

Discerning a Temporal Philosophy of Education: Understanding the Gap Between Past and Future Through Augustine, Heidegger, and Huebner

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What then is time? Who can find a quick and easy answer to that question? Whoever in his mind can grasp the subject well enough to be able to make a statement on it? Yet in ordinary conversation we use the word “time” more often and more familiarly than any other. And certainly we understand what we mean by it, just as we must understand what others mean by it when we hear the word from them. What then is time? I know what it is if no one asks me what it is; but if I want to explain it to someone who has asked me, I find that I do not know.¹

INTRODUCTION

Over forty years ago, Dwayne Huebner began questioning “the hegemony of the notion of ‘learning’ in education”² and found an “overvaluing of scientific language.”³ This privileging of the modes and methods of educational psychology or “concept-empiricism”⁴ enables the self-promotion of learning, and in turn, relegates teaching to a mere function of learning in education. For Huebner, this matter of “learning” imposes “technical pseudo-scientific language”⁵ onto education, which exemplifies the challenge of language and its role in educational praxis. The curricular field is still largely obsessed with teaching metrics, programmed learning outcomes, and school objectives that are produced in advance of the lived experiences of students within an educational framework. These mechanized values point to an inauthentic understanding of time due to a curricular and pedagogical orientation built on a determinate and preordained educational future. For Huebner, subjugating education under the auspices of learning is problematic as it diminishes the essence of our being into a very narrow condition.⁶ To subsume our beingness within a framework of learning entails a philosophy of education directed by epistemological considerations to the preclusion of ontological concerns. Instead, this article seeks to demonstrate an understanding of temporality as a way to critique the standard language of learning and to articulate the notion of *authentic learning*. Huebner’s educational philosophy is inspired by Heidegger and the phenomena of temporality and historicity. In turn, Heidegger’s understanding of time is largely developed from his study of Augustine. This article, then, traces the conceptualization of temporality through the trinity of Huebner, Heidegger, and Augustine. Accordingly, one way to understand the “gap between past and future”⁷ is to conceive of *authentic learning* within the existential-phenomenological tradition by discerning a temporal understanding of life that advocates for our ontological potentialities and possibilities as human beings.

AUGUSTINE’S CONCEPTION OF TIME

How does one measure time itself? With what do I measure time? Since antiquity, the phenomenon of time has always been a point of reflection in western thought. Greek mythology identifies Chronos, the personification of time, as the progenitor of the Olympian gods. Plato discussed the challenges around the nature of time in

the *Timaeus*, in which he presents his account of the formation of the universe. Yet it is Aristotle's argument about linear time in the fourth book of *Physics* that has largely enframed Western understandings of time. Aristotle understood time as a consideration of change and movement. In essence, Aristotle conceived time using "spatial logic"⁸ wherein time is subjugated under the conception of space. This spatial understanding of time is primarily concerned with chronology, the before and after of events, yet has no concern for human purposes.⁹ Spatialized time had no inherent values, abstracting its characteristics solely to the realm of math and science. This perspective of time was the normative worldview until Augustine turned inward to the self to find an alternative way of measuring time to account for the mystery of our beingness.

Augustine specifically investigates the nature of time in his *Confessions*. He was attracted to the contemplation of the mystery of time, because it is essentially bound up with the mystery of being. Augustine's reflection begins in his own subjectivity, asking himself how time is represented in his own mind. He attempts to discern the nature of time as past, present, and future in the following way:

But even now it is manifest and clear that there are neither times future nor times past. Thus it is not properly said that there are three times, past, present, and future. Perhaps it might be said rightly that there are three times: a time present of things past; a time present of things present; and a time present of things future. For these three do coexist somehow in the soul, for otherwise I could not see them. The time present of things past is memory; the time present of things present is direct experience; the time present of things future is expectation. If we are allowed to speak of these things so, I see three times, and I grant that there are three. Let it still be said, then, as our misapplied custom has it: "There are three times, past, present, and future."¹⁰

