

**Time in Augustine and Aquinas:  
What Time Was It When Adam Was Created?**  
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**Robert A. Gahl, Jr.**  
**Pontifical University of the Holy Cross**  
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In his 1996 Aquinas Lecture, *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine*, Roland J. Teske, S.J. proposed three paradoxes, whose apparent contradictions he then set out to resolve.<sup>1</sup> In the third and culminating paradox, Teske argues that the only coherent way of reading Augustine's view of time is one that includes a Plotinian world-soul. Teske tentatively claims that Augustine "must have held a doctrine of a universal soul of which individual human souls are in some sense parts." (49) Teske proceeds to conclude that the mind considered in the last chapter of Book 11 of the *Confessions* "can only be the universal soul with which each individual soul is somehow one." And that Augustine resolved the "third paradox in this very Plotinian fashion so that time is not the distention merely of individual souls, but of the universal soul of which individual souls are in some sense parts." (55) Teske anticipates and rejects the conciliatory response that, for Augustine, this "world-soul" is one with God. Teske explicitly claims that to identify this world-soul with God would be to misread Augustine.

In this short paper, I first propose a sketch for an alternative—perhaps more Christian—solution to Teske's third temporal paradox by showing that the *Confessions* do not require positing the existence of a world-soul as intermediary between God and material creation for the sake of measuring time throughout all the ages and then I will propose that, although such a non-Plotinian solution to the paradox is only implicitly present in the works of Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas thoroughly developed such a solution in perfect continuity with Augustinian Neoplatonism, while of course drawing heavily from Aristotle.

To further limit the scope of this paper, let me add that I will not argue either for or against Teske's contention that, at the end of his life, the Bishop of Hippo adhered to an implicit doctrine of the world-soul.<sup>2</sup> The development of such an argument would require a much more extensive study.

The paper is divided into three parts. In the first, entitled "Teske's Puzzling Paradox" I will describe the principal problem that Teske meant to solve. In the second, entitled "Augustine's Implicit Non-Plotinian Solution", I will propose a coherent interpretation of Augustine's view of time without positing a cosmic soul. In the third, entitled "Time in Divine Knowledge according to Aquinas," I will briefly describe how St. Thomas draws from the Augustinian intuitions regarding psychological time in order to complete Aristotle's theory of time. In particular, to describe the Thomistic

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<sup>1</sup> Roland J. Teske, S.J., *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine*, The Aquinas Lecture, 1996, Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 1996. See also his "The World-Soul and Time in St. Augustine," *Augustinian Studies*, 14 (1983) 75-92.

<sup>2</sup> Although Augustine never definitively repudiated the possibility of a cosmic soul, he recognized that scripture provides no basis for positing its existence. See, for example, *Retractions* 1.11.4.

solution to the paradox, I will show how all temporal beings and events are eternally present, along with their temporality within the eternal mind of God.

## 1. Teske's Puzzling Paradox

In his *The Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine* Teske makes a strong case for the unity of the work of the *Confessions*. Although composed of many books which at first glance seem haphazardly thrown together, it constitutes a single, coherent work of spiritual, philosophical, and theological autobiography. Around the year 396 AD, the Bishop of Hippo wrote this work to confess his soul before God his Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier for the sake of ascetical spiritual reflection, self-examination, and future amendment. For Teske, the question of time and eternity is the very axis of unity around which the *Confessions* are constructed.<sup>3</sup> Teske explains that the *Confessions* have often been misinterpreted as a sustained defense of a subjectivistic view of time. On the standard reading, influentially promoted by Albert the Great, Augustine proposes that time is rooted in the human soul rather than in nature or bodily motion.<sup>4</sup> Time, therefore, would be fast or slow in accord with one's mood or *status animae*, not in accord with the "objective" speed of bodily motion. Bertrand Russell provides the paradigmatic expression of this standard interpretation. In his *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* he describes what he takes to be the Augustinian view of time. "Memory, perception, and expectation ... made up all that there is of time." Russell, then, quickly moves to crush the paper tiger he has construed through a hasty reading of Augustine. "But obviously this won't do. All his memories and all his expectations occurred at about the time of the fall of Rome, whereas mine occur at about the time of the fall of industrial civilization, which formed no part of the bishop of Hippo's expectations. Subjective time might suffice for a solipsist of the moment, but not for a man, who believes in a real past and future, even if only his own."<sup>5</sup> Surely, Augustine did make assertions that could be used to claim that his view of time is subjectivistic. For instance, Augustine denied that time is "the motion of a body".<sup>6</sup> He held that neither the past nor the future are and that the present is unreal insofar as it inexorably tends towards non-being.<sup>7</sup> He also described time as a *distensio animae*, a stretching (or swelling) of the mind by which it embraces past, present, and future and regulates the flow of the future into the past.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, implicit throughout his discussion of time is the conviction that time is something real and objective, not just a fabrication of the human mind, or of any other mind. For Augustine, to understand time and its relationship to divine eternity is crucial for achieving human happiness.

