

## ARTICLE

# Time and the Ethical Subject: Emmanuel Levinas and Augustine of Hippo in Conversation

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### Abstract

“Diachronic time” represents the provocative culmination of Emmanuel Levinas’s philosophical approach to temporality. Time as diachrony is the time of responsibility; as such, diachronic time is central to Levinas’s description of the self as responsible, or for-the-other. This paper examines how diachronic time closely resembles the temporal structure which constitutes the Augustinian subject. To establish the central role of diachronic time in Augustine, I first demonstrate that his account of the human creature’s creation by God in the atemporal *conditio*, or initial foundation, of *creatio ex nihilo* attests to the Levinasian notion of the immemorial past. Then, based on Augustine’s doctrine of the image of God, I conclude that the human subject is constituted in an immemorial relation of love with God. This discussion ultimately posits that the Augustinian subject is relationally constituted in an immemorial past that is not an extension of the past-present moment of time-consciousness, a central feature of diachronic time. One upshot of this comparative analysis is that it problematizes the proto-Cartesian interpretation of the Augustinian subject offered by recent scholars. In addition, a Levinasian lens helps us recover an Augustine who stresses how we worship God through love in action on behalf of our neighbor.

### Keywords

Emmanuel Levinas, Augustine, time, diachrony, responsibility, subjectivity, image of God

Time is a fundamental aspect of human subjectivity and perhaps the most basic horizon within which humans perceive, think, and act. Consequently, philosophers often link time and subjectivity with respect to time-consciousness: how the subject experiences time, how it temporalizes itself and the world around it, or how it exists as a unified self across time. Yet there is another, less frequently scrutinized temporal dimension of subjectivity that concerns the time of the self's constitution: when the self becomes a self. This paper takes as its point of departure this latter approach to time and subjectivity in the work of Emmanuel Levinas and Augustine of Hippo. I demonstrate that the temporal structure that Levinas claims constitutes the human subject—what he calls “diachronic time”—closely resembles the temporal structure which constitutes the Augustinian self.<sup>1</sup> Given the unmapped associations between Augustine and Levinas in the scholarly literature on time, this comparative study links two thinkers rarely put into conversation about an important theme in their work.<sup>2</sup> It also builds

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- 1 I would like to thank Daniel Weiss, Howard Pickett, and Jeffrey Kosky for conversations over several years that were the genesis of this essay. I would also like to thank Matthew Eaton and another anonymous reviewer for their insightful comments and constructive feedback on an earlier draft of this article. Their thoughtful suggestions helped improve the overall quality of the final manuscript.
  - 2 Jean-Luc Marion owes much of his analysis of *Confessions* to Levinas in *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012). Neil Curtis also claims that Jean-François Lyotard owes much of his *ethical* analysis of *Confessions* to Levinas, even if Lyotard never cites Levinas himself. See Curtis, “The Time of Confession: Lyotard on Augustine,” *Time and Society* 12, no. 2–3 (2003): 189–207; Lyotard, *The Confession of Augustine*, trans. Richard Beardsworth (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). Marion's commentary informs this study more explicitly than Lyotard's unfinished essay. Beyond these (explicitly or implicitly) Levinasian treatments of Augustine, one other notable essay comes from Thomas J. J. Altizer, who draws sharp contrasts between Levinas's “pre-primordial ethics” and Augustine's “subject-centered ethics.” For Altizer, a core aim of Levinas's project is to unthink the “subject of consciousness” established by Augustine as what would become the dominant conception of subjectivity in Western Christianity and, ultimately, modernity. Insofar as this study problematizes the idea that the Augustinian subject is founded on its self-reflexive relation to itself and not on a prior, primordial relation to another, it contests Altizer's characterization of Augustinian selfhood, albeit not in explicit conversation with his work. At the same time, Altizer draws a notable parallel between the “pre-primordially” of Augustinian predestination and Levinasian responsibility that potentially maps onto the diachrony schema I identify in both thinkers. How exactly to understand the conceptual relationship between predestination, responsibility, and diachrony on the terms I outline in this essay presents an opportunity for further inquiry that draws on Altizer's perceptive comparative analysis. See “Ethics and Predestination in Augustine and Levinas,”

upon recent scholarship to renew emphasis on the ethical importance of time in Levinas and offers a new interpretation of implicit diachrony in Augustine.

This paper has two principal movements. In the first movement, I present Levinas's account of diachronic time and outline its ethical implications for the responsible subject. To underscore the radical and unprecedented character of Levinas's account of diachronic time in relation to alternative philosophical conceptions, I also contrast it with Levinas's interpretations of Aristotelian and Husserlian views of time. In the second movement, I defend my central claim: that diachronic time plays a central, if implicit role in the Augustinian subject's constitution, even if Augustine does not thematize the subject's time as diachrony. To conclude, I indicate how this comparative study of Levinas and Augustine complicates a proto-Cartesian interpretation of the Augustinian subject. I also briefly identify how a Levinasian lens enriches our interpretation of Augustinian ethics and helps correct for a common misinterpretation of the Bishop of Hippo.

### Levinas on Time as Diachrony

Emmanuel Levinas once stated that the “essential theme of my research is the deformatization of the notion of time.”<sup>3</sup> While this may be so, Levinas's philosophy of time is rather mysterious and evolved over the course of his career.<sup>4</sup> In “Diachrony and Representation,” *Otherwise Than Being*, and other late-period texts, Levinas describes time as “diachrony”—that is, a temporality that resists synchronic representation in consciousness and which comes from the other, rather than from the retentions and protentions of time-consciousness, as in Edmund Husserl's philosophy of lived time. To better understand what Levinas means by time as “diachrony,” or simply “diachronic time,” and to situate this account in the philosophical discourse

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in *Levinas and the Ancients*, ed. Brian Schroeder and Silvia Benso (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 230–42.

3 Emmanuel Levinas, “The Other, Utopia, and Justice,” in *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 232.

4 Despite the centrality of time to Levinas's philosophy, few Levinasian scholars have tackled this complex subject. Exceptions include Eric Severson, *Levinas's Philosophy of Time: Gift, Responsibility, Diachrony, Hope* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2013); Yael Lin, *The Intersubjectivity of Time: Levinas and Infinite Responsibility* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2013); Cynthia Coe, *Levinas and the Trauma of Responsibility* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018).

on time to which it responds, I briefly review two philosophical conceptions of time from Levinas's critical perspective. The first comes from Aristotle, whose philosophy of time has exercised immense influence on the Western philosophical tradition, and the second comes from Edmund Husserl, whose phenomenological analyses of internal time-consciousness dramatically problematize Aristotelian assumptions about time yet remain, in Levinas's view, overly individualistic.

