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Calvin L. Troup's edited volume *Augustine for the Philosophers* addresses a primary philosophical question for scholars of rhetoric, hermeneutics, and phenomenology. The question is simple yet penetrating. As beings that speak, whom do we speak for? When asked a question of this nature we most often resort to the easiest answer; the immediate addressee is the person for whom we speak. Yet the title of Troup's book should warn us that the easiest answer always discloses a much more difficult reality. In fact, the book's title reveals to us that in one way, Augustine is speaking *for* the philosophers mentioned in this book, but certainly not *to* them—*“for them”* because *Confessions* leverages the textual extension of Augustine's voice to reach beyond the moment of composition to enclose readers of other times in his questioning. At the same time, he confesses *to* a personal God who occupies a position of both temporal and eternal address.

Even a cursory read of *The Confessions* provides a vivid example of how it must sound to speak to a living and present God. Augustine's conversational approach borders on private meeting even though we realize he is simultaneously engaging in public prayer. The genius in Augustine's approach shows itself in his lucid awareness of how he is playing with time even as he grapples with the quandary of temporality. By inquiring into the nature of time Augustine stylistically achieves a kind of phenomenological vision that even Edmund Husserl himself might find difficulty repeating. The question of time places Augustine on the boundary between immediate and eternal experience. He achieves this by speaking to the only person who is sovereign over both times. It is this truth that gives his conversation the compelling pitch of human perplexity harmonized by the undertone of eternal truths.

Troup does Christian scholars of communication a great service by bringing to light the continuance of this conversation in continental philosophy. The personalities at play (Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Francois Lyotard, Albert Camus, Hans Georg Gadamer, Edmund Husserl, Paul Ricoeur, and Jacques Ellul) are some of the greatest minds of the last century, only a few of whom shared Augustine's own convictions about his Savior, Jesus Christ. These differing allegiances variably intone the chapters with different authorial voices. The danger in engaging Augustine's *Confessions* is that the text's revelatory power demonstrates a profound truth: the character of the one addressed appears and is heard in the how of what is said.

In Troup's introduction one receives the impression that he is writing to you, the immediate reader of the collection, encouraging you to engage Augustine as these men and women have. The question addressed by each chapter hones in on the underlying prompt for the book: what sustains intellectual attention of Augustine's *Confessions* 1,600 years after his death? Although other Augustinian texts are interpreted throughout the various chapters, this question acts as the coordinating theme focusing the conversation. Troup encourages us to consider again the nakedness of Augustine's discourse, since bravery is what one needs to unswervingly go where the words lead. After all, to follow Augustine means facing the penetrating gaze of God, which caused him to say, "What thing within me could be hidden from you even if I would not confess it to you?" (EN 1)

Each of the authors in the book address Augustine's confessional intonation with varying outcomes, and the tone of each might be said to follow each philosopher's view of God as a potential interlocutor. Seeing and hearing God as personal or impersonal, as close by or far away, provides a different resonant background for how Augustine's own confessions are engaged. Heidegger and Arendt are addressed in chapters two and three by Michael Hyde and Ronald C. Arnett respectively. Both authors foster a similar sound as Hyde addresses Heidegger's demolition of metaphysical philosophy by engrossing himself in Being, and Arnett pulls heavily on Emmanuel Levinas's emphasis on differentiation to articulate Arendt's esteem for human existence. Hyde's reading of both Heidegger and Augustine are situated against the backdrop of Hyde's own work on the nature of acknowledgement. Subsequently, Heidegger's interaction with Augustine shows that Heidegger, in writing, never acknowledges an immediately addressable god nor thinks personally about the problem of man and existence. The way a person can actually speak to Being remains pointedly enigmatic even as Hyde writes, "Heidegger directs us towards a phenomenological assessment of Being as a way to determine all that must be happening for such a belief to take from." (EN 2)

Even Arendt's more obvious concern with humanity is set off by Augustine's striking personalism. Arnett reads Augustine's deep indebtedness to God as savior as a shift from modernistic selfhood to personhood derivative of a radical existential responsiveness. This move cannot help but cloud Augustine's view of existence as a living death so that what exactly selfhood can or should be derivative of remains unanswered and without clear demonstration in either the work of Arendt or Augustine. David J. Depew's article follows this train of thought but stays closer to Augustine's own understanding of selfhood as not simply derivative but "temporally distended," (EN 3) meaning that simply locating personhood within time does not avoid the problem of identity. As Depew demonstrates, even the event of Augustine's conversion experience does not alleviate the problem of what he is as a man before God. This is where Depew locates Lyotard's own interest in Augustine's confessions. In Depew's analysis Lyotard demonstrates astute understanding of the problem, namely the phenomenological experience of time consciousness as it relates to the feeling of personal coherence. Depew claims primarily that Lyotard's contribution rests on his explication of difference and event as apt coordinates for understanding Augustine's view of time and identity. However, what Lyotard best teaches us through his analysis of *The Confessions* of Augustine is that the deferral of Augustine's confession in writing is itself a lesson in the problem. To write a confession of one's regret is in fact a delay of confession since as Depew notes "writing is a poor substitute" for confessing to an immediately present ear, especially the ear of God. (EN 4)