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<sup>3</sup> See Roland J. Teske, S.J., *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine*, The Aquinas Lecture, 1996, Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Regarding the reading of Albert the Great, see John M. Quinn, O.S.A. who concurs with Teske's view in Quinn's "Time," *Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald, O.S.A., Grand Rapids MI, Eerdmans, 1999, 834.

<sup>5</sup> Bertrand Russell, *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1948, 212.

<sup>6</sup> *Confessions*, 11.24.31—but he also writes that time is coextensive with bodily movement, see *De Genesi ad litteram* V, 5, 12: CSEL 28/1, 145: "Factae itaque creaturae motibus coeperunt currere tempora: unde ante creaturam frustra tempora requiruntur, quasi possint inveniri ante tempora tempora. Motus enim si nullus esset vel spiritalis vel corporalis creaturae, quo per praesens praeteritis futura succederent, nullum esset tempus omnino."

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, *Confessions* 11.21: "In other words, it is coming out of what does not yet exist, passing through what has no duration, and moving into what no longer exists."

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, *Confessions*, XI, 32: "It is in you, O my mind, that I measure time ... what I measure is the impress produced in you by things as they pass and abiding in you when they have passed: and it is present."

The paradox consists in the inherent incompatibility of the double conviction that, in the first place, time itself and all that is temporal are real and yet, in the second place, time is to be found in the extension of the mind. If time is to be found in the mind, the reader of Augustine can ask a serious question that only superficially resembles that famous, but facetious, Manichean question formulated by Augustine with the following words. "What was God doing before He made heaven and earth?"<sup>9</sup> After responding to this question with an explanation of God's eternity, the more problematic question for Augustine still remains. At what time did "man became a living soul"?<sup>10</sup> That is, at what time did God create Adam? If we were to answer "zero o'clock," a Teskian interrogator would still insist. What time was it just before the creation of Adam? If there were no soul to contain past, present, and future, then, it would seem, there would be no time even though there was physical movement. It would seem that time cannot be both an intrinsic property of the mind and a feature of the objective reality of the material universe. Since Adam was created well after the creation of the rest of the world, only if there were some other created soul temporally co-extensive with the material universe could we speak of time prior to the creation of the first human. Surely, time cannot be at once something embedded in material creation and something just in the human mind. According to Teske, since Augustine locates time within the soul, some soul is needed to mark time from the beginning of all material existence. The Plotinian world-soul would serve the function of the cosmic timepiece by holding within itself all of the past, even the remembrance of all that occurred prior to Adam.

Several scholars have recently argued—in my opinion quite convincingly—that Augustine's objective in Book 11 did not include the task of defining time or even developing a formal philosophical theory of it.<sup>11</sup> But by referring to Augustine's repeated questioning: "what is time," Teske holds that there has got to be a coherent response within the *Confessions*. Teske also contends that the *Confessions* entail a general account of time, not just of "psychological time." The whole point of Augustine's questioning is to determine the relationship between eternity and time, not between eternity and some specific kind or aspect of time. Obviously, it would

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the background of this question, which appears at *Confessions* 11.10.12, see E. Peters, "What Was God Doing Before He Created the Heavens and the Earth?," *Augustinia* 34 (1984) 53-74.