In Augustine, the three dimensions of time are unified as one in the present, wherein the past endures in memory and the future preexists in expectant form. There is a threefold present: the present of things past, the present of things present, and the present of things future. Through intuition (or attention), memory, and expectation, the past, present, and future are not separate moments, but rather temporal qualifications that exist in the present. Augustine elucidates this triple mode of the present as only possibly existing in our minds, or within our souls.¹¹ Past and future are not things in themselves but are signs "by means of which the soul has a memory of things gone or a pre-perception ... of things to come."¹² Augustine's turn to the subjective is further developed as he focuses on the possibilities in his memory:

All this I do inside me, in the huge court of my memory. There I have by me the sky, the earth, the sea, and all things in them which I have been able to perceive - apart from what I have forgotten. There too I encounter myself; I recall myself - what I have done, when and where I did it, and in what state of mind I was at the time. There are all the things I remember to have experienced myself or to have heard from others. From the same store too I can take out pictures of things which have either happened to me or are believed on the basis of experience; I can myself weave them into the context of the past, and from them I can infer future actions, events, hopes, and then I can contemplate all these things as though they were in the present.¹³

In this passage, Augustine connects time to his "self-conscious remembering, attending, and expecting,"¹⁴ rather than the Aristotelian understanding of spatialized time. Kierkegaard would describe Augustine's temporal distinction as life-time: whereas spatialized time is derived from the examination of movement and objects,

life-time is gleaned from the study of the self.¹⁵ Life-time recognizes the actuality and potentially of a person's being. Memory, in turn, situates Augustine's reflective praxis within himself, allowing the possibility of meaningful temporal continuity. This notion of life-time, subjective time, or "mental time travel"¹⁶ connects our memories through the self to the temporal setting of our lives. Augustine considers memory and epistemology in Book Ten of his *Confessions*, but ultimately his meditation on time is a search for eternal significance as found in Book Eleven.¹⁷ Throughout the *Confessions*, Augustine states that his aim is to know God, and consequently his meditation on temporality is written for that ultimate end. For Augustine, his investigation into temporality is entwined with eternity through his understanding of God as the incarnate Word according to Christian tradition. His personal reflection, resulting in a phenomenology of time, has set forth further explorations into temporality that we continue to trace through in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger.

FROM AUGUSTINE'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF TIME TO HEIDEGGER'S ECSTATIC TEMPORALITY

In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur provides an extensive comparison between Augustine and Heidegger's respective philosophies of time. Ricoeur divides the temporal philosophies into two traditions, one following Aristotle, and the other deriving from Augustine. Aristotle's *Physics* establishes a cosmological sense of time that leads to our contemporary scientific theories about time. In contrast, Augustine's phenomenological reflections on time can be traced to Heidegger's *Being and Time*. While Ricoeur argues for a third sense of time, narrated time, "the time of narrative (or historical) consciousness,"¹⁸ our focus here remains on Heidegger. We are locating Heidegger as an Augustinian thinker, following his subjective-philosophical reflections about time. While Augustine's temporal experience is of "redemptive time,"¹⁹ an experience of the divine, Heidegger abandons eternity and orients his understanding of time to being-towards-death. Heidegger connects his philosophy of time to a "critical focus on language,"²⁰ where his view of temporality is enframed in the meaning of Dasein. Dasein, for Heidegger, is a reconsideration of the human subject as "being-in-the-world" with dimensions of authenticity and temporality, which is situated within the schema of being-towards-death. While Dasein remains a much more complex concern than this article can elaborate, Heidegger's focus on Dasein's temporality is expressed in this way:

The existential-ontological constitution of Dasein's totality is grounded in temporality. Hence the ecstatic projection of Being must be made possible by some primordial way in which ecstatic temporality temporalizes. How is this mode of the temporalizing of temporality to be interpreted? Is there a way which leads from primordial time to the meaning of Being? Does time itself manifest itself as the horizon of Being?²¹

Heidegger asserts that Dasein is structured in modes of ecstatic temporality. Thus, to understand our beingness requires that we discern the manner in which temporality is concretely articulated in our being-in-the-world. Our being-in-the-world cannot, therefore, be abstracted out of time into pure theory or matter apart from temporality. In a way, Heidegger views temporality as the meaning of our being-in-the-world. Even the possibility for growth or transcendence is ultimately found within Dasein's own temporality. Temporality, then, provides ontological meaning within the "care structure" of our being-in-the-world. The "care-structure" actualize the three

modes of ecstatic temporality so that Dasein is both futural, as always out-ahead-of-ourselves, and present, as always alongside others in the world. We are always already in the world as a thrown, living being, as someone with a past, a history, and heritage. This is the authentic understanding of time found in the structural unity of Dasein. In essence, Dasein “has the unity of a future which makes present in the process of having been; we designate it as temporality.”²² Thus, for Heidegger the meaning of Dasein *is* temporality. We are not to understand temporality as an idea, but rather that we *always* undertake this process of temporalizing as constitutive of our being-in-the-world.

