To See Coming:
Augustine and Heidegger on the Arising and Passing Away of Things

We find one of the more affecting passages of the *Confessions* in its fourth book, when Augustine recounts the death of his unnamed, yet much mourned, friend. The devastation he feels at the loss of a loved one is soon compounded, as he meditates on the futility of lamenting the death of someone bound to die. This thought adds another layer of grief, which is as philosophical as it is personal. The question occurs to him: why would a temporal and embodied being act as if such beings lived forever? The mourning of the dead, seen from a cosmological perspective, results from the misrecognition of the mortal as immortal. 'I had spilt my soul upon the sand,' says Augustine, 'by loving someone who was going to die as if he was not going to die.'[1] But how else are we to see the world? What would it mean to transcend our mortal perspective without transcending our own mortality?

Augustine's *Ordo Modorum*

Augustine follows his account of loss with a reflection on the nature of the temporal world as a whole. This might strike us as odd, if we were expecting him to continue ruminating on his own feelings. Instead, we find an attempt to describe the shared coexistence of mortal bodies from something like a divine vantage point:

> All things arise and fall. By arising, it is as if they begin to be. They grow until they are mature. When they are mature, they grow old and perish. Not all things grow old, but all perish. And so while they are arising and stretching out towards being, by which they grow more quickly, so that they might be, they are also hastening away from being, so that they are not. This is their measure [*modus*]. You gave them this much, because they are 'parts' of things, which are not all

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[1] Augustine, *Confessions*, IV.viii: *fuderam in harenam animam meam, diligendo moriturum ac si non moriturum*. All translations from the *Confessions* are my own.

> together at once. Rather, by giving way and coming forth, all things 'perform' the universe of which they are the parts. […] God, creator of all, let my soul praise you for these things. But do not let it be stuck to them with the glue of love in its embodied experience. For they are going where they would go, so that they are not. They tear the soul to pieces with sickening desires, since it wants to *be* and yet loves to rest in the things it loves. But there is no rest in those things, since they do not stand still. They flee away. And who could follow them in incarnate experience? Or who could grasp them, even when they are right there?[2]

It is a kind of inescapable madness to love what, by its very definition, leaves so swiftly. There is no possibility of any 'grasping' or 'holding,' nor is there time for any mastering of the temporal. We have already been born into this world of fleeting things; we are those fleeting things. And yet this is not to be bemoaned, but praised. This confusing order of temporality derives, after all, from an eternal Creator. Time is sanctioned by timelessness. As humans, however, our access to the aforementioned 'divine vantage point' is severely limited. We can only look at temporality 'from the inside.' Augustine's point, of course, is not to detach time from eternity, as if he did not believe in the latter or was degrading it in some way.[3] Still, his obvious preference for the timeless should not lead us to deny that he is trying to describe the rise and fall of temporal beings precisely as temporal. His praise of eternity is never so loud that it drowns out what he has to say about time. In order to listen to Augustine more attentively, we

[2] Augustine, *Conf.* IV.x: *oriuntur et occidunt, et oriendo quasi esse incipiunt, et crescunt, ut perficiantur, et perfecta senescunt et intereunt: et non omnia senescunt et omnia intereunt. Ergo cum oriuntur et tendunt esse, quo magis celeriter crescunt, ut sint, eo magis festinant, ut non sint. Sic est modus eorum. Tantum dedisti eis, quia partes sunt rerum, quae non sunt omnes simul, sed decedendo ac succedendo agunt omnes universum, cuius partes sunt. Ecce sic peragitur et sermo noster per signa sonantia. Non enim erit totus sermo, si unum verbum non decedat, cum sonuerit partes suas, ut succedat aliud. Laudet te ex illis anima mea, deus, creator omnium, sed non eis infigatur glutine amore per sensus corporis. Eunt enim quo ibant, ut non sint, et conscindunt eam desideriis pestilentiosis, quoniam ipsa esse vult et requiescere amat in eis, quae amat. In illis autem non est ubi, quia non stant: fugiunt, et quis ea sequitur sensu carnis? Aut quis ea conprehendit, vel cum praesto sunt?*

[3] Augustine's 'preference' for eternity over time is so commonplace, both in his own writings and in patristic literature in general, that it is almost superfluous to list relevant passages. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that Book IV ends in avid expectation of a return to the timeless source; see *Conf.* IV.xvi: *non timemus, ne non sit quo redeamus, quia nos inde ruimus; nobis autem absentibus non ruit domus nostra, aeternitas tua*. / 'Let us not be afraid that we have no home to return to, since we fell out of it. Even though we are absent, our home, Your eternity, does not fall down.'

will have to interpret the above passage with great care. Only in this way can we begin to sketch out the logic of temporality it contains.