On Levinas's interpretation of Aristotle, the latter conceptualizes time as a neutral backdrop upon which experience unfolds, punctuated by a series of now-points or discrete time-slices. From this Aristotelian perspective, time orders experience in physical reality, and one can therefore study time apart from the subjectivity of lived experience. In this sense, time is objective rather than subjective, and objective time helps us keep track of what is before and what is after.<sup>5</sup> Levinas calls this "spatialized time" insofar as time is a neutral horizon "like space, made of invariable instants which repeat themselves, where all novelty would be reducible to these old elements."<sup>6</sup> With such an emphasis on "now" moments, Aristotle prioritizes presence at the expense of the past and future in his philosophy of time: "Time is the same everywhere, for the 'now' itself is identical in its essence . . . [and] it is the 'now' that marks off time as before and after."<sup>7</sup> Time, in other words, is comprised of a series of infinitely repeatable and self-identical present moments that only differ from one another insofar as they come before or after a particular now-point. As Cynthia Coe explains, Aristotle's conception of time understands the "past and future [as] modifications of the present moment, the 'now' that alone exists. . . Time becomes the linear order in which objects appear and events take place."<sup>8</sup> In his own account, as we will see, Levinas seeks to disclose a subjective—or rather, intersubjective—temporal structure from which Aristotle's measurable objective time ultimately derives. Levinas's notion of time as diachrony likewise rejects the preeminence of the present moment, the "now."

Edmund Husserl's phenomenological analyses of lived time marked a notable shift in philosophy away from the notion of objective time as a neutral backdrop comprised of discrete time-slices to one of internal time-consciousness as a condition for the possibility of our subjective (that

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5 Aristotle, *Physics*, Volume I: Books 1–4, trans. P. H. Wicksteed and F. M. Cornford (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 220a.

6 Emmanuel Levinas, "The Old and the New," in *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard Cohen (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 129.

7 Aristotle, *Physics*, 219b.

8 Coe, *Levinas and the Trauma of Responsibility*, 3.

is, psychological) and objective (that is, world-time, clock-time) temporal experience. Whereas Aristotle views time as an objective form within which experience unfolds, Husserl insists that consciousness itself has temporal determinants and, as such, temporalizes the phenomena which appear in its intentional horizon. To underscore why such a view of internal time-consciousness is warranted, Husserl points to the example of a melody: Because a melody is a unity in time with temporal extension (by virtue of which Husserl calls it a “temporal object”), consciousness must have such a structure so as to perceive the melody’s temporality.<sup>9</sup> Yet, if we try to explain how consciousness apprehends a melody with recourse to an Aristotelian view of time, we cannot make sense of how one could experience a melody as such, and not simply a succession of discrete tones or notes. That is, insofar as Aristotle understands time as an empty container of undifferentiated and unrelated now-points, he cannot explain how consciousness unites temporally differentiated notes into a coherent whole distended across a stretch of time. For Husserl, we therefore need a theory of time that provides an adequate account of duration and succession as these apply to our experience of a temporal object like a melody.

To make sense of how consciousness apprehends a temporal object like a melody, Husserl makes a crucial distinction between the temporality of the object itself and the temporal determinants inherent to any act of perception. “It is indeed evident,” Husserl writes, “that the perception of a temporal Object itself has temporality, that perception of duration itself presupposes duration of perception, and that perception of any temporal configuration whatsoever itself has its temporal form.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, in order to experience a temporal object like a melody *as* temporally extended yet nevertheless unified, consciousness must extend beyond the now and in such a way that it retains the temporal order of the notes and schematizes their relation to the now. To hear a melody *as* a melody, I must be able to hold onto the notes in consciousness that I have just heard in the order in which I heard them, *and* I must be able to continuously modify those notes’ orientation to whatever note I presently hear.

Husserl therefore claims that for consciousness to extend beyond the now in its act of perception is for it to stretch the present beyond itself into what has just been and what is about to come in what he calls “retention” and “protention,” respectively. Husserl also adds a third moment to this

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9 Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*, trans. James S. Churchill (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1964), 70.

10 Husserl, *Phenomenology*, 42.

ecstatic movement, called “primal impression,” which marks the part of consciousness that is specifically oriented toward the now-point of the temporal object—like, for instance, one note in a melody. He therefore offers a tripartite structure of internal time-consciousness, each of whose moments cannot be separated from the other two. “Lived experiences... must be extended in this fashion, that a punctual phase can never be for itself,” Husserl asserts, contra the Aristotelian time-slice view of time.<sup>11</sup> In other words, the now-point of primal impression never appears in isolation, separated from the retention of past now-points and the protention of those still to come. Famously, Husserl describes the present of internal time-consciousness as “the nucleus of a comet’s tail of retentions,” each of which refers to a past now-point in the apprehension of a temporal object.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, “in every point there is an extension and in the extension there is the ‘appearance’” of a temporal object like a melody.<sup>13</sup> This extension is like a stretch of time, or duration, in which Husserl proposes phenomena manifest to consciousness. As Jeffrey Kosky explains, “phenomena submit to the operations of consciousness where the present is stretched and space is made for phenomena to appear.”<sup>14</sup>

In sum, for Husserl, internal time-consciousness determines the time of phenomena and, in what becomes a central point of criticism for Levinas, consciousness assumes an active role with respect to this temporalization.<sup>15</sup> That is, while Husserl insists that consciousness passively first receives a “primal impression”—an actual experience that marks the momentary instant, such as one note in a melody—he focuses primarily on how the spontaneous work of consciousness extends a stretch of presence via the modification of this impression by consciousness.<sup>16</sup> Thus, contra Husserl’s own insistence on the passivity of consciousness with respect to the primal impression, the real work of consciousness in temporalization is active. If retention is an intentional act as Husserl claims, and it is only via retention that presence as a stretch of time is possible, then temporalization, and hence any apprehension of the primal impression whatsoever, is determined by and in consciousness.<sup>17</sup> Husserl explicitly attests to such a view when he writes,

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11 Husserl, *Phenomenology*, 70.

