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**Amo, Ergo Cogito:  
 Phenomenology's Non-Cartesian Augustinianism**

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ABSTRACT: Phenomenologists turn to Augustine to remedy the neglect of life, love, and language in the Cartesian *cogito*: (1) concerning life, Edmund Husserl appropriates Augustine's analysis of *distentio animi*, Edith Stein of *vivo*, and Hannah Arendt of *initium*; (2) concerning love, Max Scheler appropriates Augustine's analysis of *ordo amoris*, Martin Heidegger of *curare*, and Dietrich von Hildebrand of *affectiones*; (3) concerning language, Ludwig Wittgenstein appropriates Augustine's analysis of *ostendere*, Hans-Georg Gadamer of *verbum cordis*, and Jean-Luc Marion of *confessio*. Phenomenology's non-Cartesian Augustinianism can tell us something about phenomenology, namely that it is engaged in the project of recontextualizing the *cogito*, and something about Augustine, namely how radically different his project is than Descartes's. Phenomenology presents an Augustine that is well positioned for the debates of our times concerning mind and world, desire and the human person, and language and embodiment.

“Descartes blurred Augustine's thoughts. Self-certainty and the self-possession in the sense of Augustine are entirely different from the Cartesian evidence of the ‘*cogito*.’”<sup>1</sup> —Heidegger

What is more evident than phenomenology's commitment to the Cartesian *cogito*? Husserl, after all, presents phenomenology in the *Cartesian Meditations* as a renewal of hyperbolic doubt and of the inquiry into the ego. And what is more evident than the fact that Descartes's subject constitutes a renewal of the Augustinian self, of the inward man over against the outward one? After all, both Descartes and Augustine identify the *cogito* as wholly immune

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<sup>1</sup> *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 226.

to the doubt of skepticism. Phenomenology's interest in Augustine would then be further evidence of phenomenology's Cartesian character.

Still, when one looks closer at exactly what it is about Augustine that elicits the attention of phenomenology, the appearance of an identity between Augustine and Descartes and between Descartes and phenomenology vanishes. There is from beginning to end a continual fascination among phenomenologists with Augustine's *Confessions*. Edmund Husserl draws on Augustine's analysis of *distentio animi*, Max Scheler on *ordo amoris*, Edith Stein on *vivo*, Dietrich von Hildebrand on *affectiones*, Martin Heidegger on *curare*, Wittgenstein on *ostendere*, Gadamer on *verbum cordis*, Arendt on *initium*, and Jean-Luc Marion on *confessio*. What is this complex of phenomena that attracts such interest? Phenomenologists, I submit, turn to Augustine in order to find an account of experience that displaces the modern subject. Such displacement occurs not by ignoring experience but by giving a richer account of that experience. Phenomenology thereby counters Cartesianism on its own terms.

In the *Discourse on Method*, Descartes describes the unerotic occasion of the new philosophy: "finding no conversation to divert me and fortunately having no worries or passions to trouble me, I remained for an entire day shut up by myself in a stove-heated room, where I was completely free to converse with myself about my thoughts."<sup>2</sup> He arrives at a new starting point in the indubitable self-presence of thought to itself, and he arrives at a new conception of the human in terms of the priority of thought and the extrinsic character of embodiment and animal affectivity. The new philosophy he develops has not only theoretical ambitions but

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<sup>2</sup> In *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, 4th ed, trans. Donald Cress (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1998), p. 7-8.

practical ones as well. It aims to find ways to prolong indefinitely human life.<sup>3</sup> His provisional morality prizes the freedom of the will independent of love, truth, passions, and agency.<sup>4</sup>

The modern, unerotic subject is constituted by a radical immanence comprised by a triple neglect. First, there is the neglect of life in the choice of self-presence over and against absence, the reduction of animation to bare existence, and the focus on mortality rather than natality. Second, there is the neglect of love in the mastery of the lower, the privileging of tranquil existence, and the reduction of self to bare cogitation. Third, there is the neglect of language in the indifference to the expressive bodily presence of others, the failure to register the constitutive role of language for thought, and the absence of the language of love. By contrast, the erotic self is constituted by a marked transcendence in three directions. Regarding life, there is openness to temporal absence rather than presence (Husserl), living rather than bare existing (Stein), and natality rather than mortality (Arendt). Regarding love, there is higher rather than lower goods (Scheler), cares rather than tranquility (Heidegger), and affectivity rather than mere thinking (Hildebrand). Regarding language, there is bodily manifestation rather than hiddenness (Wittgenstein), linguisticity rather than bare conceptuality (Gadamer), and the unique speech act of the lover's praise (Marion). Phenomenology drives a wedge between the Cartesian cogito and the Augustinian one, and it constitutes a continual choice for Augustine against Descartes, a choice for the erotic self over and against the modern unerotic subject.

The phenomenological interest in Augustine, then, stands in contrast with its supposed Cartesianism, for the very things about Augustine that attract phenomenology are the things that separate Augustine from Descartes. What's behind the appearance of phenomenology's

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<sup>3</sup> Descartes's practical philosophy aims to maintain health and undermine "the frailty of old age." *Discourse on Method*, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> The provisional morality of the *Discourse on Method* has four precepts. The first is to avoid the excess of limiting freedom through love (p. 14). The second is to be resolutely arbitrary. The third is to master one's thoughts and passions. The fourth is to seek a life of contentment (p. 15) by being a spectator rather than an actor (p. 16).

Cartesianism? Sometimes phenomenologists appeal to Augustine in order to remedy some phenomenological failing, some Cartesian residue in their forerunners. Heidegger, for example, turns to Augustine in order to go beyond a certain Cartesianism he thinks is still operative in Husserl's approach to the transcendental reduction. Hence, what we can learn by heeding the phenomenological engagement with Augustine is the fact that as a movement it exists in the space between Descartes's *cogito* and Augustine's *amo*, in that space between the modern unerotic ego and the non-modern erotic one. It is the very driving force of phenomenology to continue to progress away from Descartes and toward Augustine. If its origin is Descartes, its end is Augustine. Phenomenology aims to displace the modern *cogito* by disrupting serene self-presence and opening us up to the beloved other.<sup>5</sup>

In this article, I would like to establish several interrelated theses. First, a fact: almost every major phenomenological thinker finds Augustine to be significant for his or her own project. Second, an explanation: the common aim for this turn to Augustine is to undermine the pernicious heritage of the isolated Cartesian *cogito*. Third, an implication: the Augustine that emerges thanks to the phenomenological reading is one that is erotic and embodied; in this way it is decidedly not Cartesian. Hence, I argue that phenomenology's non-Cartesian Augustinianism can tell us something about phenomenology, namely that it is engaged in the project of contextualizing the *cogito*, and something about Augustine, namely how radically different his project is than Descartes'. Phenomenology delivers an Augustine that is well positioned for the debates of our times concerning mind and world, language and embodiment, desire and the human person.

