MANIPULATING ARTIFICIAL MEMORY: AN EXAMPLE OF MISTAKE IN RECALLING

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ABSTRACT

In late medieval Scholastic thought, the sensory experience from the Aristotelian tradition is essential for the knowledge of reality. In the case of the arts of memory, such as Romberch's *Congestorium* (Venice, 1520), theories of perception are applied to the mental formation of places and images, key elements of memory systems «per locos et imagines». Through an example taken from the *Congestorium*, in which the author acknowledges his error in the process of imagining places, one can appreciate how theories of perception are applied to mental processes. Thus, after a detailed description of the rules for the formation of mental places, Romberch defends the importance of experimentation and one's own (sensory) experience to generate effective artificial memory systems.

KEYWORDS: *ars memorativa*, *locus*, Romberch, *Congestorium*, memory.

MANIPULAR LA MEMORIA ARTIFICIAL:
UN EJEMPLO DE ERROR EN EL PROCESO DE RECUERDO

RESUMEN

En el pensamiento escolástico tardomedieval, la experiencia sensorial de raigambre aristotélica es esencial para el conocimiento de la realidad. En el caso de las artes de memoria, como el *Congestorium* de Romberch (Venecia, 1520), las teorías de la percepción se aplican a la formación mental de los lugares y las imágenes, elementos clave de la memoria «per locos et imagines». Mediante un ejemplo del *Congestorium*, en el que el autor reconoce su error en el proceso de imaginación de los lugares, se aprecia cómo las teorías sobre la percepción se aplican a los procesos mentales. Así, tras una detallada descripción de las reglas para la formación de los lugares mentales, Romberch defiende la importancia de la experimentación y la experiencia (sensorial) propia para generar sistemas efectivos de memoria artificial.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *ars memorativa*, *locus*, Romberch, *Congestorium*, memoria.

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The *Congestorium artificiosae memoriae* (1520 and 1533), written by Johannes Host von Romberch, is a compilation of almost every precept of rhetorical memory in the Late Middle Ages[1]. It combines classical and modern sources and trends on memory (Cicero, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Publicius, Petrus Ravennas) and, of course, scholastic philosophy (Albert the Great, saint Thomas). As it is well-known, «ars memorativa» is a discipline consisting of the codification of memories forming mental images which must be placed in mental spaces, called *loci*. At this point, we have to add that these places should be like the real ones, so that the user can mentally walk through them and recover every single memory just by looking at the images held on them[2]. Moreover, almost every treatise written in these years offers a practical theory useful for applying it to what the user wants to remember. Romberch goes further: his purpose is to join the whole tradition of artificial memory in one volume, including as much doctrine as he was able to find[3]. As a result, his *Congestorium* may seem more theoretical and less prone to be used as a manual. Furthermore, Romberch was able to mix these precepts with his educational background, profoundly incardinated with scholastic logic and Aristotelian metaphysic, to which we must add theology. All this knowledge was obtained in the Dominican convent in Cologne in which he first entered, a quite traditional convent recognised as the Studium Generale since Albert the Great's time[4].

Regarding Romberch's book, *Congestorium Artificiosae Memoriae*, it is divided into four books, which he calls treatises. In the first one, Romberch explains the theoretical part of the art of memory and its relationship with virtues and human soul; in the second one, he defines and characterises places; the third one is about images and their forming; and the last one deals with mnemonical practise, either in rhetorical, ecclesiastical, and secular contexts. But there is something else among these precepts, personal anecdotes (or, at least, pseudo-personal experiences) can be found at some points. We cannot know if they ever happened to our Dominican, but Romberch presents them as his own, even if they are sometimes clearly retrieved from the mnemonic tradition and retold as something new. In the second treatise, the one about *loci*, various of these experiences merge among the definitions, classifications, characteristics, rules, and compositions. In the fifth chapter, Romberch tries to elucidate the main guidelines to form the best memory place-system, explaining the features with which places must be imagined to work properly.