12 Husserl, *Phenomenology*, 52.

13 Husserl, *Phenomenology*, 54.

14 Jeffrey Kosky, *Levinas and the Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 78.

15 Kosky, *Levinas*, 77.

16 Husserl, *Phenomenology*, 131.

17 Husserl speaks of “retention as proper intentionality.” See *Phenomenology*, 52. Noted

“Temporal Objects...spread their contents over an interval of time, and such Objects can be constituted only in acts which likewise constitute temporal distinctions.”<sup>18</sup> Consciousness therefore assumes an active, constitutive role through which it temporalizes itself and what it apprehends. It actively determines the time of phenomena such that phenomena only have time from consciousness.

Levinas much admires Husserl’s phenomenological analyses of time-consciousness, which he interprets as an important philosophical advancement beyond the “spatialized time” of Aristotle.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, despite his praise for Husserl’s efforts to account for what makes Aristotelian, objective time possible, he critiques Husserl’s philosophy of lived time on at least three fronts. First, Levinas insists that Husserl’s account of internal time-consciousness is overly individualistic and hence fails to account for how time-consciousness is constituted in and through an intersubjective relation between the subject and the other. For Husserl, consciousness is “self-contained” and impenetrable; its time is therefore “mine” and my consciousness is what allows phenomena to appear.<sup>20</sup> For Levinas, the time of the other precedes time-consciousness as a condition for its very possibility, such that there is, as it were, a deeper, more primordial temporality that Husserl’s phenomenological reduction overlooks.

Second, and relatedly, Levinas criticizes the active role Husserl ascribes to consciousness with respect to temporalization. Rather than constitute its own time, Levinas maintains that the subject receives its time from the other insofar as time is constituted through the subject’s relation with the other person. As John Llewelyn explains, the time of the other person cuts through every moment of the subject’s recollectable time situated within the porous horizon of internal time-consciousness.<sup>21</sup> This irruption of the other’s temporality into the subject’s temporality forms a new temporal dimension that Levinas terms “diachrony,” or “through time” (from the Greek prefix

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by Kosky, *Levinas*, 79.

18 Husserl, *Phenomenology*, 61.

19 Emmanuel Levinas, “The Work of Edmund Husserl,” in *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, trans. Richard A. Cohen and Michael B. Smith (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 76–77.

20 Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book*, trans. Fred Kersten (London: Routledge, 1982), 153.

21 John Llewelyn, “Levinas and Language,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 136.

*dia*), as opposed to “synchrony,” or “identical time” (from the Greek prefix *syn*).<sup>22</sup>

Finally, Levinas claims that, for all Husserl’s attempts at the deformalization of time, the latter still maintains the hegemony of the present in his analysis of the tripartite structure of internal time-consciousness and, in so doing, denies alterity within time. Levinas asserts that, in Husserl’s philosophy of time, “the identity of pure consciousness carries within itself...all transcendence, all otherness: ‘all exteriority’ is reduced to or returns to the immanence of subjectivity.” On such a view, “the first person present” is most fundamental to “the systematic unity of consciousness...into the present, or the synchrony...of the system.”<sup>23</sup> Thus interpreted, Husserl is not so far from Aristotle in the way he enthrones the present at the expense of the past and future as genuinely different temporal registers. Levinas therefore seeks a more primordial account of time that undermines the preeminence of the present and, consequently, of the self-possessed subject. With a clearer view of the philosophies of time with which Levinas is conversant in his deconstructive efforts, we can now turn to his constructive account of time as diachrony.

Levinas’s conception of “diachronic time” strives to correct for these perceived deficiencies in Husserl’s account of internal time-consciousness. For Levinas, time is “diachronic” in that it is composed of multiple times, each of which is not the same as or an extension of another temporal dimension. On the one hand, diachrony refers to how the present time of consciousness has an “immemorial” past that is the condition for its possibility, such that this “immemorial” past has no temporal connection with the past-present moment (what was once and is not now) that consciousness can remember. On the other hand, diachrony also refers to an utter disjunction between the present time of consciousness and the “pure future,” which Levinas describes as a future that will never become my present and is hence a future that remains inexorably futural.<sup>24</sup> In this paper, I am principally concerned with diachrony as it denotes the immemorial past.<sup>25</sup>

22 Lin, *The Intersubjectivity of Time*, 107.

23 Levinas, “From One to the Other: Transcendence and Time,” in *Entre Nous*, 137.

24 Emmanuel Levinas, “Diachrony and Representation,” in *Time and the Other*, 115–16.

25 There is, undoubtedly, much to say about the “pure future” of Levinas in comparison with Augustine’s conception of the future. That said, the pure future is even more mysterious than the immemorial past in Levinas’s philosophy. As Eric Severson observes, “Levinas hesitates...to speak with much specificity about the

For Levinas, diachronic time explains why the subject lacks reflexive self-constitution but is constituted in a face-to-face encounter with the other, an ethical relation that creates and individuates the responsible subject. To understand this, we must first briefly canvas Levinas's philosophy of the face. For Levinas, the face-to-face encounter between the self and other is the provenance of philosophical reflection that truly embraces the alterity of another human person. In this encounter, the face of the other is an epiphany or revelation that invites me into an ethical relation insofar as it bestows on me responsibility to and for the other, even to the point of her death.<sup>26</sup> In the face-to-face encounter, the subject is confronted with what Levinas calls the "essential poverty"<sup>27</sup> of the face of the other, which issues a command, "You shall not commit murder"—a plea that imposes an asymmetrical ethical obligation on the subject.<sup>28</sup> Responsibility is thereby bestowed in the subject's unchosen need to respond to this plea on behalf of the other. On the one hand, Levinas stresses that the face of the other is not a phenomenon, as if it were a visible part of the human body perceived by the "I"; he states that the face of the other is "neither seen nor touched—for in visual or tactile sensation the identity of the I envelopes the alterity of the object."<sup>29</sup> The face is not, in other words, an intentional object of consciousness, which subsumes that which falls within its horizon into what Levinas calls the "same," the realm of the "I," in contrast with the alterity of the other. "The face with which the Other turns to me is not reabsorbed in a representation of the face," Levinas explains. "To hear [the other's] destitution which cries out for justice is not to represent an image to oneself, but is to posit oneself as responsible."<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, Levinas repeatedly stresses that the face-to-face between self and other is a fully embodied and corporeal encounter, such that "the whole body—a hand or a curve of the shoulder—can express as the face."<sup>31</sup> The face-to-face

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diachrony of the future" in his later work. See Severson, *Levinas's Philosophy of Time*, 265.

