Cura et Casus: Heidegger and Augustine on the Care of the Self

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Abstract
In the context of the much-debated 'return of religion', this paper argues that Heidegger's concept of responsibility for oneself, including the idea of fallenness, owes itself chiefly to Augustine's discussion of sin and temptation. The crucial difference is that Heidegger conceives the process of an agent's singularization as taking place in confrontation with one's dying, the dying that opens up possibilities for action and understanding to an agent, rather than with the personal loving god of Augustine's Confessions.

> …is there not a least some Platonism in the *Verfallen*?
> Jacques Derrida, "*Ousia* and *Grammē*"

I

Modern thought and life finds itself in the awkward position of drawing sustenance from sources it can neither endorse in their entirety nor shake off in the manner of a *tabula rasa*. Presumably, this is the situation of all thought. For the moderns, however, the conundrum takes on peculiar salience due to the claim to generate its resources—in particular for ethical life, in its widest sense—from out of itself, from non-traditional, secular sources. While the emphasis on self-generation has been criticized at least since Hegel's critique of Kant, a perceived, and much-discussed, return of religion to modern or postmodern culture has in recent years led to a renewed focus on the theological sources of the modern West. In a less hubristic stance with regard to

overdrawn Enlightenment hopes, the task in approaching this cultural phenomenon has become one of acknowledging a double debt to religion, especially Christianity: recognizing in it the origins of seminal, more or less secularized ideas without which our ethical life cannot be seen as what it is, such as the ideas of responsibility and universal equality, while perusing religion with regard to that which (still) remains—perhaps to our disadvantage, but at least explicatory in relation to the return of religion—unsecularized, unappropriated, and perhaps untranslatable. With regard to the first debt, the debate about the degree to which such translation has been successful, or completable at all, is far from over (from Carl Schmitt to Hans Blumenberg and Claude Lefort). However, recent years bear witness to a remarkable shift in emphasis toward the second issue. Philosophical, cultural, and religious thinkers, secularists, non-secularists, and those in-between—at times called, or denounced as, post-secularists—are broaching the question of that which, having its origins in religious thought and life, should or should not, could or could not be translated into the language of modern culture.

It is remarkable in this context that even self-avowed secularists, who insist on such translation more than others, concede that the self-generation of modernity is hard to achieve, that the religious heritage still provides urgently needed resources that await their translation. Jürgen Habermas claims that, in the face of the possibility, provided by the recently discovered, and still to be discovered, tools of genetic engineering, of designing human beings so as to undermine their sense of autonomy, the Christian distinction between the creator and the created demands translation into the language of our postmetaphysical lifeworld (Habermas 2001). For Jean-Luc Nancy, that which remains to come of Christianity, that which philosophical concepts (those of, for instance, Hegel and Schelling) have determined as inaccessible, is represented by the ideas of love and faith—to be sure, belief or faith not in an epistemic sense (Nancy, Benvenuto, 2002).

Similarly, Jacques Derrida understands the notion of faith, as bequeathed by the Judeo-Christian tradition, as openness to a non-horizontal future to come, including the future of that tradition itself. The critical inheritance of this openness requires the always fragile conceptual distinction between *messianisme* and the more radically open *messianique* (Derrida 1993: 266), and reveals the paradox at the heart of the return of religion: the subtle link between religion as the patron of the pure, the autochthonous, the unscathed, and its modern dissemination by way of tele-communications and ruthless marketing strategies (Derrida 1998). Given the originary contamination of faith and the machine-like due to the ineluctability of repetition, Derrida continues, secularisation is never complete: a secularised concept preserves its theological memory (Derrida 2002). While pushing further Derrida's disenchantment of the enchanted return of religion by pointing to a secret complicity between the latter and ruthless global neo-liberalism, to the point of rejecting Derrida's philosophical "post-secularism" with its Levinasian insistence on radical alterity, Slavoj Žižek nonetheless wishes to "fight for the Christian legacy" (Žižek 2001). What needs to be defended in this legacy, paradoxically against a postsecularist return of the religious—and here, we appear to move back to the first debt, centred on that which is said to be already translated—is, again, the act of love, of Pauline *agape*: love as an act of freedom to a new beginning, a beginning that is the disruption of the mythical cycle of guilt and punishment, of perpetrator and avenger, of law and grace (see also Girard 1999).