[1] About Johannes Romberch and his life, *cf.* Paulus (1903); Torre in Dolce (2001); Vasoli (2007); Merino (2020 and 2021). We will cite this author's first edition: J. Romberch, *Congestorium artificiosae memoriae*, 1520, Venice.

[2] Heimann-Seelbach (2000, *passim*) studies the evolution of *loci* in the 15th and 16th centuries, specially taking into account who they must be mentally differentiated.

[3] «Id profecto primum ex diversis comparavimus auctorum libris quorum canones et regulas in unum congessimus ad instar notariorum prothocollum diversarum causarum et negotiorum litis perscribentium, unde memorentur quid quisque apud se quaestionis deposuerit annotandum» (f. 6r).

[4] About this convent and its tradition, *cf.* Naupert (2018).

The fifth chapter is called «De regulis conditionis locorum continentibus» («On the rules containing the conditions for places»). Romberch lists in it seven rules and some precisions to make up mnemonic places, which have been taken from different previous authors, specifically Petrus Ravennas, as we will show[5]. After a summary, Romberch introduces the first rule: one must create a convenient and ordered disposition of places, putting the first image on the left side (from the viewers' perspective[6]). He mentions Cicero, Petrarch, Petrus Ravennas or Maturanzius[7] as authorities that help avoid confusion regardless of the order in which we will begin recalling. At this point, Romberch includes an example of how he applies this rule in a «real» situation, which will be in the core of our study. The second rule concerns distance[8], in this case our author mentions two cases in which he proved himself that Petrus Ravennas was right when advising his readers to separate places by five or six feet[9]. The third rule is that the size of a place must correspond to the proportion of its images, and once more experience will be helpful[10]. Fourth and fifth rules are joined together: illumination should not disturb, and places must be spherical and clearly different[11], one must perceive the differences between the *loci*, but also between a *locus* and its *imago*; these two precepts contain the story we will analyse ahead. The sixth rule repeats the previous one, adding some new information: spherical places should not be chosen, *loci* should be always ready to use, and they should be seen empty at least once[12]. Romberch recommends with his last rule having fixed

[5] Some hints about Romberch's theories on places can be found in Yates (1966), Rossi (2000), or Plett (2004).

[6] *Congestorium* (f. 21r): «Id igitur in primis praecepimus, ut in debita ordinataque dispositione tibi loca vendices […]. [Ordo] a sinistra tamen sumendus est». Another repeated aspect in these lines is contiguity, understanding that each topic must have a concrete space and have nearby spaces semantically alike.

[7] Franciscus Maturanzius is not literally mentioned in Romberch's text, and in the marginal notes it is written «Franciscus Petrarcha». We admit with Torre (2007) that this precept does not appear in any Petrarch text. Furthermore, Romberch does not refer to Petrarch as «Franciscus», but as «Petrarcha». This led us to the thought that it couldn't be Petrarch, but some other Franciscus, who we identify as Maturanzius because of his references to this concrete rule: «Nam qui recte ex ordine haberi loci debeatur rationem … nam qui recte diverserit nunquam poterit in rerum ordine errare».

[8] *Congestorium* (f. 21v): «Congrua quoque locorum expetitur distantia».

[9] Petrus Ravennas assessment is as follows (2007: 140)*:* «Mediocriter ergo distabunt si unus ab altero quinque vel sex pedibus distabit». In this case, Romberch insists twice, *Congestorium* (f. 21v): «quod oportunissimum experti sumus … experimento novi».

[10] *Congestorium* (f. 22r): «Ea quoque continua erit locorum quantitas, ne sit nimis arcta vel alta, imagines siquidem latitudinis, superficiei et longitudinis proportionem exigent». Experience is essential to master this technique, so at this point Romberch also focusses on practise, as if he wanted to demonstrate the value of experience.

[11] *Congestorium* (f. 22v): «Ea denique locis inerit qualitas ne vel nimis obscura sint vel lucida nimis aut figura vel forma consimili vel etiam spherica».