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<sup>5</sup> For an account of this openness, see Chad Engelland, *Phenomenology* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2020).

In the first three parts of the paper, I will sketch the Augustinian phenomena of chief interest to phenomenologists—life, love, and language—and indicate the reason phenomenologists find these phenomena interesting. In the fourth part of the paper, I will contrast these phenomena with the modern Cartesian subject, and I will identify a residual modern horizon that phenomenology has yet to overcome, namely a certain allergy to the metaphysics of creation. In this respect, phenomenology has yet to catch up to its Augustinian heritage.

**Fig. 1 Phenomenological Engagement with Augustine**

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Augustinian Phenomena</i>	<i>Phenomenologist</i>
<i>Life</i>	<i>distentio animi</i>	(a) Husserl
	<i>vivo</i>	(b) Stein
	<i>initium</i>	(c) Arendt
<i>Love</i>	<i>ordo amoris</i>	(d) Scheler
	<i>curare</i>	(e) Heidegger
	<i>affectiones</i>	(f) Hildebrand
<i>Language</i>	<i>ostendere</i>	(g) Wittgenstein
	<i>verbum cordis</i>	(h) Gadamer
	<i>confessio</i>	(i) Marion

### 1. The Phenomenon of Life (Husserl, Stein, Arendt)

(a) Husserl (1905): *Distentio animi / Distension of the soul*. In the *Cartesian Meditations* (1931), Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) endeavors to introduce avid readers of Descartes into phenomenology by making plain the method of the phenomenological reduction. The modern turn to consciousness happened upon something enduringly relevant, but Descartes botched the turn by asking about the whatness of the ego and by losing sight of the significance of intentionality and intersubjectivity. Descartes was almost a phenomenologist but he failed to understand how to progress into the phenomenological domain. Thus, the text engages Descartes in order to disengage readers from Descartes and lead them into phenomenological inquiry.

Though the confrontation with Descartes dominates the text, Husserl concludes by widening his historical horizon to connect phenomenology with ancient and medieval thought.

The concluding paragraph reads as follows:

The Delphic motto, “Know thyself!” has gained a new signification. Positive science is a science lost in the world. I must lose the world by epoché, in order to regain it by a universal self-examination. “*Noli foras ire,*” says Augustine, “*in te redi, in interiore homine habitat veritas.*”<sup>6</sup>

The phenomenological reduction, which uncovers the structure of experience, is a new way of fulfilling the mandate of the ancient oracle: we come into an experience of ourselves as the ones that experience the truth of things. In this way, the self-forgetfulness of the scientific researcher, who makes marvelous advances at the expense of ignoring his or her own agency, is complemented by the self-awareness of the phenomenological philosopher who pays attention to the ignored but presupposed agency of intentional experience.<sup>7</sup> The significance of this text comes in the way that Husserl makes use of Augustine at the end, thereby linking the phenomenological project—the reduction to the structure of experience—to Augustine’s own. For Augustine enjoins us to return to ourselves and within ourselves to find truth. Now Husserl understands only part of the Augustinian movement: it is not merely a matter of returning to oneself to find truth but of turning within and above, or of turning within and of finding, more inward than ourselves, the truth that transcends us.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, the claim that phenomenology fulfills the ancient ambition to achieve self-knowledge and does so by rejoining the Augustinian return to self amounts to a correction of the Cartesian character of philosophy: one loses the world in order to regain it enriched by knowledge of oneself as the agent of experience and the

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<sup>6</sup> “Do not wish to go out; go back into yourself. Truth dwells in the inner man.” *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), 157.

<sup>7</sup> Concerning the agency of the transcendental ego, see *Cartesian Meditations*, 44-46.

<sup>8</sup> *Confessions* 3.6.11.

recipient of the truth of things together with others. The Cartesian posture lacked self-knowledge and as a result could not adequately recover the world.<sup>9</sup>

What does Husserl find when he follows Augustine? The very deepest theme of phenomenological analysis: inner time consciousness.<sup>10</sup> Husserl, the philosopher known for setting aside tradition in favor of phenomena, begins his 1905 study of the phenomenon of time by telling his readers they must begin with Augustine: “For in these matters our modern age, so proud of its knowledge, has failed to surpass or even to match the splendid achievement of this great thinker who grappled so earnestly with the problem of time.”<sup>11</sup> This singular high praise on Husserl’s part reflects the character of Augustine’s analysis of time which attempts to take us inside the experience of its irreducibly threefold character. The present is what it is by means of bleeding out into the immediately absent future and the immediately absent past. There is the present of the future, the present of the present, and the present of the past. In this way, the present is not a point but an opening. Where can this opening be found? Augustine locates it in the soul itself, which is stretched out or distended by anticipation, perception, and recollection. The distended intentional life of the soul and the distended character of time are entwined.<sup>12</sup> Similarly Husserl, as summarized by Robert Sokolowski, holds that “in our most basic temporal

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<sup>9</sup> It is noteworthy that Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in his famous preface to *Phenomenology of Perception*, will contrast the true meaning of Husserl’s phenomenological reduction with Augustine’s notion of the inner man; Merleau-Ponty insists that the self is found against the backdrop of the perception of the world rather than by leaving that behind. He presents this not as a critique of Husserl but of the Cartesian cogito and of Augustine, which means he simply does not follow Husserl in reading Augustine phenomenologically. *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (New York: Routledge, 2012), lxxiii. Merleau-Ponty remains the only major phenomenological author that does not regard Augustine as exemplary.

<sup>10</sup> On the misleading term, “inner time consciousness,” which is not inner or temporal or consciousness but instead the basis of all experience, see Thomas Prufer, *Recapitulations* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 75.

<sup>11</sup> Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)*, trans. John Barnett Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), 3. Husserl refers the reader to *Confessions* 11.14-28.

<sup>12</sup> *Confessions* 11.26.33.

experience we are not locked into a solitary presence, but stand out in the future and the past.”<sup>13</sup> Following Augustine’s careful dialectic that discerns that the present has no extent but is bound up with the absent future and the absent past, Husserl emphasizes that the present moment is essentially protentive and retentive: there is no such thing as pure presence. Augustine takes us inside the experience of time, which is the most fundamental level of phenomenological analysis.