26 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1997), 194–219; Levinas, "From One to the Other: Transcendence and Time," in *Entre Nous*, 145.

27 Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1995), 86.

28 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 199.

29 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 194.

30 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 215.

31 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 262. See also Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being, or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1997), 89–93.

encounter is thereby at once an affective relation between bodies and a non-phenomenal event that resists any attempt to reduce it to an encounter with a particular face seen in the world.

To speak of the “self’s” encounter with the face, however, is to betray the transcendental nature of the face-to-face relation vis-à-vis the constitution of the responsible subject. That is, for Levinas, the encounter with the face of the other is akin to the condition for the possibility of subjectivity, characterized by Levinas as responsibility, or being-for-the-other.<sup>32</sup> Rendered differently, the subject discovers herself as always already responsible as a result of the embodied, face-to-face encounter with the other, such that subjectivity *is* responsibility. As Levinas puts it, “the more I return to myself, the more I divest myself...of my freedom as a constituted, willful, imperialist subject, the more I discover myself to be responsible...I am ‘in myself’ through the others.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, to be responsible, or for-the-other, is not a particular act undertaken on behalf of the other at some point in time—it is simply to be oneself.<sup>34</sup> How can this be? For Levinas, diachronic time describes this “an-archic” constitution of the responsible subject prior to the incarnation of a conscious “I” and its self-reflection, willfulness, and freedom.<sup>35</sup> Insofar as diachronic time posits an absolute past with no temporal connection with the past-present moment accessible to consciousness, it introduces a before or beyond time in which the face-to-face encounter incarnates the subject as responsible. Consciousness can never remember this encounter, since it was not yet “born” and could not thereby

32 Levinas, it should be noted, does not employ this distinctively Kantian language. In fact, he stresses that the relationship of proximity with the other in the face-to-face is “an extremely urgent assignation—an obligation, anachronously prior to any commitment. This anteriority is ‘older’ than the a priori.” See Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 110. Nevertheless, the more familiar Kantian language of transcendental idealism helps convey some of what Levinas is after here.

33 Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 112.

34 Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 117.

35 Levinas uses the language of “an-archy” as part of the diachrony schema to describe the absolute or immemorial past. For Levinas, the ἀρχή (*archē*; Greek for “beginning” or “origin”) refers to the awakening of subjective consciousness and thus the beginning of the durative present associated with time-consciousness. The an-archy of the face-to-face encounter thereby refers to the *pre*-original beyond time prior to consciousness in which this affective encounter “takes place.” The ἀρχή of the subject is, as a result, rooted in its an-archic encounter with the other that constitutes the self as responsible. See Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 99–102. See also Matthew Eaton, “An-Archy and Awakening: The Ethical and Political Temporalities of Christology and Pneumatology,” *Heythrop Journal* 60, no. 4 (2018): 625–26.

witness its own birth as a responsible self.<sup>36</sup> Levinas calls this “time” or, more appropriately, this “beyond time,” the immemorial past—immemorial because the subject cannot and could never possibly remember it, even if its recollective memory were perfect.<sup>37</sup>

Diachrony therefore refers to why consciousness cannot represent to itself the moment when it became a responsible self. For Levinas, this capacity would amount to synchrony rather than diachrony. Synchronic time implies that consciousness can, in principle, represent to itself in the present any of its past experiences. Whereas diachronic time is constituted intersubjectively and consists of multiple, irreducible temporal dimensions, synchronic time is constituted in and by the solitary subject and enthrones the “systematic unity of consciousness...into the present.”<sup>38</sup> Levinas disputes that synchronic time is the most basic time of the subject, since he claims that synchronic time presupposes a deeper, more primordial temporality constituted intersubjectively in relation to the other. While Levinas values Edmund Husserl’s efforts to locate the most basic time in the subject, rather than in some external horizon within which the subject exists, he ultimately wants to radicalize Husserl’s efforts to move beyond—or rather, before—time-consciousness.

While the immemorial past in which the subject is constituted is inaccessible to memory, Levinas claims that the immemorial encounter with the other leaves a “trace” that *reminds* the subject of its constitution as responsible for the other. The concept of the “trace” is central to Levinas’s mature philosophy. It is not an empirical imprint discovered in the world, “for any such imprint is a mere *effect* of a causal process” within the phenomenal realm, as Edward Casey observes.<sup>39</sup> Rather than an empirical trace, Levinas insists on a more primordial trace that “escapes all ordinary causal and representational formats” yet functions as “an essential supplement of the memory of the absolute past.”<sup>40</sup> Paradoxically, the trace

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36 Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 139.

37 That is, even if the subject were not constrained by the limitations of the human capacity of memory and could remember *all* its past-present moments, it still could not remember its immemorial constitution as responsible. The immemorial past is of an utterly other temporal order than that of consciousness.

38 Emmanuel Levinas, “From One to the Other: Transcendence and Time,” in *Entre Nous*, 137.

39 Edward Casey, “Levinas on Memory and the Trace,” in *The Collegium Phaenomenologicum: The First Ten Years*, ed. John C. Sallis, Giuseppina Moneta, and Jacques Taminiaux (Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), 247.

40 Casey, “Levinas on Memory and the Trace,” 249.

of the other is “the presence of that which...has never been there, of what is always past” and hence transcends recollection.<sup>41</sup> As a non-representable reminder of a past that was never present, the trace testifies to how the other inhabits a time not my own, a time that transcends the cause-and-effect temporality in which consciousness recollects and anticipates in the stretch of Husserlian time-consciousness.

Levinas claims that the responsible subject encounters the trace of its immemorial constitution as the diachronic reverberation of another’s face into the present, which he insists is *traumatic*.<sup>42</sup> The trace, he writes, is “a disturbance of the rememberable time”<sup>43</sup> that reminds me of the immemorial “trauma of persecution” insofar as it refers to responsibility for the other conferred prior to any free choice.<sup>44</sup> In other words, the trace of responsibility is traumatic because it reminds the responsible subject of an event not found in memory, an event that transcends the cause-and-effect temporality of synchronic time, which imposes on the subject an infinite responsibility for the other of which she has just been made aware.