[12] *Congestorium* (f. 22v): «circularitas et rotunditas non satis discretiva est … semper loca ad manum constituta … semel vacua ab hominum frequentia vidisse».

places (*fixos esse*) so that they do not escape, as it could happen if someone imagined, for example, a boat. Finally, the main clues are repetition and meditation, which is frequently stated in the *Congestorium*, and idea probably inspired by Quintilian[13].

Taking these precepts into account, we assume that the places that Romberch makes up will have these features. Nevertheless, in this chapter, Romberch admits having made a deep mistake once. This mistake was recalling his places wrongly as he was mentally walking through a dormitory in a monastery. It is not only interesting to learn how he had built that place, but the fact that he could not solve this mistake on his own is also attracting, because it was another person who got to the solution and who warned him about avoiding that problem, as we will see. This story will show a way to manipulate an already created memory in order to correct a wrong system. In spite of that, adding different kinds of marks, notes and personal signs to a previously imagined memory is not a novelty introduced by our author[14]. Nevertheless, Romberch displays a new way to employ it by re-building a memory to guarantee differentiation for a correct recovering. This whole resource sheds light on the way people can build their memory places in rhetorical memory to make recalling easier, but it also demonstrates how established memories could be altered in our minds by practise and habit if the system does not work properly.

1. «LOCA NON FIANT IN CELLIS FRATRUM?»

Romberch story's framework is diversity of places and remarkable differences among them. «Loci» (or «loca») must be different enough not to be confused by their similarities, especially in architectonical buildings, either existing outside our minds or not. His tale is included in the *Congestorium* just to prove this rule, but it also demonstrates that memory systems must evolve by constant practise and learning[15]. Furthermore, the story is also interesting from another perspective, as it helps us understand how the whole discipline changes and develops in the Late Middle Ages.

[13] *Inst. Orat.*, 11, 2, 28: «continua et crebra meditatio, partis deinceps ipsas repetitus ordo coniungat».

[14] *Rhet. Her.,* 3, 18, 31: «Et, ne forte in numero locorum falli possimus, quintum quemque placet notari: quod genus, si in quinto loco manum auream conlocemus, si in decumo aliquem notum, cui praenomen sit Decumo; deinde facile erit inceps similis notas quinto quoque loco conlocare». This precept is also found in Ravennas' *Phoenix*: (2007: 166): «Vtile in locis esse iudico, quae pro rebus auditis reponendis fabricauimus, si in quinto loco manus aurea ponatur, in decimo crux aurea, in quinto decimo manus argentea, in uigesimo imago ipsius numeri et sic in caeteris facere monet mea doctrina».

[15] The story begins with the words: «Vnde et didici quomodo locorum diversitas alia alterius rei praebebit accessum» (f. 23v). Thus, Romberch, who is the master-treatise writer, shows he is still learning, as if he wanted to teach his students what he learnt himself.

First, Romberch recognises that he was confused while assuming the cells of a convent as mental places. Then someone suggested him not to use this kind of places in his system[16]. As it is also shown in other discussions along the *Congestorium*, some precepts are different depending on the author, reflecting thus some «individualism» in these systems[17]. As Romberch was explaining that precept to his students, another person claimed that the similarities among the doors were not a problem, because each friar can easily be linked to his job within the community, and this could be used to differentiate the doors[18]. Therefore, the user has to find a symbol for each job and imagine it in the door belonging to the corresponding friar[19]. Romberch accepts this theory (since it matches his own) and decides to apply it, insisting that this is something he has just learnt[20]. We appreciate here how mnemonical doctrine changes by experiencing and depending on the person who is using the system. Anyways, the most significant idea of the «exemplum» is that experience may establish or prove the doctrine, in this case the importance of differentiating places[21]; hence in the end, Romberch recognises that his system is better after having assumed his pupil's suggestion[22].