<sup>10</sup> *Genesis*, 2, 7.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Genevieve Lloyd, "Augustine and the 'Problem' of Time," *The Augustinian Tradition*, Gareth B. Mathews ed., Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999, 40. "The philosophical discussion in Book 11 is not an answer to a timeless philosophical question as to the nature of time. It is rather an attempt to resolve a problem posed to consciousness by the human experience of time." See also John C. Cavadini, "Time and Ascent in *Confessions* XI," *Presbyter Factus Sum*, *Collectanea Augustiniana*, ed.'s Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J., Earl C. Muller, S.J., and Roland J. Teske, S.J., New York, Peter Lang, 1993, 171-185. At 179 note 8, Cavadini writes: "Augustine is much more interested in analyzing our awareness of time as itself a phenomenon worthy of investigation, rather than in settling questions about time itself in a definitive way." And on 184 note 52 he rejects the idea that "Book XI is a treatise on time, that it does intend to define time." See also Gerard O'Daly, "Augustine on the Measurement of Time: Some Comparisons with Aristotelian and Stoic Texts," in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought*, ed. J.J. Blumenthal and R. A. Markus, London, Variorum, 1981, 171: "Augustine suggests at the beginning of his discussion that he is inquiring into the nature of time itself" but "he does not give an answer to this question, or a *definition* of time, in the course of his investigation." In contrast, John M. Quinn, O.S.A. concurs with Teske's view. See his "Time," *Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald, O.S.A., Grand Rapids MI, Eerdmans, 1999, 833 where Quinn calls Book 11 (14.17-28.38) of *The Confessions* a "treatise on time" and asserts that this "treatise" "focuses almost exclusively on formulating a definition of time."

have been pointless for Augustine to respond "to the Manichean question with the claim that there was no psychological time" before God created the world.<sup>12</sup> The question posed demands a more general answer.

Although Teske's proposal solves the paradox of time, it nonetheless leads to additional, more fundamental problems.<sup>13</sup> First, the positing of a world-soul necessitates a mediated creation of the material universe. Even if a Neo-Platonic cosmology of intelligent celestial spheres could be reconciled with Christian revelation, to solve the paradox, there would nonetheless have to be one, single coordinating ensouled sphere, regulating the time of the whole universe. All bodily material creatures, including the human being, would owe their existence to the world-soul. We would have come to be through the world-soul. Second, as John Cavidini points out in his "Time and Ascent in *Confessions* XI," a world-soul as universal timepiece would have to know all things temporal in sequential fashion, just as Augustine describes in Book 11 Chapter 31 how we humans memorize a psalm.<sup>14</sup> The world-soul would therefore extend itself throughout time, embracing all ages, with a distension analogous to the distension that our human souls suffer on account of the fall. The world-soul, suffering from the same soulful swelling that we undergo, would therefore be "fallen" into time. If the world-soul had been created with the very beginning of creation (or even prior to the creation of all bodies), and if the world-soul suffers *distentio animae*, clearly a consequence of sin for Augustine, then it would seem that the fall would be a necessary feature of creation inherent to it from the very beginning (at least since the beginning of the material universe). In sum, to posit the world-soul is to imply a mediated creation and the necessity of the fall.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. A Non-Plotinian Augustinian Solution

In Book 12 of *The City of God*, Augustine affirms that "there was time when there was not man."<sup>16</sup> And in his commentary on *Genesis*, he asserts that time began with creation.<sup>17</sup> In the *Confessions*, (Book 11, Chapter 24) he asserts "no body is moved but in time."<sup>18</sup> How could there have been time, unless there were another soul to extend across past, present, and future and know the entire history of the world, even before the creation of man? I propose that, for Augustine, even though time is

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<sup>12</sup> Teske, *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine*, 45.

<sup>13</sup> See John M. Quinn, O.S.A., "Time," *Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald, O.S.A, Grand Rapids MI, Eerdmans, 1999, 835: "recourse to the world soul for elucidating time slips into the fallacy of explaining the obscure by the more obscure."

<sup>14</sup> Cavadini, 184.

<sup>15</sup> Teske recognizes this last implication. See "The World-Soul and Time in St. Augustine," 92 note 49. David Twetten has suggested to me the hypothetical possibility, not necessarily incompatible with Augustine's understanding of scripture, that the creation of Adam was temporally coincident with the creation of the first material being.

