

The latter half of Book XI of Augustine’s *Confessions* poses an unforgettable question: “What is time?” It remains unclear, however, what kind of answer Augustine winds up giving us, if he gives us one at all.

Today I aim to sketch out two responses to Augustine’s question in *Conf.* XI. On the one hand, Augustine alleviates some of the incomprehensibility of temporality by positing a threefold present, which provides a basis for our lived experience of memory, attention, and anticipation. This threefold present redeems the idea of a present time, which Augustine spends much of the rest of Book XI debunking due to the impossibility of delineating the present as a ‘now’ or instant.

On the other hand, Augustine also describes time as *distentio*: a stretching-apart that pulls the soul in different temporal directions. Instead of re-founding the present time, Augustine’s description of unstable *distentio* comes out of a sense of how disorienting it is to live in the flux of a time without present. Whereas the threefold present seemed to solve some of the paradoxes involved in time by bringing the present back to life, *distentio* seeks to explain time in the wake of that present’s death.

The question that remains, then, is whether or not *distentio* and the threefold present are doing the same kind of work in *Conf.* XI. In my view, careful examination of the text reveals the threefold present to be a solution only to the problem of temporal measurement, which is merely a subset of Augustine’s larger list of concerns about time. Consequently, if we want to talk about the question of ‘time itself,’ we will have to focus our efforts instead on puzzling through the mystery of *distentio*. Before we reach that point, however, we should talk a little about what role the threefold present is serving here, and why exactly it falls short as a response to the question of time.

We mustn't forget, of course, that Augustine's analysis is embedded within an exegetical framework. It's the interpretation of Genesis 1 that stirs Augustine to reflect on time and creation throughout the closing books of his *Confessions*. It would take us too far afield here to reconstruct the entire scope of his cosmological inquiries, but we should at least mention his response to those who would question the doctrine of creation on the basis of their own misguided opinions about time and eternity. Of such critics, he gives the following account to his God:

They don't yet understand how those things are made which are made through you and in you. Yet they try to know eternal things, but their heart is still flying around in the past and future movements of things. Their heart is still empty. Who will hold it and fix it in place, so that it can stand a little bit and grasp, just a little bit, the splendor of eternity, which is always 'standing?' So that it can compare eternity with the times, which never stand, and see that they are incomparable? So that it can see that a long time does not become 'long' except out of many movementsⁱ which pass away and are not able to be stretched out all at once? And that in the eternal, moreover, nothing passes away, but rather the whole is present? But that no time is present as a whole?ⁱⁱ

Here, in this address to the divine, we find a brief sketch of the problems motivating the rest of Book XI. Caught up in time's instabilities, the presumptive thinker is never quite able to grasp the mechanics of temporal measurement, let alone deeper truths about the nature of temporality itself. In the intricate folds of a long-form, clause-packed question, Augustine hints (through indirect speech) at the destruction of the present that he's about to set in motion. *Nullum vero tempus totum esse praesens*—"but no time is present as a whole." The dichotomy between time and timeless eternity is made clear, and all future investigations into temporality will have to preserve this insight into the lack of presence in time—that is, if they aim to talk about time properly.

A few chapters later, we find Augustine’s memorable question about time. There we find too a more substantive claim about the relationship between time and non-being. When discussing the three tense-like aspects of time—past, present, future—Augustine writes:

In what way, then, ‘are’ those two times, past and future, when the past ‘is’ no longer and the future ‘is’ not yet? The present, moreover, if it were always present and did not pass away into the past, would no longer be time, but eternity. In order that there be time, then, the present is created for this reason [*ideo*]—namely, to [*quia*] pass over into the past.ⁱⁱⁱ How, then, can we also say that this present ‘is,’ whose reason [*causa*] for being is that it will not be? That is to say: is it that we cannot say in truth that time ‘is,’ unless because it tends to not-be?^{iv}

Time, in order to be time, must tend or stretch towards non-being. For Augustine, this is a necessary consequence to his insight into the difference between time and eternity. But in this passage he only presses the matter so far. He doesn’t quite say that there is no present. Rather, he merely emphasizes its extreme fleetingness. But he’ll soon have reason to press his insight still further.