The measure or *modus* of things, according to Augustine, implies that they arise and pass away in relation to each other—one must fall so that another may come up to take its place. They are like 'parts' which fit together to make a 'whole' or *universum*. This fittingness is what is most pleasing to God, though it is so terrifying for us to contemplate in its totality. Even attempting to do so is a struggle for us. As Augustine explains:

> For incarnate experience is late, since it is incarnate experience: it is its own measure. It is sufficient for what it was made for, but it is not sufficient for this: to take hold of the things running by from their beginning to their end, both of which they owe [*debito*/*debitum*]. For in [God's] Word, through which they are created, they hear this: 'From here up to here.'[4]

This *hinc et huc usque* is the divine judgment of a thing's limits. The determination of a temporal thing is a product of the strange 'saying' of the *Logos* of God. The human, as incarnate, is limited by her own measure, and so has trouble seeing the *modus* of all things in relation to one another. And because this relational delimiting is temporal, the incarnate human will always feel 'late,' pulled along by the current of the river of time.[5] We wish we could ascend above all of these things and see them from the viewpoint of eternity, but this is a mark of pride, for our measure is just.[6] And so we must learn to appreciate the temporality of the embodied world as we live it. The paradigm of that temporality, for Augustine, is language, particularly speech. For a sentence to make sense, its syllables must give way so that others may come. Only when

[4] Ibid., IV.x: *Tardus est enim sensus carnis, quoniam sensus carnis est: ipse est modus eius. Sufficit ad aliud, ad quod factus est; ad illud autem non sufficit, ut teneat transcurrentia ab initio debito usque ad finem debitum. In verbo enim tuo, per quod creantur, ibi audiunt: hinc et huc usque*. It would be fair to translate *tardus* as 'slow,' although it is noteworthy that Augustine chose not to use *lentus* here. *Tardus* is here given as 'late' because of the theme of lateness which turns up elsewhere in the *Confessions*. Cf. X.xxvii: *Sero te amavi, pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova, sero te amavi! Debito* and *debitum*, likewise, are rendered in terms of 'owing,' as Augustine will use such a vocabulary in thematically similar passages, as discussed below. Translating them as 'appointed' would seem too weak and somewhat misleading, while 'destined' might assume too much.

[5] On the river of time, see Augustine, *Homilies on First John*, in *Augustine: Later Works*, II.x.

[6] Cf. Augustine, *Conf.* IV.xi.

all have arisen and passed away can we attempt to understand their meaning in some sort of definitive fashion. Augustine goes on to say that, in this regard, 'All things or parts which constitute one something are always like [speech]. Those which constitute the something cannot be altogether all at once. All things would be more pleasing than individual things, if all things could be experienced.'[7] Of course, for incarnate humanity all things can never be experienced altogether. Instead, we live in the 'not-being-together-all-at-once' of the temporal world.

Turning from Book IV to Books XI-XIII, we can see Augustine struggling to comprehend how this arising and passing away of all things, so unsettling at first glance, could be divinely mandated. According to his understanding of creation, all things come to be through the *Verbum Dei*, which does not arise and pass away like spoken words.[8] It is, on the contrary, utterly timeless, and yet in it 'all things are always being said.'[9] But what does it mean to say that the eternal Word always 'says' those things which 'are said' (or just 'are') in time? Perhaps this confusion arises because the *Verbum* here is more like a *ratio* than a *sermo*. The Greek *logos* can hold the meanings of the Latin *ratio* and *verbum* at once, and there are times when Augustine, lacking the Greek term, must force the latter two together. And that is just what we find here: 'Everything which begins to be and ceases to be,' he declares, 'begins to be and ceases at the time when it is thought that it ought [*debuisse*] to begin or cease. This thinking takes place in the eternal calculation [*ratio*], where nothing begins or ceases. This itself is [God's] Word.'[10]

[7] Ibid., IV.xi: *Nam et quod loquimur, per eundem sensum carnis audis, et non vis utique stare syllabas, sed transvolare, ut aliae veniant et totum audias. Ita semper omnia, quibus unum aliquid constat, et non sunt omnia simul ea, quibus constat: plus delectant omnia quam singula, si possint sentiri omnia*.

[8] This Word itself, of course, remains untouched by arising and passing; see ibid., IV.xi.

[9] Ibid., XI.vii: *Vocas itaque nos ad intellegendum verbum, deum apud te deum, quod sempiterne dicitur et eo sempiterne dicuntur omnia*.