<sup>16</sup> *The City of God*, XII, 16: CCL 47, 371: "erat tempus quando non erat homo."

<sup>17</sup> See *De Genesi ad litteram* V, 5, 12: CSEL 28/1 (see note 6 above) and 145: "Nec sic accipiatur quod dictum est tempus a creatura coepit, quasi tempus creatura non sit, cum sit creaturae motus ex alio in aliud consequentibus regibus secundum ordinationem administrantis Dei cuncta quae creavit." and *The City of God* 11.6: "then assuredly the world was made, not in time, but simultaneously with time. For that which is made in time is made both after and before some time -- after that which is past, before that which is future. But none could then be past, for there was no creature by whose movements its duration could be measured. But simultaneously with time the world was made, if in the world's creation change and motion were created, as seems evident from the order of the first six or seven days."

<sup>18</sup> *Confessions*, 11.24.31. For other affirmations of the physical grounding of time, see *Confessions* 12.11.14: "without the change of motions times are not, and there is no change where there is no figure." And, *Quant.* 32.68 physical objects contain time rather than vice versa.

measured by *distentio animae*, his view need not entail that if there were no human mind at the moment,  $t_0$ ,  $t_0$  is not a time. Ever since the events of  $t_0$ ,  $t_0$  has been insofar as  $t_0$  is subject to being embraced by the soul as a past temporal event. Although the temporal measurement of motion requires the distension of a soul, that which is measured may precede the existence of any measuring agent. In other words, although we cannot measure time apart from psychic retention, the temporally measurable aspect of physical motion exists apart from that psychic retention.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, even if there were no soul prior to the creation of Adam, and Augustine gives us no reason to believe that at the end of his life he held that there was such a soul, there would, nonetheless, have been time insofar as the events prior to the creation of Adam can be embraced by the distension of souls which were subsequently created.

But if there was no measuring agent of time at  $t_0$  how can we speak of there being time at  $t_0$ ? The souls which would eventually measure time did not exist at  $t_0$ . Even though there was not yet a soul to retain the event in its temporality, God's mind knows the event in its temporality from all eternity. All events past and future are secured in their temporal reality by God's eternal knowledge of the temporal.<sup>20</sup> In *Against Faustus* (26.4), Augustine describes the certitude and permanence of God's knowledge of temporal events, whether past or future. The text that I am about to quote indicates that according to Augustine, God eternally knows all temporal events.

"For God knows His own future action, and therefore He knows also the effect of that action in preventing the happening of what would otherwise have happened; and, beyond all question, what God knows is more certain than what man thinks. Hence it is as impossible for what is future not to happen, as for what is past not to have happened; for it can never be God's will that anything should, in the same sense, be both true and false. Therefore all that is properly future cannot but happen; what does not happen never was future; even as all things which are properly in the past did indubitably take place."<sup>21</sup>

In the following paragraph, St. Augustine further advances his defense of the reality of time ever since the beginning of creation with the proposal that even if in our human minds we were to fail to remember the past, the past would still be past, even though it does not now exist.

"What is past no longer exists and whatever has an existence which can be put an end to cannot be past. What is truly past is no longer present; and the truth of its past existence is in our judgment, not in the thing itself which no longer exists. The proposition asserting anything to be past is true when the thing no longer exists. God cannot make such a proposition false, because He cannot contradict the truth. The truth in this case, or the true judgment, is first of all in our own mind, when we know and give expression to it. But should it disappear from our minds by our forgetting it, it would still remain as truth. It will always be true that the past thing which is no longer present had an existence; and the truth of its past existence after it has stopped is the same as the truth of its future existence before it began to be. This truth cannot be contradicted by God, in whom abides the supreme and unchangeable truth,

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<sup>19</sup> See Quinn, "Time," 836.

<sup>20</sup> See John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, (84) "Strictly speaking, God has no foreknowledge of the future; he knows the future as a 'present' synoptic knowing of any (future) sequence of events." See Augustine's *Ad simp.* 2.2.2.