Husserl is not alone among twentieth century philosophers in praising Augustine’s analysis of time. While Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* cites the analysis as a dead end, Heidegger celebrates the way it turns from the apriori structure of the subject to a pre-subjective openness characterized by restraint.<sup>14</sup> Ricoeur stylizes Augustine’s analysis as exhibiting the limits of any phenomenology of time, and he does so in order to motivate the role of narrativity in constituting the unity of distended, temporal experience.<sup>15</sup>

(b) *Edith Stein (1937): Vivo / Natural Spiritual Life*. When the accomplished phenomenologist St. Edith Stein (1891-1942) converted to Catholicism, she did not leave behind her earlier concern for intersubjectivity and sociality.<sup>16</sup> Rather she sought to situate her phenomenological interests within the Catholic philosophical tradition. The fact that she engaged Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus is well known. For example, in the *Festschrift* for Husserl edited by Heidegger, she penned an exploratory dialogue between Aquinas and Husserl.<sup>17</sup> Yet in her major work, *Finite and Eternal Being*, we find a significant engagement with Augustine as

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<sup>13</sup> Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 130-145, at 138

<sup>14</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 2d ed, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1958), n. 89-90. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962), 427; and Ryan Coyne, *Heidegger’s ‘Confessions’* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2015), 169.

<sup>15</sup> *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen McGlaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), vol. 1, 5-30.

<sup>16</sup> See her influential phenomenological study *The Problem of Empathy*, trans. Waltraut Stein (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1989).

<sup>17</sup> “Husserl and Aquinas: A Comparison,” in *Knowledge and Faith*, trans. Walter Redmond (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 2000), 1-62.



well. One might even say that Augustine is someone who is more amenable to her own phenomenological interests in intersubjectivity and sociality, for she develops the theme of the *imago dei* by unpacking Augustine's triad: memory, intellect, and will.<sup>18</sup>

After noting the contemporary difficulty of accessing the metaphysical researches of Aquinas, Stein introduces her starting point in reference to three thinkers: Descartes, Husserl, and Augustine. For, on her reading, all three identify a fundamental existential fact that can in no way be doubted, the fact that I am. Though Descartes's cogito implicates being, Stein notes that Husserl expands the terrain of the self in terms of the *life* of the ego. She then proceeds to identify this emphasis on the living, animate self with Augustine: "For in all of this—in the 'I live' of St. Augustine as much as in the 'I think' of Descartes, and in Husserl's 'being conscious of' or 'experiencing'—there is implied the same *I am*."<sup>19</sup> She cautions this is not a conclusion as *cogito ergo sum* might imply but instead something implicitly given in all experience: the living, animate self. And this self points to God.<sup>20</sup>

It is accordingly in the section on "the Image of God in the Natural Spiritual Life [*natürlichen Geistesleben*] of Human Beings" that Stein devotes sustained attention to Augustine's analyses in *De Trinitate*. She distinguishes the natural from the supernatural image, and she locates the natural image thanks to Augustine's pioneering research into the inner life. Augustine identifies three natural spiritual triads of life: the triad of love (lover-beloved-love), the triad of loving (mind-love-knowledge), and the triad of fully elucidated loving (memory-intellect-will). She argues that memory, intellect, and will arise from and return to love, and she

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<sup>18</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, O.P. (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991), 10.4.

<sup>19</sup> *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, trans. Kurt Reinhardt (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 2002), 36.

<sup>20</sup> St. Augustine is one "who groped his way to God preeminently from the experience of his inner being and who emphasized in ever new verbal expressions the fact that our being points beyond itself to true being." Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 59.

draws from contemporary phenomenology to argue that *memoria* must be complemented by feeling, disposition, or mood, which conditions and is conditioned by knowing and willing.<sup>21</sup>

We therefore distinguish a triple unfolding of spiritual life *ad extra*—in rational knowledge, feeling, and volition—and these three are yet *one*, as an unfolding of the spirit and by virtue of the fact that they mutually condition each other. On the other hand, we also distinguish a threefold inner life: 1) a cognitive inner awareness of the person's own being in the original form of the memory (which is simultaneously the original form of knowledge); 2) an emotional self-awareness [*Sichfühlen*] and 3) a volitional affirmation of the person's own being.

The *inner being* of the spirit, the spirit's *self-transcending ad extra* [*das Nach-aussen-gehen*], and the *dialectic encounters* [*Auseinandersetzung*] *between the within and the without* are the *basic directions or dimensions of the spiritual* [*gestig*] *life*.<sup>22</sup>

Stein thus finds in Augustine's explorations of human life an elucidation of the basic intentional structure of human experience.

(c) *Arendt (1975): Initium / Natality*. Heidegger follows the Greeks in defining the human relative to the end of death as a mortal; his student, Hannah Arendt (1906-1975), inspired by Augustine, defines the human as the natal, understood in terms of a beginning rather than an end. In her 1929 dissertation *Love and Saint Augustine*, which was directed by Karl Jaspers, she points out in an important footnote that though Heidegger recognizes that Augustine uses the word, "world," both as referring to creation and to the domain of experience, Heidegger proceeds to ignore world in the sense of creation to focus on world in the sense of the domain of experience; Arendt, by contrast, wishes to keep both senses of world in play.<sup>23</sup> Implicit in the dissertation is the view that the creation of the human being with freedom and memory constitutes the possibility of new beginnings. While working on revising the dissertation for publication in the 1960s, Arendt introduces the word, "natality," to express Augustine's shift from a Greek orientation toward one's end to a Christian orientation toward one's beginning.

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<sup>21</sup> *Finite and Eternal Being*, 455.

<sup>22</sup> *Finite and Eternal Being*, 455-456.

<sup>23</sup> *Love and Saint Augustine*, ed. Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 66n80. See Coyne, *Heidegger's Confessions*, 12.

Death provokes desire, but birth prompts gratitude.<sup>24</sup> Arendt says the Augustinian theme of natality emerges most clearly in a passage from *City of God*, which she often cites. In *The Life of the Mind*, she writes:

In order, he says, that there may be novelty, a *beginning* must exist; “and this beginning never before existed,” that is, not before Man’s creation. Hence, that such a beginning “might be, man was created before whom nobody was” (“*quod initium eo modo antea nunquam fuit. Hoc ergo ut esset, creatus est homo, ante quem nullus fuit*”).<sup>25</sup>

Here she notes that Augustine refers to the human beginning as *initium* and the cosmic beginning as *principium*. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt argues that human action takes its bearing from natality, this ability to introduce novelty into the world in virtue of having been introduced as something novel into the world.<sup>26</sup> Central to her phenomenology of the human condition is the natality of the human and the way this bears on the possibility of action. In this way, her work develops a philosophy of action that engenders hope, which stands in stark contrast with a philosophy of technical mastery inspired by a fear of death.

## 2. The Phenomenon of Love (Scheler, Heidegger, Hildebrand)

(d) *Scheler (1914-16): Ordo amoris / Order of love*. In “Ordo Amoris” (1914-1916), Max Scheler (1874-1928) gives a brilliant analysis of affectivity: he speaks of the difference in fulfillment between bodily and spiritual goods, he analyzes the various modes of idolization and infatuation to which affectivity is prone, and he identifies three ways in which the *ordo* can be violated.<sup>27</sup> While he does not significantly engage Augustine in this text, the Latin of the title

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<sup>24</sup> *Love and Saint Augustine*, 51-52.

