an increased societal focus on the need to remember. In his book on the topic, Volf points out, "There is today something of a memory boom, a widespread desire to memorialize events—at times almost an obsession with remembering."[2] This is seen in an increased attention to memory across a wide spectrum of disciplines—psychology, sociology, neurology, and even spirituality. Yet, in a society driven by technology, memory is often reduced to mere data recall. Memory has simply become the ones and zeros stored in the brain that can be accessed and manipulated at will. Discussions concerning the topic are largely disconnected from the philosophical and theological tradition of previous millennia, a tradition that has much to add to the contemporary conversation.

This thesis examined how St. John of the Cross developed the spiritual understanding of memory in significant ways. Although he is building on a rich tradition, his thought is considerably innovative. He harmonizes the teaching of Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and Baconthorpe and returns to a more scriptural understanding of memory not as passive storage, but active recall—making the past a present reality within the soul. In this way, John elevates the

[1] See Md Enamul Hoque, "Memorization: A Proven Method of Learning," *International Journal of Applied Research* 22 (February 2018): 142–50.
[2] Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 39.

memory above the level of a sense faculty to that of a spiritual faculty; it is not merely a natural power but, alongside the intellect and will, a spiritual one. The intellect is the soul's power to understand, the will is the soul's power to desire, and the memory is the soul's power to possess. Thus, memory is closely linked with consciousness or attention. The memory is the soul's power to bring the past and future into the present moment by holding things in consciousness.

However, the memory filled with finite knowledge, whether it be natural or supernatural, is unable to remain open to the presence of God in the present moment. Bord helpfully explains:

> This fixation on a form, on a fixed idea is certainly a defect, sometimes a disease, because to fulfill its role well, the memory must be totally flexible, totally receptive, totally active. It is a power that can possess (S III 11,1), but it is better that it strips itself of this pernicious possessive spirit, that it is poor, that is to say detached, free, ready to welcome memories in the sense of the dynamism of life: not enslaved to present memories, the memory is free to receive all possible memories and more precisely those that are exactly suitable.[3]

Thus, John teaches that the memory needs to be purified through the theological virtue of hope in order to be liberated from possession of these finite things in order to be united to God alone. This purification through hope has both an active and passive component. In the active, a person does what they can (with the help of God's grace) to turn away from any unnecessary attention to the things of the world in order to focus on God alone. In the passive component, God does the work of dispossessing the soul of all that is not Him. Ultimately, this work of uniting the memory to God through hope is a processing of coming to share in the life of the Trinity in order to become God by participation.

[3] "Cette crispation sur une forme, une idée fixe est certainement un défaut, parfois une maladie, car pour bien remplir son rôle, la mémoire doit être toute souplesse, tout accueil, toute mouvance. C'est une puissance qui peut posséder (S III 11,1), mais il vaut mieux qu'elle se dépouille de cet esprit propriétaire pernicieux, qu'elle soit pauvre, c'est-à-dire détachée, libre, prête à accueillir les souvenirs dans le sens du dynamisme de la vie: non asservie aux souvenirs actuels, la mémoire est libre pour recevoir tous les souvenirs possibles et plus précisément ceux qui conviennent exactement." (André Bord, *Mémoire et Espérance*, 80).

John's teaching on the purification of the memory is relevant today, particularly as it pertains to contemporary discussions in spirituality regarding the healing of memories. John teaches us that the healing of memories is not a matter of wiping them away, but rather a turning away from finding one's identity in these experiences and to identity with God through hope. Healing is not a process of spiritual psychoanalysis but one of receptivity to the healing grace of God by receiving the inflow of Him into the soul. Further research in this area could put John's teaching on memory in dialogue with movements focused on spiritual healing to see how his thought can nuance and enhance their understanding.[4]

For St. John of the Cross, union with God is the singular purpose of each human life. This union is not a destruction of the natural, but a reorienting of the entire human person towards the infinite. With the intellect we see either the things of this world, our own limited understandings about created or spiritual things, or in faith we see God. With the will we taste either the things of this world, sensual appetites or even spiritual attachments, or in love we taste God. With the memory we hold either the things of this world, our past wounds, our present preoccupations, our future anxieties, or in hope we hold God. Only in the purification of the memory through hope will one find true healing and union with God.

[4] Iva Beranek has already opened the door to this dialogue in her work on the topic. See Beranek, "Healing of Memories."

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