If the topoi of faith, love, and the future to come dominate recent confrontations with the return of religion, the early Heidegger's turn to these same topoi—specifically in St. Paul and St. Augustine—may be seen as a *mise-en-scène*. Despite the way in which Heidegger, more expressly in some contexts than in others, set the stage for contemporary philosophy's engagement of the cultural phenomenon in question, his own critical retrieval of the religious

legacy constellates the said topoi around a theme we have recently come to associate with writers, Foucault principally among them, who are seen as less concerned with religion and its alleged return: the notion of the care of the self. Indeed, Foucault in particular retrieves the theme from the ancient Greeks, in explicit contrast with the Latin medievals, whose relation to self is said to be dominated by the practice of confessional truth-telling (Foucault 1990). But even here, Heidegger's articulation of the care of the self, with and against the text of Augustine's *Confessiones*, already rejects the assumption of an intrinsic self-identity whose truth is to be revealed in such care, and favours the instability, alterability, and openness of the self to a transformation that overcomes the distinction between rational and affective self-engagement. Like the critical-genealogical concern with weakening the hold of inherited and publicly dominant concepts and practices of the self, Heidegger seeks to return to the self a 'power of existing' that does not, in the first instance, draw its strength from recognition by others or by mastering a material world at its disposal, in the manner of the Calvinist 'justification by works'. The concern—and this time, as we will see, precisely through a confessional relation to God—is to be directed toward a self that is genuinely one's own without being masterable or indicating a pre-given essence. It is a self that, as possibility—the "possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think", as Foucault put it so plainly yet memorably (Foucault 1997: 315)—opens itself toward a future that remains unownable and unknowable. However, given that the exposure to futural possibility, at least according to the shape Heidegger gives it, singles out the self beyond its material and social world, we may wonder whether it may be seen as a desirable response to the return of religion.

II

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If self-concern is to both avoid a Fichtean originary self-relation or a Stirnerian ownness of the ego and generate a focus on the self beyond its communal world and inevitable material concerns, early Christianity offers itself as an account of human experience to be retrieved. Its advantage appears to lie in the fact that the self is there interpreted not primarily in relation to the material or the social world, but to a God that surpasses both. Hence, the phenomenology of, specifically, religious life contributes to the project of accounting for human experience in general as a relation in which self-concern may articulate itself without seeking recognition by its standing vis-à-vis the social and the material world—what Heidegger, in his reading of Augustine, terms the *Mitwelt* and the *Umwelt* (GA 60: 227ff./169ff.)—and without comfortably installing itself in its own *Selbstwelt*, the world in which the self lives, works, and tends to take itself as important, thus missing authentic self-concern (*Selbstbekümmerung*) (GA60: 229/171).

But this characterization of Augustine's attractiveness to the project of articulating genuine self-concern is not yet specific enough. Already some ancient Greek thinkers, as Foucault reminds us, recommended *epimeleia heautou*, the care of the self beyond absorption in those three worlds, that is, beyond the search for pleasure, pride, honour, power, and wealth. But the self-concern that interests Heidegger goes beyond the advice to be concerned about the state of one's soul as opposed to the state of one's body or one's property. And further, Heidegger believes that an uncovering of proper regard for oneself from Christian texts that are said to be closer to human experience in general requires the vehement opposition to the Greek legacy, especially the neo-Platonic elements whose more or less smooth integration into the formation of Christian dogma was long thought to have been the crowning achievement of Augustine's work.[1]

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[1] For example, by Ernst Troeltsch, whose claims to this effect in his influential *Augustin, die christliche Antike und das Mittelalter* (Munich 1915) Heidegger dismisses as "an old shelf-warmer" (GA60: 161/116).

It is thus crucial to see how Augustine transformed and, as we will see, radically individualized the Greek preoccupation with the rational soul.

There can be no doubt that Augustine's account of the self in its world owes more than an occasional reference to neo-Platonism, and no illusions can be attributed to Heidegger in this regard. The marriage of the Christian *creatio ex nihilo* and Platonic *methexis* results in an account of created things as having being through their participation in God's eternal thoughts. What prevents the human soul from seeing the cosmic order as God's rational creation is the human body and its consequent involvement with the sensible which is, as in Plato, contrasted with the intelligible and immutable. Hence, what is decisive is the soul's conversion to attend to the latter, and not to the changeable realm of the social and physical worlds. Augustine's emphasis in such conversion, however, does not lie on rational attention to the immutable ideas as manifest in the outer world, but on love of a God who is to be found, principally, in the inner world of the soul: "*melius quod interius*" (*Conf.* X.vi.9; cf. GA60: 179/131; Taylor 1989: 127ff.). It is this double difference—the focus on love and on inwardness—that, as we will see, becomes crucial for Heidegger's rearticulation of authentic care.