[10] Ibid., XI.viii: *omne quod esse incipit et esse desinit, tunc esse incipit et tunc desinit, quando debuisse incipere vel desinere in aeterna ratione cognoscitur, ubi nec incipit aliquid nec desinit. Ipsum est verbum tuum, quod et principium est, quia et loquitur nobis*. The use of *debuisse* implies that temporal beings in some sense 'owe' their beginning and end like a debt. This debt is tallied up in some timeless accounting (*ratio*). And so the 'ought' here is less 'normative' (they 'should' pass away) than economic (they owe it).

The measures of all things would be found in such a calculation or account. Their temporal and bodily limits can then be expressed as 'debts' (hence the use of *debere*). Everything has come to be at the expense of others and will eventually give way to still more beings, all within their allotted *modus*. All creatures 'owe' their becoming and perishing to the diachronic structure of creation as a whole, which is the unfathomable universe of arising and passing away.

For Augustine, then, it is God who gives the measure; it is God who forms the world; and it is God who sets in place the order of things. Thanks to this Trinity—*modus*, *forma*, *ordo*—the temporal world, in its entirety, is beautiful and just.[11] Augustine calls it the 'entire, most beautiful order of very good things.'[12] The condition of being measured, delimited, defined, formed, embodied—to live and die in time, to live incompletely through time like a half-spoken sentence—this is what is divinely pleasing. But what are we to do with this unsettling wisdom? Is it simply that the Word determines the measure of the universe, according to its inhuman judgment of beauty, and that is all? No—the Word became flesh. The *Logos* experienced the lateness of incarnate life. Given this sanctification of the flesh, then, is there a way to see the world according to its divine *modus*, *forma*, and *ordo*, without falling prey to the vain presumption of an eternal perspective? Is there a way to see the world 'temporally?'

The Shepherd as *Mantis*: Everything Presences Together

Before pursuing that question, it might be helpful to set this account of arising and passing away alongside Heidegger's writings on the genesis and decay of beings. Our focus will be on his essay 'Anaximander's Saying,' which purports to be a reading of one of the sparse fragments attributed to the pre-Socratic from Miletus. In the transliterated Greek, the lacuna-

[11] In his commentary on *Conf.* I.vii.12, O'Donnell provides a summary discussion of this trinity (*modus*, *forma*, *ordo*) in Augustine's thought. *Ordo* also seems to be linked to Augustine's understanding of weight (*pondus*). Weight is the force that draws everything into its proper place, and thus into an order. On this, see Marion, 2011.
[12] Augustine, *Conf.* XIII.xxxv: *omnis quippe iste ordo pulcherrimus rerum valde bonarum*…

filled passage is as follows: '*a… archēn … eirēke tōn ontōn to apeiron … ex hōn de hē genesis esti tois ousi, kai tēn phthoran eis tauta ginesthai kata to chreōn · didonai gar auta dikēn kai tisin allēlois tēs adikias kata tēn tou chronou taxin*.'[13] Heidegger, for reasons either philological or philosophical, shortens the fragment to: '*…kata to chreōn · didonai gar auta dikēn kai tisin allēlois tēs adikias*.' He then renders this into aphoristic German as: '*entlang dem Brauch; gehören nämlich lassen sie Fug somit auch Ruch eines dem anderen (im Verwinden) des Un-Fugs*.'[14] Following the standard English translation of Heidegger, we finally arrive at the following: 'along the lines of usage; for they [i.e., beings] let order and reck belong to one another (in the surmounting) of dis-order.'[15]

The point of this arduous march through Greek and German is obviously not to lead us to a better grasp of what the '*apeiron*' meant in ancient Miletus. Rather, Heidegger is trying to interpret the passage constructively, so that he can then say something more broadly about the interrelationship between beings in time. Accordingly, the essay does not limit itself to these few words of Anaximander. Heidegger pursues his line of questioning even further back into the depths of Greek literature. And so we find his most explicit account of arising and passing away within a meditation on the meaning of *ta eonta*, the archaic plural used in Homer's *Iliad* to describe what is, was, and will be, as seen by Calchas the augur. Rather than recounting

[13] Diels and Kranz, 1974, 89. In the earlier editions, Diels gave the German for this fragment as: '*Anfang der Dinge ist das Unendliche. Woraus aber ihnen die Geburt ist, dahin geht auch ihr Sterben nach der Notwendigkeit. Denn sie zahlen einander Strafe und Buße für ihre Ruchlosigkeit nach der Zeit Ordnung*.' This is the 'standard' version as quoted by Heidegger at the beginning of his essay (p. 296). In the later editions of Diels and Kranz, we find an altered, perhaps more careful rendering: '*Anfang und Ursprung der seienden Dinge ist das Apeiron (das grenzenlos-Unbestimmbare). Woraus aber das Werden ist den seienden Dingen, in das hinein geschicht auch ihr Vergehen nach der Schuldigkeit; denn sie zahlen einander gerechte Strafe und Buße für ihre Ungerechtigkeit nach der Zeit Anordnung*.'