The occasion for Augustine’s destruction of the present is his reflection on the possibility of measuring things in time. This reflection leads him to repeat, in a different tenor, his claims about the non-being of time’s tense-like phases. The future is not yet—so how could we measure future things? The past is no longer—so how could we measure past things? The present, though, is there. Surely, then, we must measure what is present. But what, then, is the present? This is a question that carries at least as much weight as the greater question of which it is a part—namely, ‘what is time?’ If we try to delimit what the present is, we find that any span of time we isolate is always further divisible into past and future spans. The present is dissolved through a process of infinitesimal divisibility. As Augustine puts it:

Look at how the present time, which we found to be the only thing that ought to be called ‘long,’ has with difficulty been reduced to the span of one day. But let us break it apart even further. One day is not present as a whole. It is filled out with all twenty-four daytime and night-time hours. The first hour holds the rest as

‘going-to-be,’ the last as ‘having-passed-away,’ and, of course, one of the middle hours would hold those before itself to be past and those after itself to be future. Even an hour itself passes by little bits which flee away. Whatever part of it has flown away is past; whatever remains for it is future.^v

And a little further:

If we conceive of something temporal which could no longer be divided into any tiny little parts of movements—that alone is what could be called ‘present.’ And yet it flies immediately from future to past, so that it is stretched out by not even the smallest pause. For if it is stretched out, it is divided between past and future. But the present has no span.^{vi}

Here is where Augustine pushes his insight to the deepest possible level. *Praesens autem nullum habet spatium*—the present, however, has no span: no space, no duration. It couldn’t possibly have any. Whatever we mean by ‘the present’ cannot be delimited as an actual span in the flow of time. Augustine is showing us how our tense-like division of temporality into past, present, and future just doesn’t hold up under scrutiny. And the present, the supposed hinge in time that ties past and future together, is the weak link that Augustine breaks open in order to make himself heard.

But it’s here, at time’s darkest hour, that Augustine brings us to what has been called the ‘threefold present.’ Though he strips the present bare and reveals its nothingness, Augustine concedes that this insight doesn’t undermine every aspect of our conventional experience of time. Expressing measurement in terms of a coherent tense-structure of past, present, and future may have failed, and yet we do still measure things in time. To explain how this can be the case, we have to look not to the nature of time itself, but rather to the structure of human temporal experience. As Augustine writes:

Neither future nor past things are, and it is not correct to say: “there are three times—past, present, and future.” Rather, it would perhaps be more correct to say: “there are three times—the present time concerning what has passed away; the present time concerning what is ‘there;’ and the present time concerning what will be.”^{vii} These three somethings are in the living soul. I do not see them

anywhere else. The present time having to do with past things is memory. The present time having to do with present things is watching-over [*contuitus*].^{viii} The present time having to do with future things is expectation.^{ix}

What Augustine is doing here is shifting the tense-like structure of past, present, and future away from time itself and onto human temporal experience. The past is not—yet we remember. The future is not—yet we anticipate. The present is not—and yet we watch over and interact with the temporal world. And where are these three phases? It turns out that they’re not inherent in time, but rather aspects of the *anima*. There Augustine sees them, and nowhere else.

So, it seems, Augustine has redeemed *praesens tempus*. But in what sense has he done so? It’s clear that the soul’s work of remembering, watching, and expecting occurs in the *praesens* of that soul—that is, in its own ongoing life and activity. When I remember the past, I’m not in the past—I remember as I currently live on in the flow of time. This is the ongoing presence of temporal experience.^x But that is a far cry from reinstituting ‘the present’ as a distinct phase within time itself. To make sure we understand this, Augustine continues:

And yet how do we measure the present time, when it has no span? We measure as it passes by. But when it has passed by, it is not measured.^{xi} For what could be measured would not be. But where is time passing ‘from,’ ‘through,’ or ‘to’ as we measure it? Where is it coming from if not the future? What is it passing through if not the present? What is it passing over to if not the past? Time passes, then, from what is not yet, through what lacks any span, and into what no longer is.^{xii}

The present time is still afflicted by a lack of span. The measuring activity of the human soul continues on in flowing time, but the non-being that lies at the heart of temporality is not thereby eradicated. The threefold present is in fact an account of the soul’s reaction to living under time’s conditions and constraints. It is because there is no real present that we must have an ongoing, fluid kind of presence to our own temporal experience—a kind of presence that’s always varying and fluctuating between *memoria*, *contuitus*, and *expectatio*.