Still, insofar as Augustine retains the neo-Platonic orientation to the outer world as a way of discovering God, a retrieval of early Christian life experience demands that we follow Luther in rejecting the Greekanizing interpretation of Romans 1:20, which authorized infiltration by Greek philosophy, and which then came to prevail from the Patristic period throughout medieval philosophy:

> For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (Rom 1:20).

When Luther, in his Heidelberg *disputatio* of 1518, comments that "the man who looks upon the invisible things of God as they are perceived in created things does not deserve to be called a theologian", Heidegger claims that "only Luther really understood this passage for the first time" (GA 60: 281/213). Despite the wide-spread and fateful "misunderstanding" of this passage—a misunderstanding Heidegger does not set out to refute explicitly—"one cannot simply dismiss [*abstreifen*] the Platonic in Augustine" in the task of gaining "the authentically Christian" (GA 60: 281/212). Along with this Platonic conception of outward being as immutable and the resulting conception of an ascent from the sensible to the intelligible, what is most indebted to Greek metaphysics in Augustine, according to Heidegger, is the axiological and ultimately aesthetic theory of value which equates God with being, goodness, and beauty (GA60: 271/204). In addition, the concept of God as eternal being betrays what we might call, following the later Heidegger and Derrida, an onto-theological metaphysics of presence. As a result, and this time in the language of the early Heidegger, the relation to God is dominated by a fateful sense of content (*Gehaltssinn*), which Heidegger's phenomenology, in his much-discussed account of the 'formal indication', distinguishes from the relational sense (*Bezugssinn*) and, most crucially, from the sense of enactment (*Vollzugssinn*; GA60: 63/43). And yet, despite the Lutheran *destructio* thus required in reading Augustine (cf. van Buren 1994: 162ff.), the latter's turn to inwardness recognizes the centrality of enactment, and thus moves the self and its always factical and particular experience into the center of attention.

It is, then, no surprise that Heidegger chose *Confessiones* X for his destructive and phenomenological retrieval, the book with which one should begin the entire text, as he still recommended in 1933 (Heidegger, Blochmann, 1989: 62). *Confessiones* X shows Augustine at his most inward, searching for God in his memory. Although occupying the place of Plato's idea

of the good, and equally inaccessible by direct routes, Augustine's God is also a personally loving God and a creator. Hence, in contradistinction to Plato, God is not only the sun that both sustains beings and allows them to be seen, but also the light in the soul of which the gospel speaks (John 1:9). For Augustine, God is the "medice meus intime" (physician of my intimate self) who stirs up the heart to seek to know God, do good works, and strive for the eternal happy life (*Conf.* X.iii.4), who judges me as the "spiritus hominis, qui in ipso est" (the spirit of man which is in him), and who grants me light so that "quod de me scio, te mihi lucente scio" (what I know of me, I know by your illuminating it to me) (*Conf.* X.v.7). With Plotinus, the Delphic oracle's exhortation to self-knowledge becomes the path to God, and knowing God the path to self-knowledge: "quid est enim a te audire de se nisi cognoscere se?" (for what else is it to hear from you about oneself, but to know oneself?) (*Conf.* X.iii.3).

According to this non-Platonic side of Augustine, then, by trying to understand myself better, I am getting to know my creator; by making my always already (pre-reflectively present) self-knowledge more explicitly present, I come to the realization of my fullest potential as a rational creature, made in God's likeness (see also *De libere arbitrio*, bk. II). By reaching for God, I come to experience my most intimate nature as a rational being fit for the happy life spent in proximity to God; conversely, by trying to grasp my elusive self and to become present to myself, I meet God as my creator. In his interpretation of Augustine, Heidegger takes up this reversible relation by citing Kierkegaard: "The criterion for the self is always: that directly before which it is a self…The greater the conception of God, the more self there is; the more self, the greater the conception of God" (GA60: 248/186; Kierkegaard 1983: 79f.). The self is most fully itself if it radically relates itself to that which it is not, and such a relation is radical if the self

risks itself in it, to the point of losing all hold in the self-world, and the communal and

surrounding worlds:

> …it is precisely in that mode in which the self no longer attributes any achievements to
> itself, that everything is released [*alles aus der Hand gegeben wird*] in rejoicing before
> God…In the last and most decisive and purest concern for oneself lurks the possibility of
> the most abyssal fall, and of authentically losing oneself. ('Abyssal' because the fall has
> no longer any hold, and it cannot be enacted before anything…)" (GA60: 240/180).