[14] Heidegger, 1946, 342.

[15] Heidegger, 1946, ET, 280. An arguably more intelligible translation of the (full) fragment from Diels can be found in Freeman, 1957, 19: 'The non-limited is the original material of existing things; further, the source from which existing things derive their existence is also that to which they return at their destruction, according to necessity; for they give justice and make reparation to one another for their injustice, according to the arrangement of time.' Freeman based her work on the fifth edition of Diels.

Heidegger's reading of Homer proper, here we should focus only on his expansive reflection on *ta eonta* in terms of temporality:

> *Ta eonta* ambiguously names both the presently and un-presently present—the latter, understood with reference to the former, constituting the absent. The presently present, however, is not something that lies, like a severed slice, sandwiched between two absences. […] That which stands presently in unconcealment stays [*weilt*] in it as the open region. That which presently stays or whiles in that region comes forth into it, into unconcealment, from out of concealment. But the arrival which stays *is* what is present insofar as it is already on its way from unconcealment into concealment. The presently present stays awhile. It lingers in coming forth and going away. The stay is the transition from coming to going. What is present is what, in each case, lingers awhile.[16]

Beings, as temporal, arise, linger, and pass away. This temporality does not permit itself to be divided into instants or moments of past, present, and future.[17] Here we must reconsider time in terms of what Heidegger calls 'presencing,' which cannot be severed into discrete units. To do so would be to lose the rhythm of the becoming of beings, which flows out of the concealed absence of the future and disappears into that of the past. The so-called presently present is in fact the product of these twin absences. The solidity of the present thing dissolves into the presence of that which 'lingers still in arrival and lingers already in departure.'[18]

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[16] Heidegger, 1946, 322-323; ET, 263-264. Again, as with his use of Anaximander, Heidegger is reading Homer with an eye to constructive thinking, in such a way that the historically probable interpretation of the original text might seem to be left behind.

[17] Ibid., 319-320; ET, 261: 'When we latecomers speak of 'the present' either we mean what is 'now'—representing this as something that is within time, the 'now' counting as a phase within the flow of time—or we bring 'present' into relation to the objective. … But *eonta* [the being or beings] embraces, too, what is past and what is in the future. Both constitute a way of being a present being, namely, being an unpresently present being. Clarifying matters, the Greeks called the presently present *ta pareonta*; *para* means 'alongside,' that is, having arrived alongside in unconcealment. The '*gegen*' in '*gegenwärtig*' does not mean standing over against a subject, but rather the open region of unconcealment into and within which that which has arrived lingers. Accordingly, 'present,' as a trait of the *eonta*, is equivalent to: having arrived for a while within the region of unconcealment. … [But what] is past and future are also present—present, that is to say, outside the region of unconcealment. The unpresently present is the absent. … [But the] absent is also present and, as absent from it, presences in unconcealment. Both what is past and what is to come are *eonta*. Accordingly, *eōn* means: presencing in unconcealment. This clarification of *eonta* reveals that within Greek experience, too, that which is present remains ambiguous, indeed necessarily so. *Ta eonta* means on the one hand the presently present, on the other, however, both the presently and unpresently present.'

[18] Ibid., 322-323; ET, 263-264; cf., from the same pages: 'What is for the time being present, the presently present, presences out of absence. This must be said precisely of whatever is truly present, which our usual mode of representation would like to segregate from all that is absent.'

This horizontal account of presence, the melody of Being, is accompanied by a certain harmony. 'Everything,' writes Heidegger, 'presences together.'[19] In addition to relating to the future and the past (which are no less present than the present), each being relates to the others. *Ta eonta* 'names the unified multiplicity of whatever stays awhile. To the extent it is present in unconcealment, everything presences, in its own way, to everything else.'[20] Just as beings ought not to be detached from their temporal context, so they should not be torn from these relations of reciprocal becoming. This structural joining is for Heidegger the true meaning of *logos*—the gathering of beings.[21] In our obsession with 'present things,' with reifying beings and trying to hold on to them instead of acknowledging the temporality of their presencing, this *logos* is concealed from us. But, as human beings, we too are already part of this gathering.