A proper understanding of ecstatic temporality, then, enables our ontological selves to discern the authentic moments in time whereby all things, beings, and the world itself reveal themselves in meaningful ways within Dasein. The typical Aristotelian conception of time as past, present, and future is therefore an inauthentic understanding of time. Authenticity, for Heidegger, denotes our most extreme manner of expressing our temporal being-in-the-world whereby we discover our “authentic potentiality-for-Being-one’s-Self – that is to say, in the authenticity of Dasein’s Being *as care*.”²³ Heidegger’s authentic temporalizing of Dasein embodies a being-in-the-world that authentically historicizes the human person. It discloses the present as *multiplicitous* in that the present is informed by the past and enacts possibility of the future. If there is only the present moment, there is no authentic presence in beingness. Instead, authentic temporality demonstrates that time is the essence of one’s self, allowing for our ontological potentialities to find its way in temporality.

HUEBNER’S COMPLICATED CONVERSATION WITH HEIDEGGER’S TEMPORALITY

Huebner’s temporality framework is, by his own admission, principally impacted by Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. Huebner adopts Heidegger’s notion of *Dasein’s temporality*, and summarizes Heidegger’s central idea:

Dasein’s totality of being as care means: ahead-of-itself-already-being-in (a world) as being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world) ... The “ahead-of-itself” is grounded in the future. In the “Being-already-in...” the character of “having been” is made known. “Being-alongside...” becomes possible in making present.²⁴

Heidegger is speaking about authentic temporal beingness, and is criticizing inauthentic beingness wherein Dasein “temporalizes itself in the mode of making-present.”²⁵ Contra Dasein’s authentic temporality, in presentism we view “time [as] already interpreted as present, past is interpreted as no-longer-present, future as indeterminate not-yet-present.”²⁶ Huebner’s adoption of Heidegger’s conceptualization of temporality challenges the typical curricular view of time as a series of “nows”; more specifically, this authentic temporality “challenges the vision, design, and implementation of the curriculum in contemporary education.”²⁷ Huebner questions educators who “look ahead to expect outcomes, plans for tomorrow, and attempts to specify the future behaviour of the student.”²⁸ This futural understanding and planning of curriculum development is based on an inauthentic understanding of temporality and of the human condition. Instead, an authentic unfolding of history in education is constituted in the meaning of authentic temporizing embedded as being-in-the-world. To consider a temporal philosophy of education, one is led to “the problems

of change and continuity, conditioned and unconditioned, necessity and freedom, or of fixation and creativity ... essentially problems of man's temporality."²⁹ These different considerations of time, directed Huebner to state the following:

[Man] is not a fixed being. His existence is not simply given by his being in a given place, but by a present determined by a past and a future; thus offering possibilities for new ways of being in the anticipated future. A man's life cannot be described by what he is or what he does at a given time. His life is a complete something, capable of description only when the moments from beginning to end are unified by death. Retrospection about the threads of continuity and change composing an individual is the discipline of biography. These same threads projected into the future become the concern of the educator. Might it not be possible, then, that insights into curriculum planning for the individual are to be sought in the discipline of biography, as well as within the discipline of psychology? Whether or not this is true, it does seem obvious that education must be concerned with man as a temporal being. The focus upon learning (as simply the change of behavior) has detracted the educator from this larger and more complicated phenomenon of man's temporality.³⁰

Temporality is Huebner's reframing of a person's existence, such that the "manifestation of the historical process, [meshes] the unfolding biography of the individual with the unfolding history of [their] society."³¹ At the very least, Huebner is calling educators to move beyond their ahistoricism, having neglected historical modes of thought that could serve the educational field. More directly, Huebner is critiquing the language of "learning," which postulates a "spatial characteristic of knowledge" that is "relatively stable in time."³² Learning language, in spite of its ahistorical perspective, invokes a particular kind of change, usually limited to behavioral or cognitive modification in students. Yet, any idea of change is ultimately grounded in temporality, a movement in time. Huebner situates the person not as an occupant of space, but as a participant in the emergent world through time. The temporal human being, therefore, has the possibilities of infinite change, discerning an individual journey and perceiving the movements and continuities through an act of recollection. Temporality, therefore, foregrounds the opportunity of understanding the individual through complex possibilities of subjectivity.