If the parenthetical comment indicates to us that God, for Heidegger, is not to be read as a present

content-sense, let alone as presence *par* excellence—in *Being and Time*, death will take the place

of God as that in relation to which the self may gain itself authentically—the preceding passage

confirms what I called the attractiveness of the Christian relation to God for an account of radical

self-concern beyond the things which are present to us in our everyday experience. The

Augustinian relation to God brings the self into a possibility of 'having' itself, of experiencing its

experience in an act of self-reflexivity whose depth, as Charles Taylor has emphasized, is

unknown to the Greek care of the self as well as to our normal involvement with things (cf.

Taylor 1989: 130). At the same time, if the path to God becomes interior, the road to the highest

being, to knowledge and to the good, is radically individualized. Whereas the Platonic ideas grant

being to a world that is common to all, the Augustinian search for God is, as Heidegger will say

famously a few years later, 'in each case mine' (*jemeinig*).[2] Here, the abandonment of the normal

worlds (self-world, communal world, and surrounding world) is brought about by the

individualizing relation to God: "…die Not steigert sich, und jeder steht allein vor Gott [the

anguish increases, and each stands alone before God]" (GA60: 112/79). Already here, Heidegger

is searching for a "radical reference to the self, authentic facticity" which is "something which

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[2] See Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, § 9, which also cites Augustine's *Confessiones* X.vi on the self in its struggle to
understand itself in order to indicate the necessity of explicating the self (*Dasein*) in its average everydayness as the
"ontically closest" and yet "ontologically farthest" (Heidegger 1986: 43f.).

cannot be taken over from others at all" (GA 60: 196/144; cf. the account of death in *Sein und Zeit*, § 47, Heidegger 1986: 240).

The relation to God individualizes the self and moves the relational and enactmental sense into the center of attention. The sense of enactment cannot become a publicly accessible and scientifically objectified relation, as it indicates the relation that can only be actualized, enacted, or performed, in each case uniquely, by an individual from within his or her factical lifeworld. The relation to God pulls the self out of its normal, everyday involvements and turns it onto its own acts of relating or enacting. In so doing, it opens up the self to its relational acts, and allows them to be seen as acts against a background of other possibilities: "the direction of experience…opens up possibilities, but only if they are experienced as directions, that is, if the facticity of life itself lives in a directed enactment—as directed" (GA60: 253/189f.). In this way, sedimented and publicly accepted, quotidian habits and ways of life, of desiring, believing, and acting, become reactivated as choices of the self with which it may concern itself. The point is to "project" (*entgegenwerfen*) that which is not present and at one's disposal in oneself as 'possibility' to oneself so that it suffices to take possession of oneself (*sich bemächtigen*; GA 60: 198/145).

Hence, the self-concern that presents itself in the interior search for God promises to open up one's ownmost potential for being-oneself, such that the self at the same time transcends itself. In Augustine, this paradoxical movement takes the self from the interior to the upward exterior, to the *beata vita* that ultimately consists in being with God. If the upward exterior is no longer identified with the God of the onto-theological tradition, it becomes, in Ernst Bloch's memorable words, "the problem of the radically new" (Bloch 1918: 372, cf. Bloch 1959: 347), or, in Heidegger's words, the new not as the object of *curiositas* or *Neu-gier* (greedy desire for

the new; GA 60: 223/166) that seeks the frequent "alteration of what is at one's disposal" (GA60: 218/163). Rather, it becomes the openness of the possible in which the self enacts its self-enactment, an openness to the future that is not already determined as eternal life, the *beata vita* in presence of the supremely present.

III

In Foucault as in Heidegger, self-concern requires a peculiar attention to the historical dimension of the self, and in a double sense. If, as I said at the outset, every time and self has to negotiate its tradition, it becomes crucial not to let the self sink too deeply into its habits of desiring, believing, and acting. Hence, we have the genealogical critique that estranges and defamiliarizes us from inherited ways of speaking and thinking to "imagine it otherwise than it is" (Foucault 1997: 311). Hence, also, Heidegger's 'destruction' of a metaphysics that is, however, not as contingent for Heidegger as for Foucault. Heidegger connects the first sense of attention to history with the second: metaphysics proceeds from tendencies in the self that are intrinsic to its factical life. Formally indicating the structure of this life by rewriting Husserl's phenomenological reduction and re-reading Augustine's account of temptation requires that the temporal-historical structure of the self in its relation to God—and that means, as indicated a moment ago, to an open future—be laid out. The destruction of (a certain) tradition must proceed against the tendencies of the self to 'fall' into the public interpretation and habits which, as handed down, obscure the possibilities of the self to be itself. Both to clarify the notion of self-concern that the early Heidegger articulates by reading Augustine and to grasp the historical

dimension better, we thus need to deal with the duplicity, conflict, or ambiguity (*Zwiespältigkeit*) of a life always torn between its authentic and inauthentic possibilities.