The song of Being is thus made up of the melody of temporality and the harmony of relationality. But what happens when this song is played out of tune? It is in response to this question that Heidegger offers up the version of Anaximander cited above: 'along the lines of usage; for they [i.e., beings] let order and reck belong to one another (in the surmounting) of dis-order.' The Greek *dikē*, 'justice,' here becomes the order of beings as they arise and pass away in relation to one another.[22] As they presence together, beings accord each other 'reck.' This archaic word survives in the English 'reckless,' which indicates a lack of care. And so we could read this 'reck' as a kind of non-human care—that is, a way in which beings relate to one another over time. When beings give each other reck, they let one another 'be.'[23] Here it is not a matter

[19] Ibid., 322: '*west alles zusammen*.'
[20] Ibid., 323; ET, 264: '*ta eonta nennt die einige Mannigfaltigkeit des Je-weiligen. Jedes dergestalt in die Unverborgenheit Anwesende west je nach seiner Weise zu jedem anderen an*.'
[21] Ibid., 325-326; ET, 265-266. On *logos* as gathering, see also Heidegger, 1935, 135-142.
[22] Heidegger, 1946, 326-327; ET, 267.
[23] On reck, see ibid., 332-333; ET, 272: 'Insofar as things which stay awhile are not entirely abandoned to the boundless fixation on aggrandizing themselves into sheerly persisting continuants… they let order belong, *didonai dikēn*. Insofar as things which stay awhile give order they thereby allow, in their relationship to each other, reck to belong, in every case, each allowing it to belong to the other, *didonai… kai tisin allēlois*. Only when we have

of human *Dasein* deigning to let beings be or not. This letting, irreducible to a subjective act, is an aspect of the way in which beings come to presence or 'happen.' There always remains, however, the possibility of cacophonous disorder—*adikia*.[24] *Adikia* is the disjunction that occurs whenever that which comes to presence attempts to assert itself by holding on to its own presence at the expense of other beings. This unjust being refuses to accord reck and does not let other beings be. Instead, it seeks its own continuation, pursuing an endless presence at any cost. And so the being's temporality and relationality are forgotten. The melody falls apart and the harmony becomes discordant.

If, through the temporality of presencing and the reciprocity of relations, Being sets in motion the history of definitions, delimitations, and determinations, what task is left to humanity? The human, Heidegger warns us, can no longer be considered the master of beings. Rather, the human is the shepherd of Being.[25] The shepherd is the one who watches over the temporal gathering. As shepherds of *Being*, not of beings, it is not our role to preserve beings in their particularity (thus risking *adikia*), but to instead remember the rhythm in which they arise and pass away. Only in this way do we let beings be. The shepherd must be something like what Heidegger, philosophically appropriating Homer's Calchas, calls the *mantis* or seer—one who

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thought *ta eonta* as what presences, and this as the totality of what presences awhile, does *allēlois* receive the significance it has in the saying: within the open region of unconcealment each tarrying thing becomes present to all the others. As long as we fail to think the *ta eonta*, *allēlois* remains the name of some indeterminate reciprocity within a blurred multiplicity. … When the things that presence give order, they do it by, as things that stay awhile, according each other reck. The surmounting of disorder properly occurs through the letting-belong of reck.'

[24] Ibid., 328; ET, 268: 'The dis-jointure consists in the fact that what stays awhile tries to have its while understood only as continuation. Thought from out of the jointure of the while, staying as persistence is insurrection on behalf of sheer endurance. In presencing as such—presencing which lets everything that presences stay in the region of unconcealment—continuance asserts itself. In this rebellious whiling, that which stays awhile insists on sheer continuation. It presences, therefore, without and against the jointure of the while. The saying does not say that everything that presences loses itself in the dis-jointure. It says, rather, that that which stays awhile with a view to dis-jointure, *didonai dikēn*, gives jointure.'

[25] See Heidegger, 1947, 34, for the opposition between '*der Herr des Seienden*' and '*der Hirt des Seins.*'

can see outside oneself and thus become attuned to the *ek-stasis* of Being.[26] Far from conceiving 'what is' as the seemingly obvious stability of the now-present thing, the *mantis* attends to the tension of beings in their Being: 'For the seer, everything present and absent is gathered and preserved in *one* presencing.'[27] This unified flow is the conjuncture of temporality and relationality, presencing and gathering, melody and harmony. It is what ensures that the song or the sentence of Being has not yet come to an end. This truth is what the *mantis* sees and what the shepherd must protect.