<sup>25</sup> *The Life of the Mind*, vol. 2, *The Life of the Mind* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1971), 108, quoting Augustine, *City of God* 12.20.

<sup>26</sup> *The Human Condition*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 8-9 and 247.

<sup>27</sup> “Ordo Amoris,” in *Selected Philosophical Essays*, trans. David R. Lachterman (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 113-115 and 124.

recalls Augustine's analysis in *De Doctrina Christiana*.<sup>28</sup> Against the priority of the Cartesian *cogito*, a priority still present in the early Husserl's prioritization of objectifying acts, Scheler follows Augustine and argues that affectivity is prior to both the intellect and the will: "Man, before he is an *ens cogitans* or an *ens volens*, is an *ens amans*."<sup>29</sup> Scheler chastises moderns for thinking that the sphere of affectivity is relativistic; this view is a symptom of a lack of serious engagement with it.<sup>30</sup> In the second volume of the *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values* (1916), Scheler praises Augustine together with Pascal for being among the few to oppose the deep prejudice separating reason and sensibility, although he says they have failed to articulate a genuine alternative.<sup>31</sup>

It is in the essay, "Love and Knowledge" (1915), that Scheler's esteem for Augustine achieves its clearest expression. He credits Augustine with being the first thinker to work out the proper conceptual elucidation of the Christian relation of love and knowledge, and he sharply distinguishes Augustine's analysis from that of Descartes and Scotus. Augustine advocates the primacy of love, not the primacy of the will. Scheler thinks that on Augustine's account love enables knowing which enables willing.<sup>32</sup> Before one can know or will a thing one must take an interest in it.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, he thinks that Augustine attempts to work out a new psychology and epistemology based on the primacy of love. Augustine's inquiries in this direction, Scheler boldly declares, "still represent the first and only attempt to procure a new psychological and

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<sup>28</sup> *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 18. See John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1938), 113-137.

<sup>29</sup> "Ordo Amoris," 110.

<sup>30</sup> "Ordo Amoris," 119.

<sup>31</sup> *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values: A New Attempt toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism*, trans. Manfred S. Frings and Roger L. Funk (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 254-255.

<sup>32</sup> "Love and Knowledge," in *On Feeling, Knowing, and Valuing: Selected Writings*, trans. Harold Bershady (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 163.

<sup>33</sup> Scheler concludes that Augustine's understanding of the relation of knowledge and will mirrors Aquinas; both stand in contrast to voluntarism of every stripe. "Love and Knowledge," 163.

metaphysical insight from the *Christian structure of experience*.”<sup>34</sup> Scheler says that the deepest significance of Augustine’s primacy of love is a kind of openness to the self-disclosure of things, an openness without parallel in Plato, and an openness that he characterizes with terms redolent of phenomenology:

The appearance of an image or meaning in the intellectual act, even in the simplest perception, is for him not merely an activity of the knowing *subject* that penetrates the completed object. Rather, an image is simultaneously an answering reaction of the *object itself*, a “giving of itself” or a “*self-revealing*” of the object. An image is a consequence of a “question” asked with “love” that the world answers and in so doing reveals itself. In this revelation the world *comes to its full existence and value*.<sup>35</sup>

Love makes us receptive to the self-disclosure of what is; it enables us to understand it. The phenomenological openness to the self-givenness of a thing turns for Scheler on the primacy of love. Phenomenology thus conceived is Augustinian, and Augustine thus conceived, is the philosophical elucidation of the Christian structure of experience. Phenomenology, in this light, represents what Pope St. John Paul II says it does, namely an attitude of intellectual charity that lets us receive the truth of things.<sup>36</sup>

(e) *Heidegger (1927): Curare / Care*. In 1921, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) turns to Augustine in his efforts to reformulate phenomenology in dialogue with a Cartesian residue in earlier phenomenology. In doing so, he distinguishes between Augustine and Augustinianism, the latter of which includes not only Descartes but also Scheler. “Descartes blurred Augustine’s thoughts. Self-certainty and the self-possession in the sense of Augustine are entirely different from the Cartesian evidence of the ‘*cogito*.’”<sup>37</sup> And Heidegger does regard Scheler’s work as insufficiently phenomenological: “What Scheler is doing today is merely a secondary reception

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<sup>34</sup> “Love and Knowledge,” 162.

<sup>35</sup> “Love and Knowledge,” 164.

<sup>36</sup> John Paul II, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2003/march/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_20030322\\_hanover.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2003/march/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20030322_hanover.html)

<sup>37</sup> *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 226.

of these circles of thought dressed up in phenomenology.”<sup>38</sup> When Heidegger peels back the Augustinianism, he finds in Augustine a rich partner in phenomenologizing. Nonetheless, a chief burden of this early engagement is to divest Augustine of his alliance with neo-Platonic axiologizing, which Heidegger regards as a matter of preferring based on delight.<sup>39</sup> He here seems to be echoing Luther’s hostility to metaphysics.<sup>40</sup> What then does Heidegger find engaging about Augustine’s phenomenology?

Heidegger prizes Augustine’s notion of care as the proper phenomenological critique of the tranquility of the Cartesian ego. In fact, we find Heidegger repeatedly struck by the genuinely phenomenological character of Augustine’s treatment of temptation in the latter half of *Confessions* 10. Augustine, Heidegger tells us, is no moralizer but a seeker of the way God is given in experience.<sup>41</sup> As Augustine copes with the three dimensions of experience, namely the surrounding-worldly, communal-worldly, and self-worldly, he must resist the insistent pull of the world just in order to have himself before God. The authentic self is lost in yielding to each of the temptations.<sup>42</sup> By contrast, continence and chaste fear maintain our authentic selves and in so doing open us to God: “In the concern for the selfly life, God is present.”<sup>43</sup> *Confiteri* he tells us names the *how* of interpretation, and allows us to access the sense of enactment at work in the phenomenology of experience. He finds it remarkable that Augustine takes us into the very *how* of experience.<sup>44</sup> *Molestia* is taken by Heidegger to name the facticity of life, which in *Being and*

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<sup>38</sup> *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 115.

<sup>39</sup> *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 172-173. See Chad Engelland, “Augustinian Elements in Heidegger’s Philosophical Anthropology: A Study of the Early Lecture Course on Augustine,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 78 (2004): 263-275.

<sup>40</sup> *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 213, 177.

<sup>41</sup> *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 155.

<sup>42</sup> *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 170-2.

<sup>43</sup> *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 219, 225-226.

<sup>44</sup> At this stage of his development, Heidegger distinguishes three aspects of the phenomenon: the content, the relation, and the enactment sense. *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 43. He is astounded to find the priority of the enactment sense in Augustine. *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 143, 148, 164, 167.