Since the publication of Heidegger's 1921 lecture course on Augustine, there can be little doubt that the legacy of the notion of '*Verfallen*' or '*Abfall*', as it appears so prominently in *Sein und Zeit*, takes us back to Augustine's neo-Platonic '*cadere*' (falling) from spirit to flesh:

> An omnes hoc [vita beata] volunt, sed quoniam caro concupiscit adversus spiritum et spiritus adversus carnem, ut non faciant quod volunt, cadunt in id quod valent eoque contenti sunt…? (or do all men desire this [the happy life], but because the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that they do not do what they wish, they fall into what they are able to do, resting content with that…?) (*Conf.* X.xxiii.33; see GA60:197/145; GA60: 219/163).

Although *Sein und Zeit* does not explicitly mention Augustine in connection with its interpretation of the existential structure of falling, Heidegger does acknowledge a debt with regard to the account of the being of *Dasein* as care (Heidegger 1986: 199n),[3] the existential notion of anxiety (Heidegger 1986: 190n), and the already mentioned concept of curiosity in its reference to concupiscence as the average everyday primacy of vision in the self's concern with the world (Heidegger 1986: 171).

As has been pointed out, other central concepts, existentialia in particular, of the early Heidegger's major text can be traced to specifically religious sources (see van Buren 1994; Kisiel 1993). However, we need to avoid what Herman Philipse has called a genetic fallacy in this context: as a compositional whole, a text can never be reduced to, but only illuminated by, its sources. In addition, *Sein und Zeit* seeks to specify structural characteristics of human existence, and in so doing, employs Christian notions, whether those of Paul, Augustine, Eckhart, Luther,

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[3] What *Sein und Zeit* calls '*Sorge*' (care) is, in the 1921 interpretation of *Confessiones* X, called '*Bekümmerung*', which we thus translated there as 'concern'. Van Buren has suggested that '*Bekümmerung*' be translated as 'worry', and that the Heidegger of *Sein und Zeit* turns it into 'anxiety' rather than 'care' (Heidegger 2002: 189n2, 193n3). In his reading of Augustine, however, it is clear that '*Bekümmerung*' translates 'cura' (e.g., GA60: [151, title of] § 12), and in *Sein und Zeit*, the Latin 'cura' is translated as '*Sorge*' (e.g., Heidegger 1986: 197f.).

Pascal, or Kierkegaard, not in their religious sense, but as formal indicators (see also Philipse 1998: 176f.). Still, as I will suggest below, references to these sources may allow us to ask questions about the success and desirability of the 'secularizing' translation, if that is what it is.

While references to '*cadere*' in Augustine are rare, references to '*Abfall*' abound in Heidegger's reading of Augustine. However, Augustine emphasizes the struggle of life with its tendency to fall away from the singularizing, self-orienting relation to God into the multiplicities of sin, concupiscence, and the lusts of the body. It is precisely the confessional relation to God that reveals the self as, potentially, one in its everyday struggle with temptation. For concupiscence besets Augustine's self as a *malitiae diei et noctis*, an evil of day and night, of the waking body and lustful dreams (*Conf.* X.xxxi.43). The point of the confession is to question the self in its experience in order to discover that which is of God in the self, in order to become deserving of the gift of grace. Since, due to original sin, life's struggles with its temptations are unending—"vita humana super terram tota tentatio est [human life on earth is all temptation.]" (*Epistulae* XCV 2)—and the outcome as well as the gift uncertain, the self reveals itself in its nakedness and stretches itself out onto an open future. In this struggle, the self's being becomes a question to itself: "quaestio mihi factus sum [I have become a question to myself]": "quid ergo sum, deus meus [what am I, therefore, my God?]" (*Conf.* X.xvii.26).