The distinction between time itself and temporal experience matters here. If we don't keep it in mind, we risk missing much of the intellectual potential reverberating throughout Book XI. We risk reducing Augustine's unsettling interrogation of temporality to a simplistic structure of “setting 'em up and knocking 'em down.” It is not that Augustine raises the possibility of the present's non-being only to re-found it on the supposedly higher level of the soul. The threefold present responds to certain problems in temporal measurement, but it doesn't provide us with a satisfactory answer to the question “What is time?” The non-being of the present, in fact, lives on in Book XI after the discussion of the threefold present has come and gone. What it leads us to isn't the reconstitution of ‘present time’ via the soul, but instead Augustine's disarming definition of time as *distentio animi*.

One potential counterpoint to this claim would be to say, “Well, what Augustine's really after in Book XI isn't time itself at all; it's the soul. His definition of time is really just a means of getting at the work the soul does to lift itself out of time's instability.” Such an objection has the strength of seeing the ineradicable link between time and the soul in Augustine, but in doing so it risks blurring the remaining boundaries between the two. For Augustine, an understanding of time is key to an understanding of the soul—this is true. But that doesn't mean that describing the soul's experience of time is equal to working out the question of what time itself might be.

When trying to clarify his own aims in Book XI, Augustine writes quite starkly: “I want to know the force and nature of time.”^{xiii} Unsatisfied with cataloguing the various ways we might remember, engage with, or anticipate things in time, Augustine wants to dig deeper. The *vis temporis*, the *natura temporis*—these are the words he uses to mark out his target. But if time is something more than its measurement—something more, too, than the bodies that move through it—then what, finally, can we say that it is? “I see,” confesses Augustine, “that time is

some kind of stretching-out [*distentio*]. But do I see it? Or do I appear to be seeing myself?”^{xiv} Augustine’s question here encapsulates our whole problem. Is *distentio* time? Or is it just another name for my temporal experience? That is to say: is it merely identical to the threefold present discussed above?

Augustine comes at this problem by asking himself what it is that time’s *distentio* is stretching apart. As he writes: “it has become clear to me that time is nothing other than a stretching-apart. But I do not know what ‘thing’ is being stretched apart, if it is not, strangely, the soul itself!”^{xv} Here the interpreter of Augustine reaches a fork in the road. Either we take Augustine to be saying that the soul actively ‘stretches out’ and so compensates for time’s non-being, or we take him to be saying that the soul is passively ‘stretched out’ by time itself. If the soul is the agent here, we could say that the threefold present and *distentio animi* are identical. *Distentio* would thus be the soul’s victory over time in time, by way of *memoria*, *contuitus*, and *expectatio*.

But if, conversely, we take Augustine to be saying that the soul undergoes *distentio* in time, then we have an interpretation that more suitably fits the earlier chapters of Book XI. If Augustine defines time as the stretching-apart *of* the soul—in the sense of an objective genitive—then he preserves his earlier distinction between temporal experience and the nature of time itself. In this case, the force of time would be the *distentio* it operates on humans who live in time, whereas the threefold present would be a reaction to that stretched-out condition, a reaction which makes our temporal experience at least minimally coherent.

Despite that minimal coherence, though, the temporal present itself would remain dead and buried. The definition of time as *distentio animi* has given us no reason to resuscitate it. In fact, as the closing passages of Book XI show, *distentio* is not so much a victory for the soul as

its greatest wound, its ongoing suffering. *Distentio* is not a sign of the soul’s strength, its robust ability to stabilize itself amidst time’s instabilities—it is instead an affliction standing in need of a cure. And, for Augustine, such a cure arrives not now, but later; it arrives not with the first irruption of eternity into time, but only with the second:

Look at how my life is a stretching-apart. [*distentio*] Your right hand picked me up and brought me to my Lord, the human mediator. He mediates between you, who are One, and us, who are many. We are in many things and we pass through many things. And You brought me to Him, so that I might take hold of Him by whom I was already held, so that I might be gathered up from my aged days and chase after one thing, having forgotten all that has passed away—so that I might chase not after those things that are going to be and pass away, but after those things that are ‘before,’^{xvi} so that I might be stretched out, not torn apart; so that I might chase after that victory palm of the calling from above, not distractedly but intently. If I could win this palm, I would hear a voice of praise and contemplate your delight, which neither arrives nor passes away. Now, of course, my years are full of groans. You are my relief, Lord. You are eternal, my father. But I am ripped apart in times. I have no idea what their order is. My thoughts and the innermost guts of my soul will be torn to shreds by unstable differences until I flow into you, purified and melted down by the fire of your love.^{xvii}

From this kind of *distentio*, no threefold present could free us. The temporal present—as a real phase of time, as a kind of presence that could truly be separated from the twin absences of past and future—remains an impossible dream. Even the Incarnation here signals only the possible overcoming of time, only the potential establishment of a present that would be truly present. But Augustine is careful to defer the actual accomplishment of such a feat until the end—until the very end, the eschaton, the *parousia*.