*Time* he roots in care.<sup>45</sup> The self may be ever present to itself but only, as the *Confessions* shows, in such a way that it remains opaque.<sup>46</sup> The way to bring this self to exhibition, Heidegger argues, is to take a page from Scheler's appropriation of Augustine and to see that it occurs in an affective response.<sup>47</sup> Augustine's distinction between *timor castus* and *timor servilis* turns out to be an important anticipation of Heidegger's analysis of anxiety as a distinctive way in which care becomes manifest.<sup>48</sup> To counter the Cartesian tranquility of the solitary ego, Heidegger turns to the Augustinian priority of affective engagement and the care for unity of the soul in the world before God.<sup>49</sup>

(f) *Hildebrand: Affectiones / Affectivity*. Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889-1977) excoriates the history of philosophy as falling prey to the forgetfulness of affectivity. It prizes only the intellect and the will as properly personal powers and does not give due attention to the heart. The affective sphere instead becomes assimilated to animal passions as something that is irrational and impersonal. By contrast Hildebrand insists that phenomenology shows the authentic character of affectivity as something properly personal that comprises the highest experiences people are capable of. He has in mind such experiences as the elevation of spiritual joy or the release of spiritual contrition.

Hildebrand's uniform critique of the history of philosophy does admit of one exception: the tradition inaugurated by Augustine and continued by Pascal. For Hildebrand recognizes that Augustine is a thinker of the heart, someone whose thought remains profoundly marked by the biblical witness to the centrality of affectivity, someone whose writings display a profound

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<sup>45</sup> *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 181-184. *Being and Time*, 199nvii.

<sup>46</sup> *Being and Time*, 69, quoting Augustine, *Confessions* 10.16.2.

<sup>47</sup> *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 178.

<sup>48</sup> *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 190n.iv.

<sup>49</sup> For more, see Ryan Coyne's *Heidegger's Confessions*, which adopts not so much a phenomenological angle but a scholarly treatment of Heidegger's intermittent but transformative engagements with Augustine.

awareness of the importance of response for the human person. “It is true that there is one great tradition in the stream of Christian philosophy in which full justice is done in a concrete way to the affective sphere and to the heart. St. Augustine’s work from the *Confessions* onward is pervaded by deep and admirable insights concerning the heart and the affective attitudes of man.”<sup>50</sup> Augustine’s restless heart and his emphasis on the affective response as informing the intellect’s apprehension of truth and the will’s choice of the good set him apart from the main tradition of philosophical thought about such matters. Hildebrand acknowledges that affectivity pervades the very language and tempo of Augustine’s writings and that Augustine does not accept the Greek reduction of affectivity to animal feeling. In the *Art of Living*, he writes, “St. Augustine clearly distinguishes the naked will from the full, affective value-responses when he exclaims in the *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, “*parum voluntate, etiam voluptate trahimur*” (It is not enough to be drawn by the will; you are drawn even by delight).”<sup>51</sup> Moreover, equally importantly, Hildebrand cites Augustine’s *City of God* to substantiate the claim that affectivity is a response rather than a state: “Finally our doctrine inquires not so much whether one be angry but wherefore; why he is sad and not whether he is sad, and so of fear.”<sup>52</sup> Thus Augustine is exonerated from *both* charges made of the history of philosophy, for he neither reduces affectivity to animality nor divorces it from its intentional objects. To be sure, Hildebrand

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<sup>50</sup> *The Heart: An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2007), 5. He says “from the *Confessions* onwards” because he believes that *De Doctrina Christiana*’s insistence that the creature should not be an object of enjoyment (*frui*) but only use (*uti*) betrays a residual stoic or oriental aversion to affectivity. That is, von Hildebrand takes there to be three ways in which affectivity can be underappreciated: first, as identified with feeling, an identification with no parallel in Augustine, early or late; second, as denied to creatures, a denial with a parallel in the early but not the late Augustine; third, as restricted to the ethical love of neighbor but not the love of friends and family, a restriction repudiated by an Augustinian sermon quoted by Hildebrand: “I am not saying that you should not love your wife, but that you should love Christ more.” *The Heart*, 118 and 120. This contrast between the early and late Augustine appears odd. In *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine uses the distinction to avoid idolatry while acknowledging a sense in which we can love and enjoy creatures in God (1.77-80). This is the same view found in the later writings.

<sup>51</sup> *The Art of Living* (Steubenville, OH: Hildebrand Press, 2017), 105, quoting Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 26.4.

<sup>52</sup> *The Heart*, 6, quoting Augustine, *City of God* 9.5.



worries that Augustine is not sufficiently opposed to the stoical strand of the Greek tradition, and he worries that Augustine does not give the heart equal rights alongside the intellect and will but instead puts memory into his most settled account of the human person's peculiarly personal powers: intellect, will, and memory.<sup>53</sup> Despite these reservations, Hildebrand's central thesis stands: Augustine's engagement with affectivity, with the *affectiones animi*, shows him to be a phenomenologist of the first rank.<sup>54</sup>

### 3. The Phenomenon of Language (Wittgenstein, Gadamer, Marion)

(g) *Wittgenstein (1946): Ostendere / Ostension*. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) begins the *Philosophical Investigations* by quoting Augustine's *Confessions* at length. Though it is obvious that Wittgenstein engages Augustine, it is not clear that he merits mention in the context of this article insofar as he does not seem to count as a phenomenologist. However, like many others, I see a family resemblance between some aspects of Wittgenstein's operative methodology and genuinely phenomenological modes of procedure.<sup>55</sup> As I have explored the issue elsewhere, I won't argue the point here.<sup>56</sup>

What is behind Wittgenstein's engagement with Augustine? Malcolm tells us that Wittgenstein regarded Augustine as a thinker worth serious attention, and Malcolm suggests further the two thinkers have a kinship in style: "The philosophical sections of St. Augustine's

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<sup>53</sup> *The Heart*, 6 and 3, respectively.

<sup>54</sup> *Confessions* 1.8.13.

<sup>55</sup> For defense of this view, see Nicholas Gier, *Wittgenstein and Phenomenology: A Comparative Study of the Later Wittgenstein, Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty* (SUNY, 1981); Stephen Mulhall, *On Being in the World: Wittgenstein and Heidegger on Seeing Aspects* (Routledge, 1990); Søren Overgaard, *Wittgenstein and Other Minds: Rethinking Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity with Wittgenstein, Levinas, and Husserl* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Lee Braver, *Groundless Grounds: A Study of Wittgenstein and Heidegger* (MIT, 2012); Charles Guignon, "Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and the Question of Phenomenology," in *Wittgenstein and Heidegger*, ed. David Egan, Stephen Reynolds, and Aaron James Wendland (Routledge, 2013); and Oskari Kuusela, Mihai Ometita, Timur Uçan, editors. *Wittgenstein and Phenomenology* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>56</sup> Engelland, *Ostension: Word Learning and the Embodied Mind* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014), 43-46.