This tale is the evidence of Romberch's personal use and application of the art of memory. He does not embrace tradition unequivocally; he challenges its validity through practise and raises his own theories–or at least he wants the readers to think so. Moreover, Romberch accepts the fact that mnemonic precepts depend on the person's

[16] «Sed eam locorum confusionem, quam in cellarum assimulatione passus sum, aliquis in sua collectura prohibens inquit loca non fiant in cellis fratrum» (f. 23v).

[17] For example, in f. 19v Romberch introduces a discussion between Quintilian and Metrodorus, and in other passages, he shows himself against Guidus Carrara or Publicius. In another respect, each person has to adapt the theory in the manuals to his own knowledge and experience, as it is gathered from the use of the adjective *notus* in the arts of memory (Merino, 2015).

[18] «Ast dum itidem cuidam auditorum meorum praeceperim, is constanter obiecit nihil sibi ianuarum similitudinem officere, quandoquidem hunc fratrem in hac habitare cum officio suo consideret et illum in ista et sic deinceps» (f. 23v). We must remember here, following Merino (2021: 156) that Romberch was a teacher in Cologne even before he was declared so.

[19] «Quorum, quoniam diversa sunt officicia [sic], oportet aliter aliterque considerentur penes instrumenta potissimum quibus operam suam exercent, ut hic curam sacrarii gerens utatur instrumentis ad hanc conducentibus et is publice legens versare codices suae lectionis consideretur et ita reliquorum» (f. 23v). We must add here that the relationship between a person and their job is repeated in other passages, insisting in the fact that it is an easy way to find similitudes for mental images. See, for example, f. 27r, f. 36v or f. 53r.

[20] «Et eo quidem libentius hac convincebar argumentatione quo et discipulum perficere didici» (f. 23v).

[21] «Quando haec consideratio sibi conferat et novi non penitus inanem meam eruditionem, quoniam nostra perceptio est colorum varietate aut rerum materialium illic fictorum dissimiles reddantur loci multiplicitate» (f. 23v).

[22] «Vnde in singula cuiusque cellae ianua sive foribus eius quippiam effingendum erat quo forinsecus internoscerentur, abintra autem quae a discipulo recensuimus allegata» (f. 23v).

ability and ease to find the best way to codify memories. In that sense, Virenque (2019: 28) has asserted that the use of errors for teaching makes easier for students to remember the teacher's instructions. Taking into account that the *Congestorium* was dedicated to Johannes Grevembroch[23], Romberch's old friend, we consider that Grevembroch might be given in these lines the role of Romberch's student, making the story-*exemplum* a didactic resource. By the end of the 16th century, this story is still functional for the system, the prove is that it appears in Rossellius' *Thesaurus*[24], who clearly follows Romberch's *Congestorium*.

There is something left to analyse in that story, since Romberch states that «aliquis» («someone») thinks that it is not convenient to use cell doors as *loca*. As we have insisted that originality is not characteristic of the arts of memory, one might wonder who that «aliquis» is. We have found two possibilities, as the rule can be read in two previous treatises, Ragona's and the anonymous *Memoria fecunda*. Ragona's *Artificialis memorie regule* (1434) follows the anonymous *Memoria fecunda* (ap. Pack, 1979), published approximately in 1425. Ragona seems to be transliterating the anonymous text in writing his own example, as there are not many differences between the texts, so Romberch can have taken the idea from any of them:

Et cave ne assumas cellas fratrum propter nimiam ipsarum similitudinem nec hostia domorum pro locis, cum nulla vel parva ibi assit differentia, ideo confusio. (*Memoria fecunda*, *ap*. Pack, 1983: 203).	Et cave ne assumas cellas fratrum propter nimiam illarum similitudinem, nec hostia domorum pro locis quia cum nulla vel parva tibi sit differentia ideo confusio. (*Artificialis memorie regule*, f. 54r)[25].

The precept is the same in our three texts: similitude must be avoided, because a lack of differences will cause confusion. If we focus on Romberch's text, we will see that he transforms the rule into an «exemplum», a short story that illustrates what he wants to teach. For this purpose, he increases its length and includes his experiments to be able to question the rule with the new added material. Thanks to that, Romberch writes a new precept giving a clue to guarantee that the users imagine a mark to distinguish the doors. And finally, he upholds the possibility of forming places in the cells of a convent.