Upon reaching the end of Book XI, then, we find that Augustine hasn’t solved the question of time by appealing to the threefold present. The work of the soul is a reaction to time, not the constitution of time itself. Time, as an aspect of creation, remains the cosmic *distentio* that acts on souls, without ever being reducible to their activity. What remains for us to do is to let Augustine’s account of time’s activity and the soul’s receptivity be as destabilizing and

disarming as it is. Only then will we be able to properly relate Book XI to all the other moments in Augustine where we find him emphasizing instability and passivity—in his retelling of his own conversion, for example, or in his advocacy for the primacy of grace. But those are topics for another time. For now, let’s be content to say that, in Book XI of the *Confessions*, Augustine leaves time an open question.

ⁱ O’Donnell and Watt both have *motibus* (movements) here, whereas the CCSL has *morulis* (from *morula*, the diminutive of *mora*; i.e. ‘a little span or delay’) in order to cohere with a *quae* in the following part of the sentence. O’Donnell is followed here, because Augustine usually takes *morae* to be divisible. The present, if it had a *mora*, would be divisible into past and present, for example. And since the point here is to talk about something that cannot be stretched out, *mora* does not seem to work.

ⁱⁱ *Conf.* XI.xi.13: *nondum intellegunt quomodo fiant quae per te atque in te fiunt, et conantur aeterna sapere, sed adhuc in praeteritis et futuris rerum motibus cor eorum volitat et adhuc vanum est. quis tenebit illud et figet illud, ut*

paululum stet, et paululum rapiat splendorem semper stantis aeternitatis, et comparet cum temporibus numquam stantibus, et videat esse incomparabilem, et videat longum tempus, nisi ex multis praetereuntibus motibus qui simul extendi non possunt, longum non fieri; non autem praeterire quicquam in aeterno, sed totum esse praesens; nullum vero tempus totum esse praesens...

ⁱⁱⁱ A more fluid but looser translation of this line might be: “In order that there be time, then, the present is constituted by its passing into the past.”

^{iv} *Conf. XI.xiv.17: duo ergo illa tempora, praeteritum et futurum, quomodo sunt, quando et praeteritum iam non est et futurum nondum est? praesens autem si semper esset praesens nec in praeteritum transiret, non iam esset tempus, sed aeternitas. si ergo praesens, ut tempus sit, ideo fit, quia in praeteritum transit, quomodo et hoc esse dicimus, cui causa, ut sit, illa est, quia non erit, ut scilicet non vere dicamus tempus esse, nisi quia tendit non esse?* This passage poses some difficulties to the translator, especially the line about the present ‘being made for the reason that it pass into the past.’ The above rendering hews as closely as possible to the *ideo-quia* structure, which most likely means: ‘for this reason / namely, the following reason.’ This then ties into ‘*causa*’ as cause in the following clause. The ‘cause’ of the present’s ‘creation’ is quite literally its own not-being. In addition, the closing *tendit* could be given in many ways that would more fully express the imagery at work. Time could be said to ‘strive’ or ‘stretch into’ or ‘reach out’ into non-being. ‘Tend’ is preserved here in order to highlight the possible connection to other *tendere*-words later on, such as *distentio*, *attentio*, *intentio*, and *extentio*.