<sup>21</sup> *Against Faustus* 26.4.

and whose illumination is the source of all the truth to be found in any mind or understanding."<sup>22</sup>

Where is the forgotten past which no longer exists? In the mind of God. Where is the future which has not yet been foreseen by the human soul? In the mind of God. In fact, as St. Augustine explains in Book 16 of the *City of God*, all of time was "predestined and fixed" in God's coeternal Word.

Teske interprets chapter 31, the very last of Book 11 of the *Confessions*, as further evidence of the hidden presence of the cosmic soul in Augustine's treatise on time. In chapter 31 of Book 11, Augustine raises his heart in prayer asking for illumination regarding the mystery of eternity. In prayer, Augustine forces himself to consider an intellect so powerful that it be "so greatly abounding in knowledge and foreknowledge, to which all things past and future are so known as one psalm is well known to me." Before the contemplation of such a knower, Augustine exclaims: "that mind is exceedingly wonderful, and very astonishing; because whatever is so past, and whatever is to come of after ages, is no more concealed from Him than was it hidden from when singing that psalm." Then, through a *via negationis*, he affirms that God's knowledge is not of this sort. There is no before and after in God's knowing as there is when we recite a psalm. God does not know things future and past. "Far, far more wonderfully, and far more mysteriously, Thou knowest them." For in God there is no expectation of the future or remembrance of the past. No, from the very beginning God knew the heaven and the earth without any change of his knowledge. Where Teske reads Augustine positing an intelligence—the Plotinian world-soul—that knows all of time as the human mind remembers a psalm, I read Augustine as making a rhetorical move of prayerful ascent through negation in order to deepen his understanding of the unfathomable mystery of the eternal God.<sup>23</sup>

Dissatisfied with the Aristotelian explanation of time as "the number of movement according to a before and an after," Augustine sought to incorporate into the Aristotelian view a phenomenological appreciation for the temporality of psychic acts.<sup>24</sup> In so doing, Augustine achieved a Christian response to the question posed by Aristotle in the *Physics* at the end of his discussion of time almost as if he were expressing dissatisfaction with his own theory. Aristotle writes at the end of Book IV: "whether if soul did not exist time would exist or not, is a question that may fairly be asked; for if there cannot be some one to count there cannot be anything that can be counted, so that evidently there cannot be number; for

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<sup>22</sup> *Against Faustus* 26.5. Regarding divine eternal knowledge of all things temporal, see also *De Civ. Dei* 16: "And since God before these eternal times not only existed, but also, "promised" life eternal, which He manifested in its own times (that is to say, in due times), what else is this than His word? For this is life eternal. But then, how did He promise; for the promise was made to men, and yet they had no existence before eternal times? Does this not mean that, in His own eternity, and in His co-eternal word, that which was to be in its own time was already predestined and fixed?" See also *Confessions* 11.29.30: "that through Him I may apprehend in whom I have been apprehended, and may be recollected from my old days, following The One, forgetting the things that are past; and not distracted, but drawn on, not to those things which shall be and shall pass away, but to those things which are before, not distractedly, but intently, I follow on for the prize of my heavenly calling, where I may hear the voice of Thy praise, and contemplate Thy delights, neither coming nor passing away." And, as Quinn comments on *Confessions* 9.3.6 "Augustine says he is sure that his friend Nebridius, even though intoxicated by the vision of God, will not forget him, for he drinks from God, who remembers us."

<sup>23</sup> The central thesis of John Cavadini's, "Time and Ascent in *Confessions* XI," guides my interpretation of Chapter 31.

<sup>24</sup> *Physics*, IV, 11, 219b1-2

*Physics*, IV, 14, 223a21-28?. Aristotle poses the question even though he has just affirmed at 223a14-15: "it is evident that every change and everything that moves is in time."

number is either what has been, or what can be, counted. But if nothing but soul, or in soul reason, is qualified to count, there would not be time unless there were soul, but only that of which time is an attribute, i.e. if movement can exist without soul, and the before and after are attributes of movement, and time is these qua numerable."<sup>25</sup>