Consequently, even the supposedly self-possessed subject who believes that her ethical obligations derive from the self-legislation of her autonomous will encounters in the trace a traumatic reminder that she is, at the very core of her selfhood, responsible to and for the other, and that this responsibility is imposed prior to her freedom.<sup>45</sup> The trauma of responsible subjectivity is not limited to an encounter with the other I can never remember, buried in the oblivion of an immemorial past; it is repeated whenever I experience the trace of that encounter in the durative present of time-consciousness, when my sense of sovereign subjectivity and self-possession is disrupted by the proximity of the neighbor.<sup>46</sup> This is a direct consequence of diachronic time: if the subject is constituted as responsible in an immemorial past yet encounters in the trace a reminder of that immemorial relation, then responsible subjectivity entails a repeated, recurrent encounter with the other “now,” within the mode of totality, that resurrects the trauma of an

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41 Emmanuel Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 63.

42 My analysis of the trauma of the trace is influenced by Coe, *Levinas and the Trauma of Responsibility*, 52–57.

43 Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 89.

44 Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 198, n. 27.

45 Responsible even to the extent that she is responsible for the death of the other in what Levinas calls “substitution” in *Otherwise Than Being*, 99–129.

46 On this point, see Coe, *Levinas and the Trauma of Responsibility*, 55.

encounter “then,” within the unrepresentable and non-thematizable mode of infinity. Diachronic time, then, not only refers to the immemorial past of the self’s constitution but also, as Cynthia Coe observes, to “an oscillation in which the subject’s ordinary self-possession is repeatedly interrupted by responsibility,” constantly reminded that it is for-the-other.<sup>47</sup> In the simplest terms, diachronic time explains how the subject is responsible, that is, obligated to and for the other, not as a corollary of its autonomy but as a consequence of the other’s demand—a demand that is always already “older” than subjectivity itself.

### Diachrony and Augustinian Subjectivity

I now aim to show how diachronic time plays a central, if implicit role in the Augustinian subject’s constitution, even if Augustine does not explicitly thematize the subject’s time as diachrony. Whereas the Levinasian subject is constituted as responsible in an immemorial encounter with the human other, the Augustinian subject, I maintain, is constituted as lover in an immemorial relation with God.<sup>48</sup>

To be constituted diachronously, the Augustinian subject must have an immemorial past in which it was intersubjectively constituted that is not an extension of the past-present moment that consciousness could, in principle, remember. In his account of the human creature’s creation, Augustine offers evidence that implicitly attests to just this sort of immemorial relation. Recall, first, that Augustine insists in Book XI of *Confessions* that God inhabits a radically different time than the finite time of the human subject.<sup>49</sup> The eternity of God is neither the privation of time distended into present, past, and future, nor even a permanent present, since the present, as one part of finite, created time, is created and therefore not God.<sup>50</sup> God, then, “precedes” the world and the created time of the subject in a non-temporal sense nevertheless “prior” to creation.

47 Coe, *Levinas and the Trauma of Responsibility*, 48.

48 I am attuned to the precarity of the term, “subject,” in Augustinian scholarship. See John Cavadini, “The Darkest Enigma: Reconsidering the Self in Augustine’s Thought,” *Augustinian Studies* 38, no. 1 (2007): 119–32. Therefore, while I use terms such as “self” and “subject,” my description of such concepts attends to the fractured and unstable nature of this subject that Cavadini seeks to recover.

49 Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.13.15–16.

50 Marion, *In the Self’s Place*, 198.

Therefore, when God creates, he does so in a beyond time, and in this beyond time—what Augustine calls the *conditio*, or initial foundation, of *creatio ex nihilo*—God creates the human creature’s body and soul. That God creates the human soul in an atemporal creative act is true on each of the different views Augustine considers toward the creation of the soul and its relationship with the human body, whether that be traducianism, creationism, or some iteration of embodiment by pre-existent souls.<sup>51</sup> In view of the radical disjunction between the beyond time of God and the created time of the subject, the question then arises as to when subjectivity “happens,” as it were. When does the self become a proper self? Augustine expresses uncertainty in response to this question. In *Confessions* Book I, he asks God “whence I came to be in this mortal life” since “I do not know where I came from.” He specifically queries what came before the time he spent in his mother’s womb: “Was I anywhere, or even someone (*aliquis*)? I have no one able to tell me that—neither my father nor my mother nor the experience of others nor my own memory.”<sup>52</sup>

51 The creationist view posits that God creates the human soul at the time of conception. Augustine worries that creationism subverts the completeness of the primal creation and implies that material corporeality is the means by which humans inherit Adam’s sin. The traducianist view posits that each soul is produced by its parents just like its body, albeit nevertheless derived—that is, traduced—from Adam’s soul, itself created by God. As with the creationist view, its materialist implications disturb Augustine. On both views, however, God creates the human soul in an atemporal creative act: on the creationist view, this takes place whenever God creates a new human soul; on the traducianist view, this took place once, when God created Adam’s soul. See Gerard O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind* (London: Duckworth, 1987), 18–20; Ronnie Rombs, *Saint Augustine and the Fall of the Soul* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University Press, 2006), 179–80. Despite his uncertainty on the topic of souls in his mature reflection on creation, Augustine nevertheless lends considerable support to the view that God creates the human soul and body in the *conditio* of *creatio ex nihilo*, albeit in two different respects. On this view, articulated most fully in the *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, God creates both soul and body in the primary creation or *conditio* (initial foundation): The soul is created in its full reality and the body in its *ratio causalis* (causal plan) (10.3.4, 7.24.35). In other words, it is in God’s *administratio* (creative administration) of the universe when God animates the human creature’s corporeal body with a soul, yet it is in the atemporal beyond time synchronous with the *conditio* when its soul is created (5.11.7). Nevertheless, we can still state that on this view, God creates the human creature (on the one hand *actually*—the soul—on the other hand *providentially*—the body, to be formed later) in God’s atemporal beyond time concurrent with *creatio ex nihilo*.

52 Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.6.7–9. All translations from *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), with some modifications.