*Confessions* show a striking resemblance to Wittgenstein's own way of doing philosophy."<sup>57</sup> The interest becomes even more personal when one realizes that Wittgenstein stylizes Augustine as the stand-in for Wittgenstein's own earlier thoughts from the *Tractatus*. That is, Wittgenstein quotes Augustine's account of word learning, which he subsequently misconstrues as a reductive account of the essence of language, in order to be able to distance himself from his own earlier published views on the essence of language and the picture-theory of meaning.<sup>58</sup>

Wittgenstein's interpretation of Augustine is not wholly critical. Though he says the view of language in terms of naming is simplistic, he acknowledges that something like it, a simplified kind of language, forms the initial stage of first word learning.<sup>59</sup> That is, Wittgenstein criticizes Augustine's account of the nature of meaning only to agree with his account of how language first arises. In fact, the agreement is more than superficial, for Wittgenstein borrows the central ingredient of Augustine's account of first word learning, namely the fact that it happens thanks to the natural language of the body and the way it allows us to ostend things prior to speech.

An important part of the training will consist in the teacher's *pointing to the objects, directing the child's attention to them, and at the same time uttering a word*; for instance, the word 'slab' as he points to that shape. (I do not want to call this "ostensive definition", because the child cannot as yet *ask* what the name is. I will call it "ostensive teaching of words".—I say that it will form an important part of the training, because it is so with human beings; not because it could not be imagined otherwise.)<sup>60</sup>

Wittgenstein does offer an important correction to Augustine's account: because all pointing is ambiguous, the language speaker must train the infant in order to avert all inevitable

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<sup>57</sup> Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, 2d ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 59-60 and 19, respectively.

<sup>58</sup> Wittgenstein refers to himself as the author of the *Tractatus*: "It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are used, the multiplicity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language. (Including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.)" *Philosophical Investigations*, §23.

<sup>59</sup> *Investigations*, §5.

<sup>60</sup> *Philosophical Investigations*, §6. My emphasis.

misinterpretations.<sup>61</sup> It turns out, however, that Augustine is right and Wittgenstein is wrong; children can and most of the time do learn their first words by eavesdropping rather than training; only in the modern West do parents and caregivers feel the need to teach infants words; in other times and places it was and is recognized that they will pick them up from the environment.<sup>62</sup> But we should not let this disagreement concerning the need for correction obscure the central agreement: children can first tap into speech thanks to the prior participation in shared focal practices that happen due to the way our human bodies advertise our affective lives independent of speech. Echoing Augustine, Wittgenstein writes, “The common human way of acting [*Handlungsweise*] is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language.”<sup>63</sup>

In keeping with the Augustinian *ostendere*, Wittgenstein probes how our affective lives are displayed in our bodily movement. He counters the Cartesian idea that our bodies are interposed between the other person and ourselves and instead characterizes the way our bodies make us available to each other. He emphasizes, in this regard, that we do not see the body and infer anger, but we see the bodily display of this affective state: the inward is there in the outward. In this way, his engagement with Augustine amounts to a recovery of the phenomenological theme of flesh that Merleau-Ponty and others champion in their own development of phenomenology.<sup>64</sup> To counter the modern denial of the manifestation of the body, Wittgenstein like Augustine emphasizes the manifestation of affectivity through bodily movement.

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<sup>61</sup> *Philosophical Investigations*, §6.

<sup>62</sup> See Engelland, *Ostension*, 23-24.

<sup>63</sup> *Philosophical Investigations*, §206. Translation modified. On the connection of this passage to Augustine, see Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 41, and Mulhall, *Wittgenstein's Private Language: Grammar, Nonsense, and Imagination in Philosophical Investigations*, §§243-315 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 31.

<sup>64</sup> For a defense of these claims, see Engelland, *Ostension*.

(h) *Gadamer (1960): Verbum cordis / Word of the heart.* In 1921, Heidegger says that the task of phenomenology is to uncover the inner word (*verbum internum*) of the phenomena.<sup>65</sup> In this way, he counters the hiatus between language and experience in contemporary philosophy by means of gesturing toward the medieval world. It is no accident that the next semester Heidegger offers an entire lecture course on Augustine in which he seeks to recapitulate Augustine shorn of his neo-Platonic metaphysical heritage, an Augustine that proves to be the proto-phenomenologist par excellence. In 1923, Heidegger came to Marburg where he became a formative influence on Gadamer. When, four decades later, Gadamer publishes his magnum opus, *Truth and Method*, he gives central place to Augustine's analysis of the inner word.

In conversation with Jean Grondin, Gadamer attributes the universality of hermeneutics to the inner word: "This universality [of hermeneutics] consists in inner speech, in that one cannot say everything. One cannot express everything that one has in mind, the logos endiathetos. That is something I learned from Augustine's *De trinitate*. This experience is universal: the actus signatus is never completely covered by the actus exercitus."<sup>66</sup> Now Augustine appeals to the inner word in theological contexts to articulate a natural analogy for the unchanging self-identity of the eternal Word both before and after the Incarnation. The unvoiced word and the voiced word are one and the same; the latter is simply "clothed," so to speak.

Gadamer seems to find two aspects of Augustine's understanding richly suggestive for his own project of making sense of the being of language. First, Augustine's meditation on the Trinity underscores the consubstantiality of speech and thought: "The inner mental word is just

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<sup>65</sup> *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 43.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Jean Grondin's *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1994), xiv. For commentary see John Arthos, *The Inner Word in Gadamer's Hermeneutics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), and Mirela Oliva, *Das innere Verbum in Gadamer's Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009). Gadamer himself refers us to *De Trinitate* 15.10-15. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2d, rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1989), 420.

as consubstantial with thought as is God the Son with God the Father.”<sup>67</sup> Language reveals but this revelation is not other than what it reveals. Here Gadamer sees in Augustine’s Trinitarian meditations an understanding of the phenomenological unity of expression and what is.

The second thing Gadamer takes from Augustine’s understanding is the incarnational aspect of language and the difference between the inner word and the spoken or written words that bring it to expression. Our conversation can never quite catch up to what we might endeavor to say; our meaning intentions never find adequate expression. At the same time, the incarnation of the inner word in our speaking serves to work out or enrich our understanding. Hence Gadamer’s interpretation of the inner word is not that the cogito has a non-conventional mental language that gets translated into the conventional language of our interlocutors. It is rather that the source of speech is a desire to articulate and any actual articulation will always fail to measure up to what we wish to say. “The occasionality of human speech is not a casual imperfection of its expressive power; it is, rather, the logical expression of the living virtuality of speech that brings a totality of meaning into play, without being able to express it totally.”<sup>68</sup> For Gadamer language is accordingly not an accessory to understanding, a mere means for communication as Descartes thought.<sup>69</sup> Language accomplishes the understanding we ardently desire, and he thinks the first person to recognize this constitutive role of language was Augustine.