Augustine never rejects Aristotle's definition of time. Some mistakenly conflate Augustine's denial that movement is time with a rejection of Aristotle's definition of time as "the number of movement according to a before and after." Aristotle carefully distinguishes between the motion, the numberable, and the numberer. Although Augustine rejects that time is motion and explores the reality of time in the numberer, he never rejects Aristotle's fundamental definition of time as the numberable. Nevertheless, Augustine did express the same dissatisfaction that Aristotle experienced with his own definition. By developing his phenomenology of time as a swelling of the human soul, Augustine describes our capacity to hold within our memory the many words of a psalm. But to know any particular verse we must pass from beginning to end, by discursively flowing the text through our soul as we recite the text, whether audibly or not. He then considers God's eternal knowledge of all that has been, is, and will be. For God, it is as though he can consider, all at once, all psalms, all books and songs, even all web pages. To God's mind, all that has ever been, all that is, and all that will be is at once and everlastingly present. God's eternal knowledge of all things temporal serves as the basis of the reality of the temporal. Although the past is no more, it will always be and has always been in the Word of God. For the sake of simplicity, and for the sake of defending Augustine's thoroughgoing orthodoxy, there is, therefore, no need to posit an implicit doctrine of the world-soul in Augustine's mature works.

Moreover, Teske's proposal of the world-soul in Augustine faces further textual difficulties. Teske suggests that the unity of all humans in Adam and in Christ, a doctrine so dear to the Bishop of Hippo, is based on the unity of all humans within the world-soul. But Teske seems not to remember Augustine's description of the unity of the human race in *The City of God*. In Book 12, and especially in chapter 21, Augustine explains why at first God created just one man. In chapter 21 he explains that the universal fatherhood of Adam is suited to forming the unity of the human race.

"It is easy to see how much better it is that God was pleased to produce the human race from the one individual whom He created, than if He had originated it in several men. ... And therefore God created only one single man, not, certainly, that he might be a solitary, bereft of all society, but that by this means the unity of society and the bond of concord might be more effectually commended to him, men being bound together not only by similarity of nature, but by family affection. And indeed He did not even create the woman that was to be given him as his wife, as he created the man, but created her out of the man, that the whole human race might derive from one man."<sup>26</sup>

When explaining how divine creation fostered the unity of the human race in accord with the providential design of salvation, surely, if Augustine held the existence of the world-soul he would have mentioned it in order to further reinforce the unity of all humans.

### 3. Time in Divine Knowledge according to Aquinas

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<sup>26</sup> *The City of God*, 12.21.

Whereas St. Albert held closely to Aristotle's physical view of time as something real in nature, Aquinas originally held the Averroist position that time is only potentially present in nature.<sup>27</sup> In the beginning of his career, when he wrote the *Commentary on the Sentences*, he held that time is fully in act only when numbered by the human mind according to a prior and posterior.<sup>28</sup> Later, when he wrote the commentary on the *Physics*, St. Thomas, in more Aristotelian fashion, moves to hold that time is real, in nature. "It is necessary to say either that there is no time if there is no soul or to say more truly that without the soul time is a kind of being (*utcumque being*)."<sup>29</sup> As there can be sensibles without sense existing, so the numerable and number can exist without numbering.<sup>30</sup> If, as Thomas indicates in his early writings, time is not yet fully in act unless it is measured by a soul, we might ask what is missing in the physical reality of time? The perfection of time requires its existence in parts: past, present, and future. The operation of the soul, its embracing distension, brings into act all at once the past, the present, and the future. "The power of retaining the past in memory and of looking ahead to the future requires an intellect."<sup>31</sup> Thomas therefore explains in his *Commentary on the Physics* that "the totality itself of time is obtained through the ordination of the soul numbering the prior and posterior in motion."<sup>32</sup>

In Aquinas's later works he advances the Aristotelian doctrine on time by considering time in its relation to eternity through the lense of Neo-Platonic exemplary causality. William Lane Craig explains this Neoplatonic move in Aquinas as a consideration of the temporal through its eternal cause.

"Aquinas differs sharply with Aristotle concerning God's knowledge of the universe. Since the Christian God, unlike the Unmoved Mover, is the Creator of the world, the world stands to God as effect to cause. This constitutes the crucial watershed between Aristotle and Aquinas on this score, for God, in knowing Himself, knows his power and the effects to which that power extends. In knowing Himself as the First Cause of everything that exists, God knows all His effects. Thus, God knows Himself through Himself and all created things through Himself. Nor does He know created things merely as universal essences, which imitate His own essence; as the existential cause of every singular, God in knowing Himself as First Cause knows every singular effect produced by Him. As Aquinas puts it, God's knowledge has the same extension in this regard as his causality."