^v *Conf. X.xv.20: ecce praesens tempus, quod solum inveniebamus longum appellandum, vix ad unius diei spatium contractum est. sed discutiamus etiam ipsum, quia nec unus dies totus est praesens. nocturnis enim et diurnis horis omnibus viginti quattuor expletur, quarum prima ceteras futuras habet, novissima praeteritas, aliqua vero interiectarum ante se praeteritas, post se futuras. et ipsa una hora fugitivis particulis agitur. quidquid eius avolavit, praeteritum est, quidquid ei restat, futurum.*

^{vi} *Conf. XI.xv.20: si quid intellegitur temporis, quod in nullas iam vel minutissimas momentorum partes dividi possit, id solum est quod praesens dicatur; quod tamen ita raptim a futuro in praeteritum transvolat, ut nulla morula extendatur. nam si extenditur, dividitur in praeteritum et futurum; praesens autem nullum habet spatium.* Henceforth, ‘*spatium*’ will usually be translated as ‘span,’ since speaking of a ‘space of time’ makes sense only part of the time in English. In this passage we also find *morula*, the word which Verheijen interposed into *Conf. XI.xi.13* above. Here, however, the ‘briefest of delays’ makes much more sense, since it is being used to show how a proper present could not consist even in the most minimal *mora*.

^{vii} This translation has been adopted in order to highlight the experiential dimension to the divisions Augustine is drawing out. In order to think these divisions through, it is helpful to break down the words he is using and so to see what kind of connections (between the three tenses and the three kinds of temporal objects) were possible in the Latin. *Praesens*, “present,” consists of *prae* (near, by, in front of) and *sens* (‘being,’ the present participle of *esse*). *Praeteritum*, “past,” consists of *praeter* (beyond, away) + *itus* (‘having gone,’ past participle of *ire*). *Futurum* is the neuter of the future active participle of *esse*—i.e., ‘what is going to be.’ By paying careful attention to the constitution of these words in the Latin, we can hopefully avoid falling back into ready-made assumptions about what exactly distinguishes past, present, and future from one another.

^{viii} *Contuitus* is an odd word for Augustine to introduce here. It could just mean “sight” or something equally benign. Still, Augustine often chose his words carefully, and so there is always the chance that he is suggesting something more than *visio* here. In *contuitus*, the affix *con-* (with, together) is set before *tueri*, a deponent verb meaning ‘to watch, look, guard, protect, keep.’ (The word—*con-tueor, contuitus*—is built on the same model as *in-tueor, intuitus*, intuition.) It remains to be determined what the substantive difference might be between, say, intuition and ‘contuition.’ Is *contuitus* what emerges after time and the present have been critically rethought? Rather than focusing (*intentio*), or looking-at (*intuitus*), *contuitus* might be a kind of ‘seeing’ that takes account of the human inability to ‘focus,’ to direct intentionality towards one thing and hold it there. *Contuitus* would then be a seeing (or watching-over) on the basis of *distentio (animi)*, as opposed to a totally rehabilitated *intentio*.

^{ix} *Conf. XI.xx.26: nec futura sunt nec praeterita, nec proprie dicitur, `tempora sunt tria, praeteritum, praesens, et futurum,' sed fortasse proprie diceretur, `tempora sunt tria, praesens de praeteritis, praesens de praesentibus, praesens de futuris.' sunt enim haec in anima tria quaedam et alibi ea non video, praesens de praeteritis memoria, praesens de praesentibus contuitus, praesens de futuris expectatio.*

^x Cf. *Conf. XI.xxviii.37: nam et expectat et attendit et meminit, ut id quod expectat per id quod attendit transeat in id quod meminerit. quis igitur negat futura nondum esse? sed tamen iam est in animo expectatio futurorum. et quis negat praeterita iam non esse? sed tamen adhuc est in animo memoria praeteritorum. et quis negat praesens tempus carere spatio, quia in puncto praeterit? sed tamen perdurat attentio, per quam pergat abesse quod aderit.* / “The soul awaits, attends, and remembers. What it awaits passes over into what it remembers by means of what it pays

attention to. Who, then, would deny that things which are going to be are not yet? And yet already, in the soul, there is an awaiting for things that are going to be. And who would deny that things that have passed away no longer are? And yet still, in the soul, there is a memory of past things. And again, who would deny that present time lacks any span, because it passes in a point? And yet attention—through which what will be there passes through to absence—endures.” The words *expectare* and *expectatio* are given above as ‘to await,’ because Augustine’s description is not limited to expectations of fully defined futures. ‘Expectation’ thus seemed to pre-laden here, while ‘awaiting’ makes more sense, given the finite and fragile scope of the soul’s view of the future. Augustine’s use of *adesse* in the last sense also shows that what is primarily at stake here is not a present *punctum*, but rather the experiential ‘presence’ (or being-there, *ad-esse*) of some intentional object, as it passes from the future into the past.