(i) *Marion (2008): Confessio / The erotic reduction.* Descartes powerfully philosophizes in the first-person; Augustine powerfully does so as well with this difference: In the *Meditations*, Descartes lets his readers eavesdrop on a conversation he is having with himself, while in the *Discourse*, he addresses his reader directly; Augustine, by contrast, lets the readers eavesdrop on his conversation with God. That is, Augustine enters into the Psalmist’s discourse of praise to

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<sup>67</sup> *Truth and Method*, 421.

<sup>68</sup> *Truth and Method*, 458.

<sup>69</sup> See Engelland, *Ostension*, 220.

God and occupies that space from the start to the finish of the *Confessions*. Rather than a discourse that prompts the reader to turn to his or her own thoughts, the Augustinian discourse draws the reader into an experience opened to God. Jean-Luc Marion (1946- ) prizes just this power of the *confessio*, which he identifies as filling out the form of a radical phenomenological reduction.

Now it is the reduction that opens up the realm of phenomenology for analysis. In *Reduction and Givenness* and subsequent works, Marion details three deepening horizons of phenomenological reduction, three ways of thematizing the givenness of experience.<sup>70</sup> First is the Husserlian reduction to objectivity, which approaches experience insofar as the transcendental ego affords us objects of investigation. Marion follows Heidegger in thinking that this reduction leaves the question of being unaddressed. Second is the Heideggerian ontological reduction that relates the appearance of all being, and not just objectivity, to human existence or Dasein. Marion argues that this reduction takes for granted the very givenness of being and human existence. Hence, Marion introduces a third reduction to givenness of the self as such; he calls this the *erotic reduction*.

In 2003, he publishes the work, *Erotic Phenomenon*, in which he develops this reduction in specific contrast to Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy*. In six meditations, Marion aims to make up for what he identifies as the one lacuna in Descartes's account of the *cogito*, namely that he fails to observe that the ego *loves*.<sup>71</sup> Marion argues that including love transfigures the entire meaning of the *cogito*. His book unfolds meditation by meditation as a direct contrast to what he calls Descartes's unloving *epistemic reduction*, which seeks the sort of

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<sup>70</sup> *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*, trans. Thomas Carlson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998); *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

<sup>71</sup> Marion says that Descartes' neglect of love is "doubtless his only error." *Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 7.

certainty that can be certified by the subject itself. In its stead, Marion offers his *erotic reduction*, which seeks an assurance that only another can give, an assurance that comprises the condition for the possibility of subjectivity. This reduction returns us to the givenness of the self to the self by another.

Marion does not mention by name any philosopher other than Descartes in that text, but he places before the English though not the French text, as a second epigraph, the unattributed words, “*Nemo est qui non amet*,” which is taken from Augustine’s 34<sup>th</sup> sermon. “There is no one that does not love.” That quotation comprises the germ of the text’s entire argument, namely the priority of love and the even more basic priority of being loved over loving, and it is an argument that comes directly from Augustine.<sup>72</sup> It is thus no surprise that three years later Marion should come out with a text that explicitly and thoroughly presents Augustine’s *Confessions* as a figure of the erotic reduction, which offers an account of experience in relation to the other that precedes us and makes us possible.<sup>73</sup>

#### 4. Between the *Cogito* and the *Amo*

The turn to the self accomplished by Descartes reminds many, including some of Descartes’ own contemporaries, of Augustine.<sup>74</sup> After all, both Descartes and Augustine offer a

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<sup>72</sup> Augustine writes, “Seek where a person gets the ability to love God from, and absolutely the only discovery you will make is that it is because God has first loved him. He has given us himself, the one we have loved; he has given us what to love with.” Since we can only love God through the gift of the Holy Spirit, we can only love God through God. He imagines God as saying, “Love me and you will have me because you can’t even love me unless you already have me,” *Sermons*, II, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1990), 168.

<sup>73</sup> See *In the Self’s Place: The Approach of St. Augustine*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

<sup>74</sup> For example, Antoine Arnauld calls attention to parallels in the fourth set of objections to the *Meditations*. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. II, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 138–153, at 139. See also Gareth Matthews, *Thought’s Ego in Augustine and Descartes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992). Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 134. For a rejoinder, see Chad Engelland, “Perceiving Other Animate Minds in Augustine,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 90 (2016): 25–48

transcendental rejoinder to skepticism: doubting presupposes certain indubitable soul powers. Both point to the immediacy of self-awareness to argue for the irreducibility of mind to matter. Both adopt the first-person perspective. But the phenomenological interest in Augustine and aversion to Descartes show that these superficial commonalities cover over a profound rift in making sense of experience as rooted either in the *cogito* or the *amo*.

**Fig. 2 Phenomenology's Choice of the Augustinian *Amo* over the Cartesian *Cogito***

PHENOMENOLOGIST	THE AUGUSTINIAN SELF	THE CARTESIAN SUBJECT
(a) Husserl	Distension of the soul: the openness to temporal absence	Cogito: self-presence
(b) Stein	Life: interiority and transcendence	Cogito: interiority and immanence
(c) Arendt	Natality: the priority of renewal	Mortality: the priority of preservation
(d) Scheler	Order of love: the priority of the higher	Certainty and power: neglecting the higher for the lower
(e) Heidegger	Care: concern for self in the world	Tranquility: indifference to self in the world
(f) Hildebrand	Affectivity: the logic of the heart	Stoic counsel: the indifference of the will
(g) Wittgenstein	Ostension: the bodily presence of others	The inner versus the outer: the absence of the other
(h) Gadamer	Inner word: linguisticity	Irrelevance of language: thought's conceptuality
(i) Marion	Erotic reduction: interpersonal love is ultimate	Epistemic reduction: egoistic certainty is ultimate

Descartes's *cogito* arises and returns to itself. By contrast, Augustine gives us a *cogito* situated within the ambit of love, situated within an intersubjective context marked by an openness to the truth that transcends us. In this way, the phenomenological interest in Augustine testifies to a movement from Descartes's unerotic self to Augustine's erotic self. Several



questions arise concerning this movement from one to the other. First, is the movement toward Augustine a movement from phenomenology to something else? This was the suggestion of Fr. Quentin Lauer, who attributed the attractiveness of Scheler and Hildebrand to their Augustinianism. Hildebrand, for his part, replied, “Instead of interpreting my ethical work as a hidden Augustinianism which parades under the garb of phenomenology, he might have inferred how much of a phenomenologist St. Augustine truly was in his great philosophical discoveries.”<sup>75</sup> The most natural way to construe the phenomenological attraction to Augustine is to regard it as responding to the deeply phenomenological character of his original investigations.