Among the sins that pull the self away from the concentration on the question of its being, from its search for God by confessing its temptations, is the attempt to establish oneself comfortably in the material world and seek recognition from others, rather than from God. Following 1 John 2:15-17, Augustine divides sin into *concupiscentia carnis* (desire of the flesh), *concupiscentia oculorum* (desire of the eyes), and *ambitio saeculi* (secular, worldly ambition) (*Conf.* X.xxx.41). While the first most closely connects the Christian doctrine of original sin to

the Platonic disregard for the body and its inevitable immersion in the material world, the last type of sin stresses the self's relation to the social world and what Heidegger calls the self-world. The desires of the flesh and the eyes are primarily directed at objects in the world, whereas the third kind is concerned with the social world: "timere et amari velle ab hominibus non propter aliud, sed ut inde sit gaudium, quod non est gaudium [the desire to be feared and loved by people for no other end than the joy derived from it, which is no joy]" (*Conf.* X.xxxvi.59). It is such desire for social approval that pulls the self away from God's truth, and makes it love itself as well as other people for their own sake, rather than for their being God's creations. Again, the soul must be pulled inward in order to move upward, toward God and the promise of an eternal *beata vita*.

While Heidegger emphasizes the being of the self in this searching, being pulled, and caring for its soul, he rejects the upward movement. Central to a phenomenological-ontological account of the self indeed becomes the concern of the self for its being, for the state of its soul, in its everyday involvement. In the inextricable connectedness of exposure to temptations and soul-searching, of *tentatio* and *quaestio*, Augustine laid bare the self's original structure as *curare*: the "being" of the self is "somehow determined by the sense of the dealing-with and coping [*des Umgehens und Fertigwerdens*]" (GA60: 212/157). In opposition to a theoretical, scientific-objective, content-oriented attitude in which what is closest—the self in its daily activities—drops out of view, Augustine's confessional mode proceeds from the self's factical life as experienced, in each case, by a singular self, rather than distilled and abstracted into a publicly accessible, identical content. Only the phenomenon of temptation in its self-concerned, confessional exposure to God reveals the self as singular. Hence, temptation is necessary to concentrate the self on its factical life, its always unique sense of enactment as well as its equally

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unique possibilities. At the same time, of course, temptation turns the self to its concern with objects and their content, and 'pulls' the self into the acceptance of already prepared, interpreted, pre-given possibilities. These are, consequently, no longer experienced as possibilities enacted by the self; the self is merely "among" the world (*Dabeisein*), one among other people, and reads itself accordingly: "this means that the self qua self does not articulate itself enactmentally [*sich nicht vollziehend artikuliert*] in the experiental enactment" and thus does not "come to itself", but rather is "lived by the world" rather than living it (GA 60: 228/170). This double role of temptation is what Heidegger terms the duplicity, conflict, or ambiguity (*Zwiespältigkeit*) of life:

> In giving in to this *tentatio*, the self is lost for itself in its ownmost way. Correspondingly, here is the winning and finding of oneself, the possibility of knowing oneself and getting clear about oneself (GA 60: 229/171).

Temptation, then, represents both the possibility of opening up the self to its own potential, and the option of putting aside possibilities by comfortably installing oneself in "the real, in what is significant", that is, in what has already become actual and acquired an established, usually communally shared, meaning for the self (GA60: 218/162). These two possible responses may also be characterized by their different relations to the future. The latter seeks to increase that which is significant to the self, that which already stands in validity for the self, and that which is already at its disposal in some way (GA60: 219/163). It wishes to increase the new that already has meaning for it, in order to distract itself from itself by "flowing into the many" (*defluxus in multum*; GA60: 280/211): it seeks further confirmation from others, more praise, more objects and their content in caring for its material well-being and social standing. In this inauthentic comportment to the future, the Heidegger who had just abandoned the strongly anti-modernist rhetoric of dogmatic Catholicism (see van Buren 1994: 123ff.), detects an absorption in the "bustling activity" of life concerned to secure its future; indeed, bustling

activity may be identified with "inauthentic concern" (*unechte Bekümmerung*; GA60: 271/204). However, he reserves his severest strictures for the *ambitio saeculi*, the *amor laudis*: seeking recognition from others is "mostly motivated by cowardly weakness and insecurity, the dependence upon models [*Anlehnungsbedürftigkeit*], the need of being allowed to go along" (GA60: 229/171). In giving in to such a need, in falling into *das Man* (the They), as he will later say, the self misses its chance to appropriate itself genuinely.