One could interpret this text as representative of Augustine's uncertainty about the more specific question of the pre-existence of the soul and when the soul animates the body.<sup>53</sup> On a certain level, he *is* concerned about animation, since animation, as he implies in his *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, is a precondition for selfhood.<sup>54</sup> Yet, I would offer that in this text, Augustine is less interested in the ontic question about when, specifically, the conditions for selfhood are realized, and more interested in the mysterious provenance of subjectivity. Was I "me" before I was an infant? If so, was I "me" in my mother's womb? Could I have been "me" before this, somehow prior to embodiment?<sup>55</sup> Who can tell me when I became "me" except you, God, since I cannot remember it, and no one else can know, not even my parents? His concern with whether he was "someone" or "anyone" (*aliquis*) prior to his conception reflects an aporia, not just with respect to doctrinal uncertainty about souls and animation, but also with respect to what it means to be a self with subjectivity.

Importantly, Augustine does not resolve this aporia. In fact, in the conclusion to this aporetic section, he wryly remarks that "you [God] may smile at me for putting these questions. Your command that I praise you and confess you may be limited to that which I know."<sup>56</sup> The point, it seems, is that finite humans can never know an answer to the sort of question Augustine poses here in *Confessions*. Yet one plausible interpretation of the aporia is that finite humans can never know such answers because there *is* no definitive answer to this question, as it is a mistake to identify any single, ontic moment as that in which one becomes a self. Presumably, subjectivity manifests at some point "between" the creation of body and soul in the atemporal *conditio* and embodied self-awareness. Yet Augustine's aporia

53 As does Chadwick, *Confessions*, 6, n. 7.

54 That is, even if the doctrine of the soul described at the end of fn. 51 implies that the soul has some sort of pre-corporeal existence, Augustine rejects the view that a pre-embodied soul possesses a life or self of its own; it is a mistake to believe that created souls have "some form of life to perceive, believe, and understand" prior to embodiment (*De Genesi ad litteram*, 6.6.9). If this were true, it would imply that the soul knows beatitude before it enlivens a body, which would mean that it leaves a superior life of happiness for an embodied life in search of happiness, which, for Augustine, is an untenable conclusion. Therefore, the pre-corporeal soul is neither equivalent to embodied human nature, which consists of both body and soul, nor equivalent to human *subjectivity*, because, unable "to perceive, believe, and understand," the pre-existent soul does not have a self.

55 Augustine explicitly rejects this last possibility in *De Genesi ad litteram*, 6.6.9. See fn. 51.

56 Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.7.9.

indicates not only that such a “between” moment is unidentifiable and thus unknowable but also, perhaps, that there never *was* such a moment, that it was *never* once present in his life narrative.

Here, I detect implicit diachrony with respect to subjectivity. Cast in diachronic terms, Augustine points to a temporal lapse between the lived immediacy of subjectivity and the atemporal beyond time in which the conditions for human subjectivity—body and soul—were created by God. Rendered differently, the moment “between” the creation of the human creature in the *conditio* and embodied self-awareness—that is, the “between” moment when the human creature becomes a subject—has no temporal connection with any past-present moment in the life of the human subject. This “between” moment is, in other words, immemorial, that is, a not-memorable, non-empirical moment inaccessible to consciousness. We can, therefore, cautiously state that Augustine’s aporia in Book I of *Confessions* about the inception of selfhood, coupled with his speculative remarks on the creation of the human creature, lend credence to the view that the human subject is constituted in an immemorial past in relation to God, the divine other, its creator. With this much established, we can more closely attend to the latter half of that claim, namely, how the subject is constituted *in relation* to God.

For Augustine, the human subject is constituted in relation to God because humans are created in the image of God (*imago Dei*).<sup>57</sup> We can understand the sort of dynamic relation between God and the subject inscribed by the image of God with respect to two, interrelated ideas. First, Augustine understands the image of God to denote human subjectivity’s provenance or source in God. In his *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis*, he writes:

And God said, “Let us make the human to our image and likeness (*ad imaginem et similitudinem*).” Every image is like that of which it is an image, *yet not everything which is like something is also its image*. Thus, because in a mirror or in a picture there are images, they are also like. But if the one does not have its *source* from the other (*si alter ex altero natus non est*), it cannot be said to be the image of the other. It is only an image, then, when it is [lit.] pressed out (*exprimitur*) from the other.<sup>58</sup>

57 My interpretation of Augustine’s conception of the image of God draws on Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine’s De Trinitate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 233–98.

58 *De Genesi ad Litteram imperfectus*, 16.57. My translation and emphasis.

Now, this relation of origin between the human creature and God inscribed by the image of God could be interpreted exclusively in causal metaphysical terms, such that humans have their source in God insofar as God causes and sustains human existence. In this case, the immemorial relation between God and the human subject would differ notably from the Levinasian immemorial encounter, because for Levinas, this relation constitutes the subject in terms of relational selfhood and *not* in terms of ontological existence. On the one hand, Augustine no doubt holds this view: God *does* create and sustain human existence.<sup>59</sup> Yet, for Augustine—and this is the second idea to which I want to call attention—the image of God *also* refers to the human creature’s intersubjective selfhood constituted in relation to the divine.

That the image of God implicates relational human subjectivity becomes clear in view of how Augustine compares the image of God in the second person of the Trinity to this image in the human person. Whereas the Son of God *is* the image of God and thus immutably and eternally adheres to God the Father in love via the Holy Spirit, human creatures are *to* or *toward* the image (*ad* plus the accusative in Latin), and therefore are called to draw toward this image in imitation of that same love.<sup>60</sup> Consequently, to be created *ad imaginem* not only means that one’s existence has its source in God; it also inscribes within human creatures what Rowan Williams calls an innate “God-directedness.”<sup>61</sup> To be created *ad imaginem Dei* denotes (i) the *imago* itself (the Son), (ii) its source (God the Father), and (iii) the love by which the Son adheres to the Father, that is, the Holy Spirit—in sum, the Trinity—as the human creature’s ultimate end. Therefore, for Augustine, our constitution as *imago Dei* means that our subjectivity comes from God and, in addition, that God calls us to continuously constitute this subjectivity, which we do not possess as some static essence, but for which we must strive in a constitutive relation of imitative love.<sup>62</sup> Put differently, I am who I really am (toward the *imago Dei*) to the extent that I am aware of and adhere to my relation with God, whose perfect, triune, and constitutive love is that by which I become myself (as *ad imaginem*), and, moreover, that toward which I strive in imitation.