^{xi} There is an awkward switch here between *metimur* and *metitur/metiatur*. *Metior* is a deponent verb, which means that attempts to use it in the passive sense (as Augustine seems to be doing here) are befuddling. The CCSL edition notes that some versions repeat “*metimur*” instead.

^{xii} *Conf. XI.xxi.27: praesens vero tempus quomodo metimur, quando non habet spatium? metitur ergo cum praeterit, cum autem praeterierit, non metitur; quid enim metiatur non erit. sed unde et qua et quo praeterit, cum metitur? unde nisi ex futuro? qua nisi per praesens? quo nisi in praeteritum? ex illo ergo quod nondum est, per illud quod spatio caret, in illud quod iam non est. quid autem metimur nisi tempus in aliquo spatio?* The Latin *spatium* would be most literally ‘room’ or ‘extent.’ With regard to time, it often means ‘span,’ ‘interval,’ or ‘period.’

^{xiii} *Conf. XI.xxiii.30: ego scire cupio vim naturamque temporis, quo metimur corporum motus et dicimus illum motum verbi gratia tempore duplo esse diuturniorem quam istum.*

^{xiv} *Conf. XI.xxiii.30: video igitur tempus quandam esse distentionem. sed video? an videre mihi videor? tu demonstrabis, lux, veritas.* Augustine’s term *distentio* comes from *distendere*, ‘to stretch apart,’ which is in turn made up of *di(s)-* (‘apart, asunder, in two’) and *tendere*, ‘to stretch, exert, strain, reach out.’ Words based on *tendere* tend to proliferate in Augustine, and especially so here in Book XI, where we have *intentio*, *extentio*, and *attentio*, in addition to this odd yet pivotal use of *distentio*.

^{xv} *Conf. XI.xxvi.33: inde mihi visum est nihil esse aliud tempus quam distentionem; sed cuius rei, nescio, et mirum, si non ipsius animi. quid enim metior, obsecro, deus meus?*

^{xvi} *Conf. XI.xxix.39: ecce distentio est vita mea, et me suscepit dextera tua in domino meo, mediatore filio hominis inter te unum et nos multos, in multis per multa, ut per eum apprehendam in quo et apprehensus sum, et a veteribus diebus conligar sequens unum, praeterita oblitus, non in ea quae futura et transitura sunt, sed in ea quae ante sunt...* (This passage continues, and will be picked up in the next block quotation below.) Augustine’s invocation of the Latinized Pauline *ante* leads us to a strange contrast between the *futura et transitura* (the going-to-be-and-going-to-pass-away) and the ‘before.’ *Ante* can mean ‘ahead of’ in a spatial sense, but here we are talking about time, where *ante* usually means ‘before’ as in ‘antecedent’ or ‘earlier.’ Augustine’s goal is not entirely futural but is also “earlier.” It is in fact the “earliest” thing—*aeternitas*, which has priority over time according to the logic of creation. To place eternity merely in the future would be to commit the error of thinking that it is an everlasting duration to continue after the eschaton. Yet what Augustine is after is, as we saw above, pure timelessness. *Aeternitas* is not only something to ‘look forward to,’ but also something that can be ‘looked back to’ or just ‘looked at’ as we experience life in passing.

^{xvii} *Conf. XI.xxix.39: non distentus sed extentus, non secundum distentionem sed secundum intentionem sequor ad palmam supernae vocationis, ubi audiam vocem laudis et contempler delectationem tuam nec venientem nec praetereuntem. nunc vero anni mei in gemitibus, et tu solacium meum, domine, pater meus aeternus es. at ego in tempora dissilui quorum ordinem nescio, et tumultuosis varietatibus dilaniantur cogitationes meae, intima viscera animae meae, donec in te confluam purgatus et liquidus igne amoris tui.* Both *distentus* and *extentus* can mean ‘stretched out,’ but the former has much more violent connotations of being pulled-apart. This can also have to do with the distraction of a life lived in temporal multiplicity. *Distentus* and *extentus* are both given here in the past passive participle, and so Augustine could be emphasizing how the soul receives *distentio* (from time) or *extentio* (from God?), rather than achieving these two modes of temporal experience of its own accord. *Secundum* is given as “pursuing” rather than “according to,” so that the connection to the follow “*sequor*” (“I pursue or follow”) is clear. Augustine’s text is picking up on the Pauline rhetoric of motion, which emphasizes life as something of a contested race, at least from an eschatological perspective.