



# Monument

# and Memory

**4th Nordic Conference in Philosophy of Religion,  
16-18 June 2013, Stockholm School of Theology.**  
In collaboration with the research program Time,  
Memory, Representation ([www.histcon.se](http://www.histcon.se)).

**Key note speakers: Hent de Vries, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza,  
Andreas Nordlander and Amy Hollywood**

At the 3<sup>rd</sup> Nordic Conference in Philosophy of Religion in 2011, questions of time, of the past and the future were thematized. The present conference pursues this theme by inviting discussions on philosophy of religion that focus on memory and monuments. How is memory constructed and performed in religion and secular life, in oral and written culture? Do we understand religions as monuments or rather as fleeting and passing aspects of reality? How can we understand the monument in its twofold character: both a tool for ideologically driven memory practices that fixate memory, as well as a constant source for creative construction and an opening up of memory? We want to investigate monuments

both as materialized collective memories and as inner monuments on which our understanding of the world is built. In understanding memory, Augustine is monumental in both a theological and philosophical self-understanding, but in what sense are his writings monumental?

*We invite papers on the following interrelated topics:*

## ■ A. Memory and Cultural Environment

Winston Churchill once stated: “We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us.” Among other things, this statement focuses the fact that our cultural environment, not least its physical side, is a relatively silent force that keeps us in living contact with an ambiguous past. This force operates as a consequence of both intentional and unintentional factors. The whole debate on monuments, memorial spaces and their relation to collective memory tends towards the *intentional* side of this complex, but the force of cultural memory that we often meet in our cultural environments is perhaps mainly produced through the unintentional side of historical change.

This section invites papers on the memorial side of our cultural environment. What does it mean for secular people to live in the midst of Churches, Mosques and Synagogues? How can the cultural heritage be interpreted if street names, monuments, and commemorative sites are taken into consideration? How do we interpret the need for recreation of public spaces in societies with a turbulent history?

## ■ B. Remembering Augustine

Throughout his famous work *Confessions*, Augustine searches for knowledge of God through self-knowledge. In line with the Platonic tradition, he relies on memory and the whole work is concentrated on the function of memory in the process of the divination of the soul. One of the interesting questions in this context is the relation between Augustine’s Platonism and his Christian notions of Incarnation and Grace. His reflection on memory is crucial in this context. Another is the question of possible relations between Augustine and later philosophies on subjectivity, existence, and cognition. This session opens up for papers on Augustine and the Augustinian tradition of philosophy of mind and memory. How do we remember Augustine through the history of philosophy, how can re-readings of his basic writings on memory reframe philosophical issues today?

### ■ C. Techniques of Memory and Oral History

In cultures of written language memories are preserved in texts, whereas in modern technology memory increasingly becomes unnecessary on an individual level. We do not have to remember, we google! Or... In older times when culture was still oral, memory had to be lived and recalled through very different kinds of technologies. In oral traditions memory is instituted in rites as well as in the structure of everyday life. Religion “performed” memory and thus gave structure to the cosmos. In oral tradition mnemonics are of crucial significance: whoever has memory also holds the key to the order of the cosmos as well as his own and the community’s identity. Such functions and traditions also continued far into written cultures. But how can we today understand historical epochs of oral culture? What can we learn? What does mnemonics teach us today? How do we combine oral and written culture today?

### ■ D. Uses and Abuses of Memory

One of the deadly sins of a society, it is often said, is forgetfulness of history. Through practices of memory we gain our identities as groups, nations and peoples. By remembering the past, we also gain critical awareness of past crimes and cultural shortcomings. Yet we know this is only half the story. Practices of memory are also used for ideological and oppressive purposes. And even when not deliberately repressive, practices of memory often serve the interests of particular groups over against others. Not least within religious traditions, the central act of venerating the past has often been played out at the expense of other voices, as the many different strands of liberation theology have untiringly drawn attention to. So what are we to do with the ambivalence of memory? How do we distinguish more constructive practices of memory from less constructive ones? Is there such a thing as a privileged spot from which a “true” practice of memory can be carried out? In case there is, who is to occupy this spot?

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### Practical information

Abstracts are invited for the sessions by January 15, 2013. Abstracts of no more than 300 words should be sent directly to [jayne.svenungsson@ths.se](mailto:jayne.svenungsson@ths.se) ; abstracts are to be headed with the applicant’s name, professional affiliation, and title of paper.

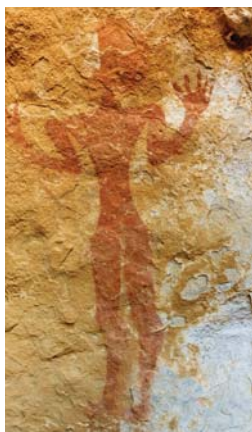
The conference will be held at Stockholm School of Theology ([www.ths.se](http://www.ths.se)) and is arranged in cooperation with Södertörn University College and the Theological Faculty at Uppsala University.

For further information, please contact:

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