59 Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 22.4.

60 Regarding the Son, see Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 15.17.27. Regarding human creatures, see Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus*, 51.4; *De Trinitate*, 7.6.12; Gioia, *Theological Epistemology*, 238.

61 Rowan Williams, “Augustinian Love,” in *On Augustine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 195.

62 Marion, *In the Self’s Place*, 255–56.

Augustine's conception of the *imago Dei* as inherently relational means that the immemorial past in which the subject is constituted entails an *intersubjective* relation between God and the human subject. The *immemorality* of this relation speaks to the always-already nature of the subject's relation to God. Just as there is no point in the life of the human subject when it "becomes" a subject, there is no point in its life when it is not *ad imaginem*, and therefore not in relation with God.

Moreover, the human subject's relation with God as *ad imaginem* is characterized by love all the way down: love is that *by which* one draws toward the image of God, and perfect, triune love is that *toward which* one strives. Therefore, we can conclude that the Augustinian subject, whose end is love, is also constituted by love.<sup>63</sup> The subject is a subject *qua* lover, for whom love is its source, self, and end. And this has two, interrelated ethical implications. First, constituted by love *ad imaginem Dei*, the human subject is *for-God*, such that it should love God alone as its ultimate end. Yet to be constituted by love *ad imaginem Dei* also means, second, that the subject is by necessity *for-others*, since the love by which the subject becomes itself is, as from and of God, *also* love for what is not God. As Williams explains, for Augustine, "God desires to be God *for* what is not God."<sup>64</sup> Hence God, as the source of all love, both renders possible and commands the love of human persons.<sup>65</sup> To be constituted *ad imaginem Dei* is, therefore, to be for God and God's creatures in terms of the imitative love by which one strives toward the perfect love of the Trinity.

## Implications

To conclude, I want to underscore two broader implications that follow from the comparative analysis I have undertaken. The first is that, for Augustine no less than Levinas, the ethical obligations constitutive of what it means to have a self derive from a primordial relation with another. This upshot is particularly relevant because several commentators have identified in Augustine the semblance of a proto-Cartesian subject.<sup>66</sup> Conversely, the

63 Augustine, *Tractatus in Epistolam Ioannis*, 10.4.

64 Rowan Williams, "On Being Creatures," in *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 73; Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, 1.31.34.

65 Matthew 22:37–40; John 13:34; Augustine, *Tractatus in Epistolam Ioannis*, 10.3.

66 See Wayne Hankey, "Between and Beyond Augustine and Descartes: More Than a Source of the Self," *Augustinian Studies* 32, no. 1 (2001): 65–88 for one notable example.

relational aspects of the Augustinian self that I have emphasized bolster an anti-Cartesian interpretation and call into question proto-Cartesian identifiers. For example, whereas some scholars stress that both thinkers share an affinity for immediate self-presence, I have stressed that diachronic time renders the Augustinian self other to itself at the very heart of its subjectivity.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, whereas scholars in the proto-Cartesian camp identify radical- or self-reflexivity supposedly evidenced by the inward turn toward *memoria* in Book X of *Confessions*, I have underscored how, for Augustine, created subjectivity is incomplete and directed toward the divine other in an erotic movement of transcendence.<sup>68</sup> My view consequently supplements interpretations of Augustine that question his affinities with Descartes.<sup>69</sup>

The second implication that follows from my comparative analysis concerns how a Levinasian lens enriches our interpretation of Augustinian ethics. For Levinas, time as diachrony bears upon the inseparability of responsibility for the other and God insofar as the latter is linked with the concept of the trace and its immemorial referent. In “Meaning and Sense,” Levinas writes that the face of the other is itself *in* the trace of an “absence” he associates with the immemorial past. “The face is in the trace of the utterly bygone, utterly past Absent...which cannot be discovered in the Self by any introspection...No memory can follow the traces of this past. It is an immemorial past.”<sup>70</sup> He then proceeds to characterize this immemorial absence as “illeity” (*illéité*), a neologism formed from the French pronoun *il* or the Latin *ille* that, for Levinas, indicates the third-person-ness within the face-to-face encounter in the second person.<sup>71</sup> Michael Morgan explains that this “illeity of the third person”<sup>72</sup> expresses “the dimension of universality and objectivity even within the utterly particular intersubjective encounter of

67 Hankey, “Between and Beyond,” 76; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 133.

68 Hankey, “Between and Beyond,” 73–74; Taylor, *Sources*, 130–31, 137, 143.

69 See, for example, Rowan Williams, “The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in Augustine’s Trinitarian Thought,” in *On Augustine*, 155–170; Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine’s De Trinitate*; James Wetzel, “The Force of Memory: Reflections on the Interrupted Self,” *Augustinian Studies* 38, no. 1 (2007): 147–159; Cavadini, “The Darkest Enigma,” 119–32.

70 Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” 60.

71 Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 12; Michael Morgan, “Levinas on God and the Trace of the Other,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. Michael Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 330.

72 Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” 61.

an I and a you. This is the third person in the second person, so to speak.”<sup>73</sup> As Levinas puts this point in “Enigma and Phenomenon,” “A You is inserted between the I and the absolute He,” where the “He” (*Il*) here reflects illeity.<sup>74</sup> For Levinas, there is a sacredness or divinity inherent in this third person-ness manifest in the face-to-face relation between self and other insofar as it invests this relation with a kind of ultimacy that constitutes the self as responsible. Put (perhaps too) simply, illeity expresses a transcendence that underwrites the obligation to and for the other in responsible subjectivity.