***Praesens Contuitus*: How to See Like a *Mantis*?**

Perhaps we can now find some resources within the writings of Augustine that would allow us to think through what it means to see like a *mantis*. Before doing so, it seems necessary to justify the jump, which we have already begun to take, from Book IV to Book XI of the *Confessions*. The obvious connection between the two is that they both deal with Augustine's doctrine of Creation. The cosmological interlude in Book IV and the exegesis of Genesis in Books XI-XIII are both attempts to come to terms with the temporality of a world created by an atemporal God. Already we have seen that the discussion of the *verbum Dei* in Book XI can serve as an interpretive key for unlocking the mechanisms at work below the surface in Book IV. And as was argued above, Augustine's strong conception of *aeternitas* as immutable timelessness does not, for him or for us, obliterate the need to explore the temporality of the world. To move from his 'logic of creation' to his 'philosophy of time,' then, is not to rudely

[26] Heidegger's appropriation of the *mantis* is obviously not a defense of augury or Homeric prophecy as it is usually understood. Rather, he is trying to suggest a different way of seeing time, one that unsettles our inherited categories of 'past, present, and future,' as well as any hierarchy that privileges the middle term without due consideration.

[27] Heidegger, 1946, 320-321; ET, 262: 'The seer stands in the sight of what is present in its unconcealment, which at the same time has illuminated the concealment of the absent as the absent. … The seer, *ho mantis*, is the *mainomenos*, the madman. The madman is beside, outside himself. He is away. We ask: away to where? And from where? Away from the mere crush of what lies before us, of the merely presently present, and away to the absent; away to, at the same time, the presently absent, inasmuch as this is always only the arrival of something that departs.'

wrench an argument out of its hexaemeral context, but rather to seize upon an inner thread that weaves Books IV and XI together. This inner thread involves the troublesome question of how temporality works, especially in its relation to mortality and instability. The fact that Augustine often explicates time by reference to timelessness (and vice versa) need not lead us to smother the liveliness out of Augustine's arguments in Books IV and XI by enclosing them within the well-trodden trope of praise for God's eternity.[28] It is true that Augustine's goal remains to touch upon the timeless, as the Vision at Ostia shows.[29] But that experience of *reverberatio* from the gates of eternity is an exceptional event within the Saint's tumultuous life in time and proof that full access to the eternal must be postponed until death (or perhaps even the eschaton). Following this inner thread from Book IV to Book XI should help us to appreciate Augustine's doctrine of Creation (thus maintaining Book XI's close relation to Books XII-XII), while at the same time giving us the chance to say something constructive about temporality. These two purposes do not have to be mutually exclusive.[30]

[28] The discussion of time and eternity in Book XI begins (x-xiii) with the clarification that *aeternitas* is not simply everlasting duration, but rather absolute timelessness. The same book ends (xxxi) with the assertion that God must 'know' the past and future of this world in a way far beyond that of a hypothetical 'everlasting mind.' That is to say: God does not see the unfolding of the temporal world 'as it happens,' nor does He 'know' it in the way that Augustine knows and can reproduce a psalm. Rather, God's knowledge of temporality is itself utterly atemporal. We see, then, that the interrogation of time contained in the middle chapters of Book XI is both prefaced by a discussion of eternity and followed by praise of eternity. This preface and this praise do not, however, relieve us of the duty of doing justice to the arguments about time situated between them. In other words: the 'fact' that eternity is the superior source of temporality does not in itself tell us what time is and how it works.

[29] Augustine, *Conf.* IX.x.

[30] It should be admitted that the subsequent reading of Book XI is not the traditional one. This departure from the standard interpretation is aimed at giving a more coherent account of some of Book XI's more daring and unconventional claims, both within the context of the book itself and in its relation to the *Confessions* as a whole. Misgivings about such a divergence from the usual presentation can perhaps be assuaged by reflection upon this statement of Augustine in *Conf.* XII.xxxi: *Ego certe, quod intrepidus de meo corde pronuntio, si ad culmen auctoritatis aliquid scriberem, sic mallem scribere, ut, quod veri aliquid scriberem, sic mallem scribere, ut quod veri quisque de his rebus capere posset, mea verba resonarent, quam ut unam veram sententiam ad hoc apertius ponerem ut excluderem ceteras, quarum falsitas me non posset offendere*. / 'To speak boldly from my heart: certainly, if I were to write something of the highest authority, I would prefer to write in such a way that what I wrote was true. I would prefer to write so that my words resound in such a way that anyone could grasp something true about these things, rather than me blatantly positing one true opinion and excluding others, which could not offend me by being 'false.''