A second, more interesting question follows on the heels of the first. If Augustine is indeed a proto-phenomenologist—perhaps even a contender for proto-phenomenologist par excellence—has the phenomenological movement, in moving from the *cogito* to the *amo*, yet caught up to Augustine’s phenomenological legacy? After all, what was Augustine’s motivation for thinking in an explicitly experiential register? He did not have to cope with the heritage of the modern substitute for experience; he did not have to free himself from subjective impressions in order to return to the reality of the world and its cause. Instead he had to try and catch up with a radical challenge to thought: to think the unthinkable, namely the advent of the wholly other, the divine other, into the world of our human experience.

Regarding the theme of life, Augustine works out the saturation of the present moment with absence in order to point out that no rest can be found in the *distentio animi* apart from the eternity of God the creator.<sup>76</sup> In *vivo* Augustine invites us to recover a philosophical interiority,

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<sup>75</sup> *What Is Philosophy?* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), 224. Referencing Quentin Lauer’s *Triumph of Subjectivity: An Introduction to Transcendental Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1978), 142.

<sup>76</sup> *Confessions* 11.29.39.

but only on the way to finding the truth that transcends us.<sup>77</sup> The *initium* of natality, similarly, is not geared toward just any start but instead a start for one's heavenly destination, which is also one's true home.<sup>78</sup> Regarding the theme of love, Augustine speaks of the *ordo amoris* only to indicate that the rest we seek ought to be sought in the way it can be found in terms of God as the highest good.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, *curare* takes on its real significance as an expression of our freedom to resist the allure of the world and its disintegration of self and to exist toward God and thereby to integrate oneself.<sup>80</sup> *Affectiones*, richly explored in Augustine, have the theme of uncovering the spiritual experiences of the presence of God and the joy of meditating on his creation and revelation.<sup>81</sup> Regarding the theme of language, the attention to *ostendere* is only marginally concerned with the acquisition of social meaning; principally and primarily Augustine wants to work out how God might be pointed out.<sup>82</sup> Even the *verbum cordis* comes into play for Augustine in the context of making sense of the Trinity and our being made in its likeness.<sup>83</sup> *Confessio* in all its rich suggestiveness is at bottom a dialogue of a soul with the source of its own existence: the praise extended to the perfect source also involves blame of the imperfections of the one who praises; the twofold character of *confessio*, both praise and blame, takes its bearing from creation: God creates us and thereby sets us on a course regarding which we can progress or regress.<sup>84</sup>

The unifying idea to all of these rich phenomenological analyses is something that is not quite captured by the phenomenological appropriation of them. Augustine's phenomenologizing, his rich plumbing of the depths of experience, is the fruit of his single-minded attempt to make

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<sup>77</sup> *Confessions* 3.6.11.

<sup>78</sup> *City of God* 12.20.

<sup>79</sup> *Confessions* 2.5.10.

<sup>80</sup> *Confessions* 1.20.31.

<sup>81</sup> *Confessions* 10.22.32.

<sup>82</sup> *Confessions* 1.1.1.

<sup>83</sup> *De Trinitate* 15.10-15.

<sup>84</sup> *Confessions* 1.1.1.

sense of the restlessness of human life and its primal orientation to the continual source of its existence, a source that we naturally delight in praising. Augustine's original phenomenologizing happens in view of God the creator. Can phenomenology press into this domain further than it has? Or does it need to avail itself of some kind of language of causality to make sense of the giving of creation and the glory of the giver? And in this way, would it need to help itself to something more of what the medievals pursued as first philosophy?<sup>85</sup>

There is an unnecessary tension among phenomenologists between phenomenology and theology. Husserl and Heidegger both keep the question of God at bay and develop their method in reaction to the kind of subject that keeps God at bay; also, they find attractive the Augustinian self which is constituted in dialogue with God.<sup>86</sup> Yet others, such as Scheler and Marion, rightly see that raising the bastions of the modern subject and opening oneself to the question of God amount to one and the same project.<sup>87</sup> Hence the theological turn of recent French phenomenology is both contrary to the original founders of phenomenology and consonant with their deepest sympathies.<sup>88</sup> But I would like to submit further that there is an unnecessary tension among phenomenologists between phenomenology and the causal language of creation.

Phenomenologists, including Marion, miss creation and the witness of beauty as a natural path toward God; they do so because of a residual antipathy to metaphysics; what they should reject is not metaphysics per se but modern, unerotic metaphysics. Consider the way Augustine in *Confessions* 10 deploys a novel phenomenology of beauty as natural sign to motivate a

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<sup>85</sup> See Kenneth Schmitz, *The Gift: Creation* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1982).

<sup>86</sup> Sean McGrath, *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy: Phenomenology for the Godforsaken* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006). What Heidegger finds attractive is the direct result of what he finds unattractive: creation.

<sup>87</sup> See Scheler, *The Eternal in Man*, trans. Bernard Noble (New York, Routledge, 2017) and Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*.

<sup>88</sup> On the theological turn, see Dominique Janicaud and Jean Francois Courtine, *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn: The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), and Jason Alvis, *The Inconspicuous God: Heidegger, French Phenomenology, and the Theological Turn* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018).

movement toward God the creator. Marion, by contrast, regards creation as a theme that emerges only for the believer; there is thus no philosophical opening upon God through the things he has made.<sup>89</sup> Insofar as Augustine argues that we can indeed be moved to take the world as caused due to the force of certain experiences, there remains more to Augustine's phenomenology than phenomenologists, even Catholic ones, have rediscovered. Thus, the phenomenological tradition has yet to cope with the most powerful phenomenological dynamic and hence the phenomenological dialogue with God remains without the full support it has in Augustine. In this way, the phenomenological Augustine does not belong to what has been accomplished but to what might yet be. Higher than what is actual stands this possibility: recovering an Augustinian phenomenology of creation and creation's God.

After all, Augustine's leading question is, "How shall I call upon God — and not some other in his stead?" Augustine's answer is that the God I seek to experience is the God that remains close to me, because he causes me to be. The God I seek, the God I invoke, is not in the first place an object of sought experience; the intentional relation I seek to establish is but the echo of the intentional relation that I am in my very existence. As Aquinas observed, creation is a *relation* of the creature to the creator, together with a certain perpetual newness and beginning.<sup>90</sup> Augustine testifies that this continual creaturely dependence enables the experiential relation to God the creator, a relation that calls to mind for us the importance of life, love, and language.

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<sup>89</sup> "Creation appears—or, more exactly, heaven, earth, and all things appear—as created only starting from the *confessio* of the believers, who assume in the flesh (constituting and constituted) the interpretation of creation as praise rendered to God, acknowledged as such because invoked in the figure of the creator." *In the Self's Place*, 236.

<sup>90</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 45, a. 3, ad 3.

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