By contrast, as we already saw, genuine self-possession, in regard to whose characterization Heidegger is willing to take over the neo-Platonic language of the self's oneness as opposed to the distracting dispersion into multiplicity (GA60: 206/152), is found precisely by opening oneself to an open future (GA60: 198/145), by "experiencing possibility, living in the open, keeping open, opening [oneself] authentically". An "authentic", "enactmental" experience of *tentatio* becomes present to those "who radically become 'questions' to themselves" and cultivate "an opening relation" to themselves so that "*possibility*" is experienced as the true 'burden' [*molestia*]". "Freedom" emerges when "solid reality [the reality we always take for granted in our everyday life] disappears" and the self "assumes [*annehmen*] its existence" by living "radically in possibility" (GA60: 248f./186f.). The future is here not projected as that which I have already interpreted, as a horizon determined by one's material and social needs, but as a 'radical' openness, that is, as that which is not at one's disposal and cannot be anticipated: in Foucault's words, the work of freedom is (to remain) "undefined" (Foucault 1997: 316).

On the basis of Augustine's emphasis on the insecurity of life in light of the omnipresent possibility of overwhelming temptations, then, Heidegger interprets the historical dimension of the self, its temporality, on the basis of *tentatio*: my past is the possibility that has become actual, whereas my present "stands in a '*fiat*': the becoming which could still occur" (GA60: 217/161).

What a primal Christianity reborn in Augustine's *Confessiones*, despite the overlay of Greek concepts, discovered is the historical-temporal structure of a life that assumes its own future as self-enactment. Indeed, Augustine gave it a more detailed interpretation by exposing the self in its concern not only to the future of the *parousia*, but the ultimately uncontrollable and erratic incoming of temptations: "Already the next moment can make me fall, and expose me as someone entirely different" (ibid.). The required watchfulness, anguish, and questionability or insecurity of a life exposed to God as the unpredictable openness of the future reveals the self as never quite identical with itself, as 'stretched-out' toward an unknown future full of possibilities, as Heidegger already says here (ibid.). Fundamentally obscure or concealed to itself, the search for unity renders self-concern unending and the being of the self non-present, that is, historical in a way inaccessible to Greek *theoria* and modern, objective science.

It in this sense that Heidegger emphasizes the *kairos* in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians: "the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night" (I Thess 5, 2; GA60: 112/79). If the *parousia* is not interpreted as expecting the Messiah every day, but as increasing the anguish in standing alone before God, Christian life, as opposed to "late Judaism", articulates the primacy of enactment over the expectation of an event (GA60: 114/81). It is the singularizing relation to God, and corresponding location of the messianic in the soul rather than as a public, social event with more or less determinate features, that allows Christian experience to outline factical life in its originary, authentic temporal-historical dimension.

IV

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As we have seen, in reading the factical life experience of primal Christianity—as articulated by Paul, and re-awakened by Augustine as well as Luther and Kierkegaard—as a formal indication of a life exposed to an unpredictable, non-present future, Heidegger abandons the orientation to a gift of grace that, for Augustine, could be, if not brought about by proper concern for the self, at least expected, or hoped for, by rendering the state of the soul deserving of such grace. Hence, Augustine's confession to God is a dialogue with a personal, loving God and saviour. Heidegger's philosophical intentions in reading *Confessiones*, however, sever the confessional, singularizing relation, the relation that allows the self to soar above the social and material worlds, from such an expectation. Hope becomes emptied of a transcendent content: *vita beata*, *veritas*, *fruitio Dei*: eternal life in God's proximity. What remains is the focus on one's factical self-enactment, as brought to light in genuine self-concern. The action of God, the giving of grace, becomes 'naturalized' in the existential care of the self.

Philosophy, as the phenomenological extension of the tendencies of factical life (cf. GA 63: 197), seeks to wrest life from its self-obscuring tendencies by interpreting it more originally, thus restoring it to its most authentic possibilities. As such, it may not be religious itself, but, as Philipse writes, "methodologically atheistic" without, for all that, being wholly secular (Philipse 1998: 177): philosophy "stands honestly before God", Heidegger wrote in 1922, only by the "act of throwing life back to life itself" (Heidegger 2002: 194n9). While this, from a religious perspective, amounts to "raising one's hand against God", it is the only possibility of avoiding "glib talk about religiosity" (ibid.). Perhaps we should take this to mean that faith, and not philosophy, is the only way that grace may be received; the modern separation of Augustine's *credo ut intelligam* disallows philosophy any intimate connection to grace. There is nothing

philosophy, and that also means the hermeneutics of facticity won in reading religious life, can do to deserve the gift of God.