In chapter five Ramsey Eric Ramsey marries Augustine and Albert Camus in what he sees as a complementary hermeneutic approach for a post-secular age. He frames the conversation around Camus's address to a meeting of Dominican monks in which Camus strives to find in his atheism a point of religious connection. Through a reading of Gianni Vattimo, Ramsey argues that Camus in one way practices a postmodern or even post-metaphysical Christianity, which places him in close kinship with the confident yet tenuous confession of Augustine. Ramsey of course does not argue that Camus, a considerably public atheist, follows Augustine's conversion, but rather Camus call for an orthopraxy of dialogic charity evocative of the humility found in Augustine's own admittance of his need for God's love. Ramsey's appeal possesses an attractive charm even as he admits that the chasm between Camus and Augustine is great. This admission softens the force of his conclusion and might cause us to doubt his claim that he can leave readers "not so much between Camus and Augustine as near to them both." (EN 5)

In chapter six, John Arthos grants the spoken word divine origin invoking the Christian doctrines of Incarnation and the Holy Trinity as both theological and theoretical touch points. His explanation of Gadamer's reliance on Trinitarian theology reveals the significance of the linguistic turn in Continental philosophy. According to Arthos, The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, revealed and confirmed by the discursive frame of language, upend Neo-Platonist semiotics placing the signifier before the signified in their procession. (EN 6) Arthos's essay signals a turn in the volume giving greater attention to Augustine's testimony of God's felt presence as a companion and interlocutor. In fact, Augustine's *Confessions* are in a sense an exemplar of Gadamer's own *Truth and Method*, a revelation of how God shows himself in the human conversation called prayer. The next three chapters in the book follow this theme in differing directions.

The authors of the last three chapters in the volume turn our attention towards Augustine's preoccupation with time and the role it plays in the articulation of human being. Algis Mickunas converses amiably with Augustine and confronts the problem of being and time directly. However, Mickunas adopts Heidegger's language for his discussion all the while quoting Augustine's reference to God and reverting back to "Being" in his own commentary. This choice creates a lexical limit on the kind of conversation Mickunas can generate between Husserl and Augustine. Augustine speaks with a distinctly personal God, not with an impersonal Being, and Mickunas admits as much, writing, "Being had to be personalized to satisfy Augustine's search for an eternal rest, stability, and permanence to his soul." (EN 7) The point remains unarticulated as Mickunas attempts to explain Augustine's view of the soul and its relation to time stating that the soul "is not in danger of dissolution" even as it exists in time because it is encased in its "own time that is different from this mutable, contingent, and ultimately temporal world." (EN 8) Mickunas juxtaposes Augustine's view with Husserl's transcendental self which finds solidity in a state of permanent flux. The only dependable or graspable characteristic of the soul in this construct is its fluidity, in other words, the self as experienced in time.

In chapter eight Andreea Decui Ritivoi similarly situates her discussion of Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* inside Augustine's view of time presented primarily as question of subjectivity. Ricoeur's departure from Augustine's view focuses heavily on Aristotle's solution found in the idea of narrative plot. The dissipation that the soul experiences in time is enclosed in Ricoeur's notion of emplotment. Narrative plot serves as the limit, the distinction of before, now, and after enabling a person to speak and to be spoken to, to act, and to will and therefore be perceived as an individual subject. Subsequently, time takes on poetic qualities because of its moral situation within the human view as urgent, patient, or prescient. These characteristics of plot are brought to bear by the position, or more aptly disposition, of the person within a plot. The events of before, now, and after are treated and given their distinction by how they are read within the frame of the acting human. The problem of time felt by the person within it is, according to Augustine, overcome by conversation with an eternal God who offers a permanent point of view outside the scope of human emplotment. Ritivoi finds Ricoeur struggling to reconcile the relationship between eternity and temporality and attempts to remedy this shortcoming by making a similar move to Mickunas. Self-transcendence and or self-discovery are the means for establishing a coherent subject. Conversing with God, as Augustine most clearly does in his *Confessions*, becomes simply a "strategy for self-discovery, as well as a way for of coping with the knowledge of one's inevitable ending, death." (EN 9)