In Book XI, then, Augustine reveals how our attempt to hold on to the present manifests the proud conceit of grasping at eternity 'before the time.' *Praesens tempus*, as long as we conceive of it in terms of a 'now' that stays, if even for the most infinitesimal instant, seems to approximate eternity by stepping out of the river of time. The lure of such a substantial present surfaces whenever we relate to time from a present-based point of view: such as when Augustine unconsciously assumed that his friend, who 'was there' (who was 'present'), would always be there, even if he knew otherwise in an abstract sense. We are tempted to think that the way things appear to us now is somehow a reliable basis for judgment, thought, or action. But the present, for Augustine, is neither reliable nor in any way a ground for anything. Thought of as a now, a unit, or a discrete 'something' of any sort, the present is, quite simply, nothing at all. 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.'[31] If we are to understand the temporal world according to time, then we will have to rethink temporality without using 'the present' as a starting point. Augustine's account of arising and passing away suggests a notion of temporality rooted not in the *nunc stans*, but in the ongoing course of relations between beings.

According to Book XI of the *Confessions*, this other way of thinking about time begins with *distentio* rather than the now. If there is no solid, eternity-like present upon which we might stand (like little gods), then we are necessarily 'stretched out' in time. Our *modus*, our allotted measure, our way of being is to live without pause, caught up in the currents and undertows

[31] Augustine, *Conf.* XI.xv: *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*. Cf. XI.xiv: *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? /* 'The present, moreover, if it were always present and did not pass away into the past, would no longer be time, but eternity. If, then, the present, in order to be time, must for this reason 'become,' then how can we also say that this present 'is,' whose purpose 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 strives to not-be?'

between future and past. We are never able to catch up with what 'is;' we are always late. 'My life,' says Augustine to his God, 'is a stretching-apart.'[32] Within the time of this *distentio*, presence must be thought in terms of a 'threefold' present, which, contrary to some interpretations, does not bring us back to the grounds of the now. It is not that the present expands to conquer the threat of imposing temporality, but that temporality breaks forth from within what seems to be the present, asserting itself as the divine means by which the arising and passing of all things occurs.

Augustine reworks *praesens* into a threefold by fitting it into the temporal order described earlier. 'Being there' (*prae-sens*) is not something that happens in punctiliar fashion. It is the unstable interrelation between where something was and where it will be. In human terms, we can say that instead of experiencing a discrete present detached from 'the past' and 'the future,' we live through the flow of time without such a break in the continuum. Throughout our lives, we are always remembering what has passed away, attending to what is still around, and awaiting what might come. These three—*memoria*, *contuitus*, and *expectatio*—

[32] Most references in this paragraph are to Augustine, *Conf.* XI.xxix, which is given in full here: *Sed quoniam melior est misericordia tua super vitas, 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 adprehendam, in quo et adprehensus sum, et a veteribus diebus colligar sequens unum, praeterita oblitus, non in ea quae futura et transitura sunt, sed in ea quae ante sunt 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.* / 'Since, however, your mercy is better and above our lives—look at how my life is a stretching-apart. Your right hand picks me up and brings me to my lord, the human mediator. He mediates between you, who are One, and we, who are many. We are in many things and we pass through many things. You bring me to him so that I might take hold of him by whom I am already held, so that I might be gathered up from my aged days, so that I chase after one thing, having forgotten all that has passed away. I am not chasing after those things that are going to be and pass away, but rather those things that are 'before.' I am stretched out, but I am not torn apart. I am pursuing not distraction but focus. I am chasing after the victory palm of the calling from above. 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.' Here again we see that the longing for eternity does not liberate the human being from having to live in time and struggle with temporality, at least until the final absorption into timelessness.

make up our 'being-there.'[33] Once we start thinking this way, any hierarchy of Being centered around the present tense must begin to crumble:

> 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[34] passes through to absence—endures.[35]

This endurance of attention, far from being an expansion of the *punctum* of the now, results from the *distentio* that marks all temporal life.[36] Time stretches us out; if we are to stretch with it, our attending to things must also have its duration. While in the above passage Augustine uses the term *attentio*, elsewhere he prefers *contuitus*. Often translated simply as 'sight,' *contuitus* would have to be a kind of vision that fits into the stretched-out temporality of *distentio*. In other words,

[33] Augustine, *Conf.* XI.xx: *Quod autem nunc liquet et claret, 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. Si haec permittimur dicere, tria tempora video fateorque tria sunt*. / 'Now then, let this light be clear and make clear. Neither future nor past things are, and it is not correct to say: 'there are three times—past, present, and future.' Rather, perhaps it would be 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.' These three somethings are in the living soul. I don't see them anywhere else. The present time having to do with past things is memory. The present time having to do with what is there is *contuitus*. The present time having to do with future things is awaiting. If we are permitted to say this: I see three times and I admit that they are three.'

[34] Here Augustine uses *adesse* (to be near, there, or present). This verb may provide us with a clue for understanding how Augustine is using *praesens* without invoking a potentially incoherent 'present instant.'