TEMPORAL POSSIBILITIES IN A PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

One educative possibility of the "gap between past and future" is the conceptualization of an educational concern for our temporality. Following the trail of Augustine, Heidegger, and Huebner, we are led to a phenomenological understanding of time. We are, therefore, able to conceive of authentic learning within a temporal understanding of the human condition. This prioritization of temporality as a curricular concern allows for reflection on inauthentic learning, such as curriculum-making based on rational-scientific efficiency models and instrumentalism.³³ Educationally, understanding curriculum as a historical text, and having a philosophy of education concerned with our temporality, can involve at least three educative possibilities: phenomena of memory to access the past; activities of interpretation to bridge self to others; and discerning mutual understanding in community.³⁴

Within this educative community, there exist the possibilities for temporality in many ways. For instance, the study of life politics and life history allows us to respectfully understand how each other lives historically. Another temporal possibility, *currere*, the autobiographical reflection on educational experiences, can "contradict

presentism by self-consciously cultivating the temporality of subjectivity, insisting on the simultaneity of past, present, and future, a temporal complexity in which difference does not dissolve on to a flatted social surface.”³⁵ This educational community shares memories and interpretations and is a representation of authentic temporality embodied together. The curriculum, then, manifests the authentic in-dwelling of teachers, students, schools, parents, and other educative beings within the lived realities and traditions that are articulated in our collective memory. In this way, students and those responsible for their education, “project [their] potentiality-for-Being into the present, thus tying together the future and the past into the present.”³⁶

The linear understanding of time restricts education according to its own limited infrastructuration. For instance, a philosophy of education with unwavering devotion to educational practices from the past will only enact academic, cosmetic modifications without the possibility of meaningful change. The curriculum remains stagnant in its status quo, as it envelops students in dated goals, objectives, and learning outcomes for the sake of tradition. This view of the past employs superficial movements of curricular change that do not consider students and their potentiality-for-Being. Other educational philosophies conform to a kind of presentism whereby certain curricular views or pedagogical practices are held as eternal. Such is the ahistorical character of contemporary educational rhetoric that presupposes an instrumentalized view of the human condition in order to justify specific learning theories as sound basis for pedagogy.

A final inauthentic understanding of time orients a praxis of education towards a future that is envisaged as determinate and predictable, such that teaching metrics, programmed learning outcomes, and school goals are formulated in advance of the lived experiences of students. From the unique temporal tradition of Augustine, Heidegger, and Huebner, we are confronted with their invitation for us to live historically, whereupon the memories and interpretative processes enable a humble way of educating one another. Authentic education is a collective decision about “what aspects of our tradition, or collective ethos, are in fact worthy to be taken up and appropriate in ‘repetition’ and project, as authentic possibility, into the future as our authentic destiny, which occurs through creative acts of interpretation.”³⁷ Authentic living, then, “is not future; nor is it past, but, rather, a present made up of a past and future brought into the moment.”³⁸ Perhaps, this community, educationally, is redefining a life lived within the concerns of temporality, together.

1. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Rex Warner (New York: Mentor-Omega, 1963), 267.

2. Ted T. Aoki, “Signs of Vitality in Curriculum Scholarship,” in *Curriculum in a New Key*, eds William F. Pinar and Rita L. Irwin (New York: Routledge, [1985] 2005), 230.

3. Dwayne E. Huebner, “New Modes of Man’s Relationship to Man,” in *The Lure of the Transcendent: Collected Essays by Dwayne E. Huebner*, ed. Vikki Hillis (New York: Routledge, [1963] 2008), 87.