[23] Romberch states it at the beginning of the *Congestorium* (f. 2v): «Pro importuna amicissimi mei domini Ioannis Grevembroch, artium, philosophiae ac medicinarum expertissimi doctoris, solicitatione dum adolescentior esset, in unum congessi libellum». But he also includes an epistle dedicated to him in which he explains the reasons why he wrote the book. The main one seems to be Grevembroch's insistance, as he wanted to have at hand the system that they both used when studying at the convent.

[24] *Cf.* ff. 55r-v in C. Rossellius, *Thesaurus artificiosae memoriae*, Venice, 1575.

[25] J. Ragona, *Artificialis memoriae regulae*, 1434, Rome. On this author, see Zappacosta (1972).

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF EXPERIENCE

As I stated above following Virenque (p. 6), when a teacher explains his own mistakes to a student, it becomes easier for the pupil to remember the rule. This sort of comparison allows the student to contrast his mental process with his master's. So, if we transferred this idea to Romberch's work, he would be the one teaching and his friend, Grevembroch, and the readers would be the students[26]. In this sense, this «exemplum» could be understood as one of the multiple didactic resources that one can find along the *Congestorium*. Furthermore, in medieval tradition, «exempla» are stories told to illustrate moral doctrine; in a huge number of stories, «exempla» demonstrate through experience the value or the truth of teachings, by punishing or rewarding the characters according to their actions[27].

Nevertheless, there might be another reason for Romberch to insist that much in experiences and experiments. It is not frequent to find in the *Congestorium* allusions to experience, although, in most of the chapters, practise and exercise are recommended. Regardless of this chapter, the term «experimentum» is only used twice, and «experiential» on five occasions, whilst «exercitium» is employed twenty-eight times. The more one practises, the faster he will master the rules and the better he will use the system[28]. But in these lines (second treatise, fifth chapter), Romberch mentions experience six times (without taking our «exemplum» into account), using expressions like the following: «quod oportunissimum experti sumus» or «experimento novi» (f. 21v), «experientia moderabitur» (f. 22r) or «experientia quoque didici» (f. 23r).

In addition to the «exemplum» we have discussed, there is a second experiment widely developed in this chapter:

> And this way I demonstrated once through practise to some people who were listening to me repeating the same topic, sometimes beginning by the exordium, by the central part, and finishing it by the central part and sometimes beginning by the central part. And the fact is that, thanks to an ordered disposition of places, it is easy to pronounce an imagined topic with order and knowledge, following places safely in the right, oblique or reversed order (*Congestorium*, f. 21v)[29].

[26] Similar ideas can be found in García (2015: 219-237), who states that including experiences in this kind of texts is a way to guarantee the system functioning, to assert that the doctrine is useful and true.

[27] On this topic, see M. J. Lacarra (2021). On the relation between *exempla* and the art of memory, see Rivers (2010).

[28] «Cuius vim hi dumtaxat novere, qui perpaucis conquisitum canonibus, iugi meditatione, exercitatione et sedulo usu facilem quendam habitum memorandi generarunt, quem nec leviter amittere possent» (*Congestorium*, f. 7v).

[29] «Et itidem experimento quibusdam nonnunquam patefeci, eandem materiam audientibus recensens, nunc illinc intentans exordium, nunc hinc, nunc ex medio finem repetens, nunc quidem caput et frontem. Facille quippe est ex locis ordine collocatis materiam imaginatam ordinate et sapienter pronunciare, certitudinaliter de uno in alterum procedendo ordine recto et reflexo atque praepostero».