Craig clearly explains many facets of God's eternal knowledge but, as David Burrell and Brian Shanley have pointed out in their responses to Craig, he fails to appreciate the eternal character of God's knowledge of the temporal.<sup>33</sup> In fact, Craig concludes

<sup>27</sup> Albert the Great, *Physicorum*, Lib. IV, tr. III, cap. 16, ed. Borgnet, III, p. 340a.: "et ideo fluxus ille realis erit realiter tempus."

<sup>28</sup> See Sister M. Jocelyn, "Time the Number of Movement," *The Thomist*, 24 (1961) 431-438, especially 435 where she refers to I *Sent.*, dist. 19, q. 2, a. 1; q. 5, a. 1; dist. 37, q. 4, a. 3; II *Sent.*, dist. 12, q. 5, a. 2: "the notion of time is in some way completed by the action of the soul counting".

<sup>29</sup> *In IV Physics*, lect. 23, n. 5. Sister M. Jocelyn, comments in "Time the Number of Movement," 432: "We shall try to show that it is the thought of Aristotle and of St. Thomas that time is an *ens naturae* and not an *ens rationis*, and to exist even if there were no soul; not indeed perfect in being, but rather imperfect, as in motion."

<sup>30</sup> *In IV Physics*, lect. 23, n. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Sister M. Jocelyn, "Time the Number of Movement," 438.

<sup>32</sup> *In IV Physicorum*, 23, 5.

<sup>33</sup> See David Burrell, "God's Knowledge of Future Contingents: A Reply to William Lane Craig," *The Thomist*, 58 (1994) 317-322. And, Brian J. Shanley, O.P., "Eternal Knowledge of the Temporal in Aquinas," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 70, 2 (1997) 197-224.

his 1990 *Thomist* article with the contention that there is no space for human freedom within Aquinas's account of divine eternal omniscience. Craig writes:

"It is futile for him [Aquinas] to contend that God's knowledge does not necessitate an effect because the effect may be impeded by its secondary cause, for this secondary cause is itself determined causally by God. Therefore, it seems to me that, having sought to escape the clutches of theological fatalism, Aquinas flees into the arms of divine determinism. In maintaining that God's knowledge is the cause of everything God knows, Thomas transforms the universe into a nexus which, though freely chosen by God, is causally determined from above, thus eliminating human freedom."<sup>34</sup>

Craig's major mistake is to consider that God foreknows. But God cannot know something before it happens. He does not "foreknow." To claim that he does is to limit him by time. There are no future contingents in God. To God all things are eternally present, in a single now. If God were to foreknow, he would also co-know and post-know, but then there would be change in God. He would no longer be simple, eternal, immutable, and pure act. He would come to know that something had been after knowing that it would come to be in the future. Such a coming to know presupposed by Craig's use of the term "foreknowledge" contradicts God's simplicity.

Perhaps, as Brian Shanley points out, Craig's failure to appreciate the tremendous transcendence of divine knowledge flows from his all too literal interpretation of two Thomistic metaphors. The Angelic Doctor draws from Boethius to compare God's knowledge of temporal singulars to the structure of a circle. God is the center and all creatures are equidistant from God along the circle's circumference.<sup>35</sup> Or, in the other Boethian metaphor used by Thomas, God is a Superviewer atop a mountain observing as pilgrims pass along the highway below.<sup>36</sup> God sees them all at once in their various stages of voyage. Shanley explains that these two metaphors must be interpreted with care because they could seem to entail passive receptivity on the part of God and a static view of creation. In her "Eternity Has No Duration," Katherin A. Rogers defends the metaphysical depth of the Neoplatonic metaphor of the circle.<sup>37</sup> While the metaphor may at first appear static, from within a Neoplatonic context it connotes a dynamic causal meaning. "For the platonic [sic] thinker ... the circle analogy for time and 'eternity' is especially apt because the centre point is seen not only as present to the circumference, but as its *source*. Perfect power resides in unity. The One must precede the many. Extension is a weakness, a limitation, which comes to be from the fulness of undivided unity."<sup>38</sup>