To indicate the sacred or divine nature of the third personness expressed by illeity, Levinas turns to explicitly theological language. In the conclusion to “Meaning and Sense,” he describes illeity as “the God who passed,” a reference to Exodus 33:18–23, when God passes before Moses and reveals God’s back to him.<sup>75</sup> “The God who passed,” however, is not another “Thou,” nor is God a kind of metaphysical or ontological fact. As Levinas writes elsewhere, God “is neither an object nor an interlocutor”—neither an “it” one can possess nor a person to whom one answers.<sup>76</sup> Rather, God is “other than the other, other otherwise, other with an alterity prior to the alterity of the other, prior to the ethical bond with the other, and different from every neighbor.”<sup>77</sup> This God who is neither an “it” nor a “Thou” “shows himself only by his trace,” that is, the face of the other, and thus “to go toward Him is not to follow this trace, which is not a sign; it is to go toward the Others who stand in the trace of illeity.”<sup>78</sup> Or, as Levinas puts it in “God and Philosophy,” God “is Good in just this eminent sense; He does not fill me up with goods but compels me to goodness, which is better than goods received.”<sup>79</sup> While a more fulsome examination of Levinas’s conception of God stands outside the scope of this study, we can state that, for Levinas, the immemorial constitution of the subject as responsible to and for the other implicates an absolutely remote and utterly transcendent third person-ness, or illeity, that summons the self to responsible relation. In a theological register, Levinas denominates this third person-ness “God.” God and responsibility, therefore, are necessarily and inextricably intertwined. Indeed, for Levinas, God comes to mind *only* in the face as a trace of an

73 Morgan, “Levinas on God and the Trace of the Other,” 339, n. 30.

74 Emmanuel Levinas, “Enigma and Phenomenon,” in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 77.

75 Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” 64.

76 As noted by Kosky, *Levinas and the Philosophy of Religion*, 191.

77 Emmanuel Levinas, “God and Philosophy,” in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 141.

78 Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” 64.

79 Levinas, “God and Philosophy,” 141.

immemorial past that calls forth a responsibility for the fragile mortality of another human person.<sup>80</sup>

In view of the comparative analysis I have undertaken in this essay, I would offer that Levinas reminds his Christian readers that the obligations constitutive of subjectivity are ultimately ordered toward both God and neighbor and that these two cannot be neatly separated. While, for Levinas, God is not another other to whom I am responsible but the absent other who inclines me to responsibility for the mortality of human others, his claims about the inseparability of God and responsibility nevertheless prompt Christians to recall resources in their own tradition that similarly underscore how our face-to-face encounters with other humans instantiate the ultimate relation between the self and the divine.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, Levinas's insistence on this point spurs us to better appreciate Augustine's often-overlooked contention that there simply *is* no love of God separate and apart from the love of neighbor.<sup>82</sup> In a sermon on Matthew 25:31–36, the story of the Final Judgment, in which Jesus indicates that those who have performed the material acts of mercy did so not only on behalf of society's most marginalized members but also unto Jesus himself, Augustine implores his listeners to love their neighbor in concrete, compassionate action.<sup>83</sup>

80 Matthew Eaton, "Theology and An-Archy: Deep Incarnation Christology following Emmanuel Lévinas and the New Materialism," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 32, no. 1 (2016): 7.

81 I here borrow language from Kosky in describing Levinas's understanding of God. See Kosky, *Levinas and the Philosophy of Religion*, 191.

82 Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 8.5.12.

83 Notably, the inextricable link Levinas posits between God and responsibility informs his positive assessment of Matthew 25. In an interview toward the end of his career, Levinas identifies a certain resonance between the spirit of Matthew 25 and his own philosophy as well as its ecumenical potential in discussions with Christians. "I cannot describe the relation to God without speaking of my concern for the other," Levinas states. "When I speak to a Christian, I always quote Matthew 25; the relation to God is presented there as a relation to another person. It is not a metaphor; in the other, there is a real presence of God." See Emmanuel Levinas, "Philosophy, Justice, and Love," in *Entre Nous*, 109–110. In a similar vein and ostensibly with an eye toward Matthew 25, Levinas elsewhere claims that "what I say about the face of the neighbor, the Christian probably says about the face of Christ." See Emmanuel Levinas, *Is It Righteous to Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. Jill Robbins (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 280. While Levinas, who was Jewish, insists that Matthew 25 was already anticipated by Isaiah 58, which equates the true worship of God with similar material acts of compassion and the liberation of the oppressed, he nevertheless asserts that Matthew 25 is "literally true." See Jeffrey Hanson, "Levinas and Christianity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Emmanuel Levinas*, 423.

Now here we are already, by God's goodness, in winter. Think about the poor, how Christ in his nakedness is to be clothed... Listen to the judgment he is going to pass: *When you did it for one of these least of mine, you did it for me* (Mt. 25:40). You are all looking forward to greeting Christ seated in heaven. Attend to him lying under the arches, attend to him hungry, attend to him shivering with cold, attend to him needy, attend to him a foreigner. Do it, if it's already your practice; do it, if it isn't your practice.<sup>84</sup>

Augustine subtly implies in this sermon that his listeners have a somewhat otherworldly conception of their relation to the divine. While they look forward to a joyful encounter with Christ in heaven, he exhorts them to bear witness to the presence of Christ in the vulnerable and afflicted whom they encounter every day. In this sermon, Augustine echoes his powerful claim in *City of God* that *latreia*, the true worship of God alone in contrast with idolatry, necessarily encompasses both the love of God and the love of neighbor, such that religious piety is ultimately inextricable from the human good.<sup>85</sup> In these and similar texts, we encounter an Augustine very much attuned to how the diachronic constitution of the subject *qua* lover does not simply bear upon its relation with the divine other but necessarily implicates its relationship with other humans, especially those in need. A Levinasian lens helps us recover an Augustinian ethics that stresses how we worship God *through* love in action on behalf of our neighbor, in contrast with characterizations of Augustine that mistakenly attribute to him an otherworldliness that obfuscates the material needs of the other.<sup>86</sup> Perhaps more importantly, such a lens reminds Christians that the love of God should not and fundamentally cannot come at the expense of the love we owe our neighbor, in whose face we encounter the Word of God, Christ himself.<sup>87</sup>

84 Augustine, *Sermons, Vol. II: Sermons 20-50*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle (New York: New City Press, 1990), 25.8.

85 Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 10.5, 10.6.

86 For representative accusations of otherworldliness in Augustine, see Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, ed. Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Reinhold Niebuhr, "Augustine's Political Realism," in *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses*, ed. Robert McAfee Brown (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 198), 123–41; Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of the Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 551, 528–29, 552–55.

87 In the same interview in which he commends Matthew 25, Levinas states: "I'm not saying that the other is God, but that in his or her Face I hear the Word of God." While we cannot know for sure, Levinas seems aware of the Christological

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resonances of the “Word of God” for Christians, particularly insofar as this remark immediately follows his reference to Matthew 25. See Levinas, “Philosophy, Justice, and Love,” 110.

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