[35] Augustine, *Conf.* XI.xxviii: *nam et expectat et adtendit et meminit, ut id quod expectat per id quod adtendit 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 est adhuc in animo memoria praeteritorum. Et quid negat praesens tempus carere spatio, quid in puncto praeterit? Sed tamen perdurat attentio, per quam pergat abesse quod aderit.*

[36] For Augustine, the 'point' through which time passes seems to be more of a limit (dividing earlier from later) than a lived present. The now as *punctum* is not part of temporal experience, but is the inconceivable turning-point, the 'moment of decision' which the will cannot grasp as it lives through it. In *Conf.* VIII.xi, Augustine will use the term *punctum temporis* to refer to the impending and incomprehensible 'break' of his conversion, which cannot be pinned down to some infinitesimal time-unit. The scene in the garden is just that—a scene that takes time, that allows temporal syllables to rise and fall in succession—*tolle, lege*. The argument that the now is merely a limit (used for retroactive measurement) and not at all part of temporal experience can already be found in Aristotle, *Physics*, IV.218a.19-25.

it would have to be a way of seeing the arising and passing away of the order of delimited things—not from the standpoint of an eternity-like present, but from within time.

Contuitus attaches the prefix *con-* (implying 'together') to *tueri*, a deponent verb that connotes watching or keeping guard. If this is a kind of seeing-without-the-now that allows us to encounter other beings in their arising and passing away, we could interpret *contuitus* as a way of 'watching over' whatever is there. This would be a 'keeping watch,' a guarding and protecting of all in their due measure. Rather than clinging to temporal things as if their presence implied timelessness, we could learn to be with them while they are there, and to let them go when they have reached their *modus*. Being 'with' them does not mean blindly accepting them as static identities or as attempts at an atemporal formal coherence, but instead seeing them as impermanent, changing, and related to all other beings. *Intentio*, our reaching-out to the world, does not have to be the opposite of *distentio*.[37] There can be an *intentio* founded on a time without present, an *intentio* that would be the 'variation' of *memoria*, *contuitus*, and *expectatio*.[38]

Some Concluding Remarks

Reading Augustine and Heidegger alongside one another, in the way that we have, can help us to think through this problem of how to see the temporal world as temporal, neither seeking to grasp it as if it were timeless, nor reducing it to the fallen shadow of eternity. We are not condemned to the vain search for a finally fulfilled intuition or to an inescapable blindness. Con-tuition—the *contuitus* of the *mantis*—would allow us to see beings (and not just human beings) in their reciprocal arising and passing away. But this con-tuition could not be some

[37] If this is the case, then Ricoeur's description of a dialectical tension between *intentio* and *distentio* might prove insufficient. See *Time and Narrative*, vol. I, 16-22.

[38] *Conf.* XII.xv: *expectatio rerum venturarum fit contuitus, cum venerint, idemque contuitus fit memoria, cum praeterierint: omnis porro intentio, quae ita variatur, mutabilis est*… / 'The awaiting of things to come becomes, when those things come, *contuitus*. Likewise, *contuitus* becomes memory when those things have passed away. Every *intentio*, which is varied in this way, is mutable.'

Augenblick or moment of vision that we would wait for eschatologically. It is merely seeing what is present—differently.

Does that make this account of *contuitus* nothing but a description, or is there a normative component? Here we stumble upon an ambiguity found already in Heidegger's reading of Anaximander and Augustine's lamentation of his friend. Both slide imperceptibly between ethical and cosmological language. For them, justice and love are no longer solely anthropocentric terms. Perhaps, as Heidegger suggests, this kind of poetic language is needed because we are trying to discuss something prior to the division between ethics and cosmology, because presupposed by both.[39] The temporal relationality of beings precedes the taking of any stance on our part, and so does not offer us a determinate program, although it is not thereby relieved of all ethical weight. There might, ultimately, be applications for this kind of 'seeing' in the realm of ethics or even ecology. But the first step is attending carefully to this reciprocal temporality—this arising and falling of things in relation to one another—lest we offer up prescriptive maxims too rashly. Before making recommendations about the way things should be, we have to open ours eyes to the way things 'are.'

[39] Heidegger, 1946, 305; ET, 249-250: 'If… our usual way of thinking within a range of disciplines (physics, ethics, philosophy of law, biology, psychology) has, here, no place, then, where boundaries between disciplines are absent, there is no possibility of boundary transgression, no possibility of the illegitimate transfer of representations from one area to another. The absence of boundaries between disciplines does not necessarily mean, however, the boundlessness of indeterminacy and the flux. On the contrary, it can well be that purely thought—free of over-simple categorization—the actual structure of the matter comes to language.'

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