In the margin, it is written «experimentum», something that we can easily connect to Petrus Ravennas «experimentum», included in the end of his *Phoenix*[30]. Moreover, there is a sentence in which Romberch links experiments directly to Ravennas: «From my own experience, we deny this following Ravennas' authority» (*Congestorium,* f. 24r[31]). As Petrus Ravennas is one of the most important sources in Romberch's text, especially concerning places theories, we wonder whether he is following his predecessor example. Merino (2007: 118 and 121-122) explores the ideas behind the «experimentum»: it seems to be a set of feats related to his memory abilities, which serve to provide his students with testimonies of prestige and fame, accomplished using his system[32]. It is a kind of exhibition, which is an interesting idea as Romberch also mentions being before students in these examples («quibusdam… audientibus», f. 21v; «cuidam auditorum meorum», f. 23v).

Finally, there is another similitude between Romberch's *Congestorium* and Ravennas' *Phoenix* in this respect: Petrus Ravennas has a personal experience related to the cells of a convent. He describes his experience in the *Phoenix* (in Merino, 2007: 174):

> While I was in Piacenza, I visited a monastery of «black monks» and when I accompanied a monk to the dormitory, so I only passed twice, I placed [in my memory] the names of the monks that were at the cell doors. Then, once we were reunited, I greeted them by their names one by one, although I couldn't identify them while I was naming them. The monks were amazed at how a stranger could pronounce their names by heart; as they did not cease in their admiration, I finally told them: «My memory did it». And one of them said: «Then, Petrus Ravennas did this, and nobody else»[33].

A walk back and forth down the corridor was enough for Petrus Ravennas to remember all the names written in the cells of that Benedictine convent. As we have shown, Romberch goes further in his speculation, proposing to use cells as

[30] See concretely Merino (2007: 168-179).

[31] «Nos ipsa experientia refellimus post Ravennatis auctoritatem».

[32] Merino (n. 29, p. 121) states that it might have been added when the book was already finished as a kind of echo of the preliminaries of the *Phoenix*. In this «experimentum» Ravennas confirms being able to remember twenty thousand allegations, seven thousand biblical authorities, one thousand verses by Ovid and two hundred «sententiae» by Cicero. In the preliminary texts, one can find a huge rage of Ravenna's exhibitions of memory before the Duchess of Ferrara, Bonifacio Marcio, Lancelotto Decio and many others.

[33] «Dum essem Placentiae, monasterium monachorum nigrorum intraui ut illud uiderem in dormitorioque eius comitante monacho quodam bis deambulans monachorum nomina quae in ostiis cellarum erant, collocaui; deinde congregatis eis nomine proprio quemlibet salutaui, licet quem nominabam digito demonstrare non potuissem. Mirabantur monachi quo pacto ego peregrinus nomina eorum memoriter proferrem; ipsis mirari non desinentibus dixi tandem: "Hoc potuit mea artificiosa memoria". Quorum unus dixit: "Ergo hoc Petrus Rauennas facere potuit et non alius"».

mnemonic places. Perhaps with this counter-anecdote Romberch was trying to defend that it is possible to emulate Ravennas' feat, despite how great he is depicted in his own story. In this sense, the names written on the cells would not be so different from the distinguishing marks proposed by Romberch.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Firstly, if Romberch's anecdote (and that of Petrus Ravennas) were true, different theories on the recreation of memories would have to be considered, especially in a case like this, in which memories become doctrinal elements. From a psychological perspective, people can re-build their memories, either when they bring them back to their minds or when somehow force themselves to change them (consciously or unconsciously)[34]. Furthermore, Penny (1997: 193) states that a biographic memory may be confused somewhere between usefulness and truthfulness. At this point (Penny, 1997: 194), she relates this idea with Steen Larsen, who explains that there are two kinds of memory, experienced events and reported events, being the later indirect to us. Both types of memory (and memories themselves) can interact and intermingle. Thus, the memory is no longer true, and it becomes useful, using the past to get something in the present; in this case, Romberch's doctrine on places. So, in a certain way, Romberch and Ravennas anecdotes can never be totally true.