4. William F. Pinar, “The Reconceptualization of Curriculum Studies,” in *The Curriculum Studies Reader*, eds David Flinders and Stephen Thornton (New York: Routledge, 2009), 171.

5. William F. Pinar, “Introduction,” in *The Lure of the Transcendent: Collected Essays by Dwayne E. Huebner*, ed. Vikki Hillis (New York: Routledge, 2008), xxii.

6. Dwayne E. Huebner, "The Capacity for Wonder and Education," in *The Lure of the Transcendent: Collected Essays by Dwayne E. Huebner*, ed. Vikki Hillis (New York: Routledge, [1959] 2008), 6.
7. Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: The Viking Press, 1961), 13.
8. Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 34.
9. Mark C. Taylor, "Time's Struggle with Space: Kierkegaard's Understanding of Temporality," *The Harvard Theological Review* 66, no. 3 (1973): 316.
10. Augustine, *Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion*, ed. Albert Cook Outler (Louisville: The Westminster Press, 2006), 259.
11. Herman Hausheer, "St. Augustine's Conception of Time," *The Philosophical Review* 46, no. 5 (1937): 506.
12. Richard Kearney, "Time, Evil, and Narrative: Ricoeur on Augustine," in *Augustine and Postmodernism: Confessions and Circumfession*, eds John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 145.
13. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Rex Warner (New York: Mentor-Omega, 1963), 218-219.
14. Taylor, "Time's Struggle with Space: Kierkegaard's Understanding of Temporality," 312.
15. Taylor, "Time's Struggle with Space: Kierkegaard's Understanding of Temporality," 313.
16. See Liliann Manning, Daniel Cassel, and Jean-Christophe Cassel, "St. Augustine's Reflections on Memory and Time and the Current Concept of Subjective Time in Mental Time Travel," *Behavioral Sciences* 3, no. 2 (2013): 232-243, 233. They argue that Augustine's view of time, i.e., the ability to reconstruct the past and anticipate the future, is the ability to travel in mental time.
17. See Calvin L. Troup, *Temporality, Eternity, and Wisdom: The Rhetoric of Augustine's Confessions* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 104.
18. Richard James Severson, *Time, Death, and Eternity: Reflecting on Augustine's Confessions in Light of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1995), 19.
19. Severson, *Time, Death, and Eternity*, 14.
20. Troup, *Temporality, Eternity, and Wisdom*, 170.
21. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1962), 488.
22. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 374.
23. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 369.
24. Dwayne E. Huebner, "Curriculum as Concern for Man's Temporality," in *The Lure of the Transcendent: Collected Essays by Dwayne E. Huebner* (New York: Routledge, [1967] 2008), 136.
25. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 463.
26. Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, trans. William McNeill (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1992), 17E.
27. James Magrini, "Huebner's Critical Encounter with the Philosophy of Heidegger in *Being and Time*: Learning, Understanding, and the Authentic Unfolding of History in the Curriculum," *KRITIKE* 5, no. 2 (2011): 123-155, 134.
28. Huebner, "Curriculum as Concern for Man's Temporality," 132.
29. *Ibid.*, 135.
30. *Ibid.*, 135.
31. *Ibid.*, 139.
32. Dwayne E. Huebner, "Knowledge: An Instrument of Man," in *The Lure of the Transcendent: Collected Essays by Dwayne E. Huebner*, ed. Vikki Hillis (New York: Routledge, [1962] 2008), 39.
33. James Magrini, "Huebner's Heidegger: Toward an Authentic Conception of Learning and 'Historicity' for Contemporary Education," *Philosophy Scholarship Paper* 29 (2012).

34. Dwayne E. Huebner, "Toward a Remaking of Curriculum Language," in *The Lure of the Transcendent: Collected Essays by Dwayne E. Huebner*, ed. Vikki Hillis (New York: Routledge, [1974] 2008), 185.
35. William F. Pinar, *What Is Curriculum Theory?* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004), 240.
36. Huebner, "Curriculum as Concern for Man's Temporality," 139.
37. James M. Magrini, *Social Efficiency and Instrumentalism in Education: Critical Essays in Ontology, Phenomenology, and Philosophical Hermeneutics* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 138.
38. Huebner, "Curriculum as Concern for Man's Temporality," 137.