Heidegger retains the singularizing reference to a God beyond the communal and surrounding worlds, but in emptying Augustine's God of its potential presence in the self, in denying the gift of grace as a phenomenon of life (cf. Esposito 1996: 282), the singularizing relation is no longer dialogical, but autoteleological (though *Sein und Zeit*, §34, admits the voice of the friend that every Dasein carries with it; Heidegger 1986: 163). It is also no longer motivated by expectation of a loving response. The personal relation to God as the creator, and to Christ as the saviour, is replaced by the exposure to an open future that reveals the nullity of a life devoid of grace, and with it, the possibility of seizing one's potential for being oneself. This explains the marked difference in tone between Heidegger's emphasis on the struggle of 'man' and Augustine's on the love of God, a difference John Caputo has explored further by contrasting Heidegger's and Derrida's reading of *Confessiones* (Caputo: 1996b).

While Heidegger's modernizing abandonment of the orientation to a promised eternal life is consistent with his, in the sense indicated, 'secular' interpretation of *Dasein* as a general structure, it leaves the self with a lack of motivation for radical self-enactment: the nullity of existence seems insufficient to pull the self out of its everyday involvement in the world. But Heidegger's account of the self in its exposure to the nullity of existence, the void left by the flight of the gods, may appear phenomenologically adequate to our current, late or post-modern cultural condition, with its rootlessness and the emptiness of post-traditionalism—the very situation that might explain the phenomenon of the return of religion with which we began. The early Heidegger, no doubt, would recommend authentic self-concern in this situation in order to pull the self out of a *horror vacui* that consists in being pulled along by the 'bustling activity' to

which said conditions obligate individuals even more than before. In so far as authentic concern, like Foucault's undefined work of freedom, calls for a historical-genealogical loosening of the grip traditional practices and communal habits have upon the self, the accelerated speed of the late modern condition may even help to prevent the self from sinking deeply, too deeply for radical self-examination and self-concern, into such practices, as William Connolly has argued recently (Connolly 2002: 142ff.).

But the return of religion—especially if we understand it, with Žižek and others, as a response to, or at least as inseparable from, neo-liberal globalization—seems to call for a different, and differently motivated, answer: it needs to be transformed into a socio-political problem that is recognized and tackled as such. And here, religion and its secularizing translation may provide resources that Heidegger's powerful interpretation of the life experience of early Christianity, not by chance, neglects. What I have in mind here is brought out by those who seek, consciously or unconsciously, in Judeo-Christian religion an impulse to social and political work. Despite important differences, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Ernst Bloch, Richard Rorty,[4] and Marx, whose call for a classless society has more and more been read as a secularized messianism, join company here. The messianism in question seeks to transform (without fully exhausting) a longing that, among other, less salutary things, finds expression in the return of religion—a desire for life in its wholeness, for peace, for repairing what was damaged and reviving those slain—into socio-political, prophetic projections. Those projections would precisely be based on the material and social needs Heidegger finds distracting. The expectation of *beata vita* may then become a communal hope for a better future in a *civitas terrena* that is not irreconcilably opposed to the *civitas Dei*, a hope that does not disparage, but seeks to cultivate the

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[4] Cf. Rorty, "Schlachtbank der Geschichte. Bemerkungen anläßlich der Entgegennahme des Meister-Eckhart-Preises" *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, December 4, 2001.

need for community. Here, the theme of 'grace' returns as the breaking of what Benjamin called the 'mythical spell' of law and punishment (Benjamin 1979). At the same time, we can no longer privilege, as Heidegger did, the Christian turn to the singular soul in its exposure to a radically open future over the Judaic, communal expectation of a worldly event.[5]

Nor should political messianism privilege the latter (although arguments demonstrating that individualization occurs only by socialization are too convincing to neglect in this context). Both pairs of the difference in question—the erratic as opposed to the horizonal future, the singular self and the community—may be translated into a dialectic that preserves both moments, albeit in a conflictual tension without synthesis. Communities, as both the word's etymology and recent history make clear all too painfully, may easily turn to the building of protective walls, in particular if they are united by a common vision of the future (and even if that vision does not go so far as to claim to single out the elect). The radically open, un(kn)ownable and unpredictable future upon which the early Heidegger insists may then stand for the contestability of such a vision as well as for its anti-teleological exposure to chance. The result would be a community unsure of its borders, without control of its future, in short, a community of mortals: "sociorum gaudii mei et consortium mortalitatis meae [sharers in my joy and partners in mortality with me]" (*Conf.* X.iv.6).

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[5] Cf. Gershom Scholem: "The [Christian] reinterpretation of the prophetic promises of the Bible to refer to a realm of inwardness, which semed as remote as possible from any contents of these prophecies, always seemed to the religious thinkers of Judaism to be an illegitimate anticipation of something which could at best be seen as the interior side of an event basically taking place in the external world, but could never be cut off from the event itself" (Scholem 1971: 2).

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