The final chapter possesses a distinctly different tone than all those preceding. The clue for this difference is found in Troup and Clifford Christians's use of the "incarnation as prototype" which immediately encloses the question of personhood within the particular narrative of Jesus Christ's birth, death and resurrection. All of the untied ends offered by the collection's other authors are given a calm yet commanding resolution in Troup and Christians's discussion of Jacques Ellul's affinity with Augustine. Troup and Christians assert that the "definitive word for both Ellul and Augustine is the Word incarnate." (EN 10) Furthermore, they directly reference the historical event of the Incarnation as the essential link in both Ellul and Augustine's philosophy, an event that "announces the essence of speech as the original, personal and meaningful language." (EN 11) Ellul's acceptance of Augustine's most fundamental presupposition allows a harmony of thought and explanatory discourse that eludes many of the

philosophers and authors in the remainder of the collection. Here the earlier theme of tone has renewed usefulness. Troup and Christians's discussion rings with the surety of tone reminiscent of Augustine's own confession. Of course, Augustine often appears unsure of himself and rightly so when he considers his own thoughts and actions. However, this personal discourse rebounds off the surety he finds in the faithfulness, graciousness and steadfastness of God's response. This kind of conversation refutes the semiotic trends Ellul critiques as well as the fruitless striving for self-assurance found in the chapters on Heidegger, Arendt, Lyotard, Camus, Gadamer, and Husserl. Troup and Christians's chapter is rightly placed after Ritivoi's discussion of Ricoeur because where she refuses to tread, Troup and Christians thankfully shed light on one continental who instead of contending with Augustine, extends his work into, and for, the present time.

Although rightly placed, the nature of the last chapter in the volume raises some questions regarding what wisdom can be gleaned from a book like this one. While not reducing the quality of its contribution nor its value to contemporary scholars of communication, the last chapter unveils the echo in contemporary communication scholarship that borrows its vocabulary from the referenced Continentals. Their work may, in fact, be bound by the times of their authorship and permanently enclosed in temporality. As the strength of an echo immediately fades, so also the extension of these voices may be losing their resonant power simply because they do not consider the tone of human speech embraced by an eternal presence. Depending on who is addressed, a confession can sound either quite hollow or soft and close as it rings in the ear of a near and present God.

This book provides a sound and helpful entrance for Christian communication scholars interested in exploring the intersection between continental philosophy and cosmological questions prompted by Christian faith. The level of engagement makes it an unlikely text for an undergraduate classroom unless utilized in a seminar on Augustine's work. The book is more likely suited for a graduate course that discusses the trajectory of common ideas in the study of rhetoric and philosophy of communication traced in the work of Augustine as an important historical figure for the discipline. Augustine's work, and Troup's collection of essays here show that problems of theology are not merely theological; they are human problems that provoke a response. At the center of this long conversation we find common research questions in contemporary communication study including, identity, addressivity, time, and acknowledgement. They arise in these conversations with Augustine not because he alone grappled with them but because confession involves being human both in time and eternity. Christian scholars of communication should be emboldened by this list of thinkers who continue to excite interest in contemporary communication scholarship not for their answers, but for the questions they pursued. Christianity, and more poignantly the person of Christ, always offers a contemporary yet timeless gateway into studying and understanding how speech reveals and shapes the nature of human experience.

Notes

(1) St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book X.

(2) Michael Hyde, “Augustine and Heidegger on Acknowledging the Importance of Acknowledgement and the Orator’s Art,” in *Augustine for the Philosophers: Studies in Rhetoric and Religion*, ed. Calvin L. Troup (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2014), 37.

(3) David J. Depew, “Lyotard’s Augustine” in *Augustine for the Philosophers: Studies in Rhetoric and Religion*, ed. Calvin L. Troup (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2014), 61.

(4) *Ibid.*, 74.

(5) Ramsey Eric Ramsey, “Love, and Interpret What You Will,” in *Augustine for the Philosophers: Studies in Rhetoric and Religion*, ed. Calvin L. Troup (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2014), 92.

(6) John Arthos, “A Limit That Resides in the Word,” in *Augustine for the Philosophers: Studies in Rhetoric and Religion*, ed. Calvin L. Troup (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2014), 104.

(7) Algis Mickunas, “Self-Identity and Time,” in *Augustine for the Philosophers: Studies in Rhetoric and Religion*, ed. Calvin L. Troup (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2014), 109.

(8) *Ibid.*, 117.

(9) Andreea Deciu Ritivoi, “A Time to Be Born, A Time to Die: St. Augustine’s *Confessions* and Paul Ricoeur’s *Time and Narrative*,” in *Augustine for the Philosophers: Studies in Rhetoric and Religion*, ed. Calvin L. Troup (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2014), 142.

(10) Calvin L. Troup and Clifford Christians, “Ellul and Augustine on Rhetoric and Philosophy in Communication,” in *Augustine for the Philosophers: Studies in Rhetoric and Religion*, ed. Calvin L. Troup (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2014), 161.

(11) *Ibid.*, 161.