Secondly, Romberch's initial mistake in recalling is due to the fact that he does not consider the rules to form places in the right manner. Specifically, Romberch forgets to differentiate each place, as he states when he first mentions this mistake: *one will be confused by the similitude of places* (f. 23r)[35]. Romberch is conscious that similitudes had led him to a wrong recalling: *not being the cells in the dormitory sufficiently differentiated* (f. 23r)[36]. Thus, if Romberch had made some marks to differentiate his mental places («something with which they could be distinguished on the outside», f. 23v[37]), there would not have been any similitude to confuse him. And once we imagine these *notae*, as they are called in other passages of the *Congestorium*, it will be easy to use cells as mental places. Inside a mental convent, we will have a huge range of *loci* to hold as many images as we want inside an architectonical building. So, this precept would also explain Romberch's ideas on multiplicity of

[34] Penny (1997: 199) picks up on Steven Rose's theory, according to which we re-create our memories every time we bring them back to mind. Carruthers (1990: 1-15, 46-79) explains how re-memoration generates a creative process with which memories are re-created every time we think of them. I would add that «ars memoriae» aims to make these memories precise and accurate.

[35] «Similitudine locorum conturbabitur».

[36] «Non habente cellarum dormitorii quantae sufficiebant differentias».

[37] «Quo forinsecus internoscerentur».

mental places, following modern texts in which it is stated that one should have as many places as necessary[38].

Moreover, although it is not mentioned here, we would like to add that this kind of errors lead to mistakes in the system, making it impossible to recall memories in a proper way. But respecting the mental walk through the place, errors may also be physical, attending to the origin of the Latin word, 'errare' means 'wander about, err'. Thus, we must think of mental wandering as the result of having lost the ordered sequence of places.

From a rhetorical point of view, Romberch exposes an «exemplum», which is a typical medieval practice, probably inherited from «artes praedicandi», as it is used for exposing moral content. As a result of the evolution of rhetorical *exempla*, we find this one in a logical context as a proof of true doctrine (Lacarra, 2021). This story aims to demonstrate the validity of the system in general, but also of the concrete rule on «differentia locorum», making it more trustful through some kind of sensual and material experience. In this sense we have been able to connect that experience to Petrus Ravennas' «experimentum» and boast; and to find out that Romberch approves using doors and windows in the art of memory, following both Cicero, and tradition. The clue is to put on a mark on them[39].

This example also sheds light into the development of the «artes memorativae» as a discipline, applying a sort of «scientific method». Romberch had an initial theory (apparently inherited) –cell doors cause confusion; and external advice is useful to develop another rule (apparently new) –a mark avoids confusion and cells are helpful. Thus, the system must be constantly refined and evolving: Romberch admits the new idea, improves it, and learns from his experience; or at least he wants readers to think so to encourage their own experience. This would be the reason why there cannot be a «ultimate memory treatise», not even a work as complete and complex as the *Congestorium* itself can be, although this is Romberch's intention.

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[38] This precept appears, for example, in Albertus Carrara's text («Mihi vero facillimum videtur non modo centum, sed propemodum infinitos locos effingere, cum neminem lateat situs civitatis originalis»; f. 114) and in Petrus Ravennas' (2007: 142: «Et si quis locorum copiam habere cupiat, hoc ordine monasterium intret et illud totum locis impleat, aut in parietibus extra ecclesiam sibi loca comparetet qui multa uoluerit meminisse, multa sibi loca comparare debet. Ego autem quia omnes homines Italiae copia rerum absque chartarum reuolutione superare uolui, in Sacris scripturis, iure canonico ciuilique et aliis multarum rerum auctoritatibus, dum essem adolescens mihi centum millia locorum parаui et nunc ipsis decem millia addidi, in quibus per me dicenda posui, ut in promptu sint. Quando memoriae uires experiri cupio»).

[39] In fact, this example is not the only passage in which Romberch confirms it: «[loci] in quibus imaginamur differentias ianuarum, parietum et reliquorum quae novimus ad cuiuslibet statum pertinere» (f. 14r).

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