Before concluding, I would like to refer to two, exemplary Thomistic texts in order to explain the eternal presence of the temporal, as temporal, in God's eternal knowing. I propose that Aquinas, like Augustine, solved the numberable's need for a numberer through divine eternal omniscience. The first text explains that all things temporal are eternally known by God, even in their temporality. While explaining God's eternal

<sup>34</sup> Craig, "Aquinas on God's Knowledge of Future Contingents," *The Thomist*, 54, 1 (1990) 33-79, 78-79.

<sup>35</sup> *SCGI*, 66 develops Boethius's description (at *Consolatio* IV, 6, p. 362, ll. 80-81— in the Loeb Classical Library Edition) of the relation between time and eternity with the metaphor of the circumference and the center of a circle.

<sup>36</sup> *Compendium Theologiae*, 133: "God knows the flight of time in his eternity as a person standing atop a watchtower embraces in a single glance a whole caravan of passing travellers." For this same image see also *I Sent* 38, 1, 5; *ST I*, 14, 13; *De Ver.* 2, 12; *De Malo* 16, 7; and *In I Periherm.*, 1, 14—the Boethian source is *Consolatio* V, 6 (p. 432, ll. 166 in the Loeb Classical Library Edition).

<sup>37</sup> *Religious Studies*, 30 (1994) 5.

<sup>38</sup> Rogers goes on to cite *Enneads* VI, 8, 18 as the prime Plotinian source.

knowledge of all singulars, *QD De Ver*, 2.7 explicitly affirms that God also knows all their accident's, including the accident of time. Thomas held that God eternally knows all temporal singulars, even our feelings, thoughts, and desires in their temporality.<sup>39</sup>

Another Thomistic text that entails the premise that God eternally knows all things temporal in the temporality also has important implications for a narrative account of natural law.<sup>40</sup> The first article of q. 91 of the *Prima Secundae* faces the daunting task of responding to what looks, at first, like a "knock-down" argument. Here, in the early stages of his Treatise on Law, Thomas is developing his view of all law as a participation in the eternal law. At the end of q. 90, Thomas has defined all law as including 4 characteristics through the prism of the four Aristotelian causes, one of which is proper promulgation (the efficient cause). In q. 91, article 1, the second objector asserts that there can be no such thing as an eternal law, because such a law could not have been promulgated, since there was no one to promulgate it to. Thomas's response tells us an awful lot, in a few words, about all law, but also about God's knowledge of temporal things, especially those things that are most important to us fallen humans. "Promulgatio fit et verbo et scripto." "Promulgation is by word and by writing and the eternal law is promulgated in both modes in God the Promulgator since the Divine Word is eternal and the writing of the Book of Life is eternal. But in the creatures who hear and see promulgation cannot be eternal."<sup>41</sup> The promulgation of the eternal law was accomplished from all eternity by word and by writing and in both these ways the eternal law was promulgated on the part of God the Promulgator, because the divine word is eternal and the book of life is eternal. The Book of Life, referred to in the Book of Revelation, is eternally known, all at once, by God. Therefore all the temporal details of every human being's activity, even the most hidden and interior, have always been held in God's mind, in the Word, through whom we were created and by whom we hope to be saved in order to achieve the status of being written for ever in that book of life.

To conclude, let us confidently return to those prayerful words repeated by St. Augustine towards the end of Book 11 of the *Confessions* directed towards "*Deus creator omnium*." "Let him who understandeth confess unto Thee; and let him who understandeth not, confess unto Thee. Oh, how exalted art Thou, and yet the humble

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<sup>39</sup> For instance, *I Sent.* 38.1.5: "Thus when God sees all temporal events through one, non-successive eternal gaze, he does not eternally see as present all contingent events in their diverse times as having existence only in his act of knowledge. For from eternity God did not know only that he knew the things that he knew as existing in his knowing, but rather through one eternal glance God saw and will see each moment of time and what thing exists at that time and what does not exist at that time. Nor does God only see that this thing will be future with respect to what preceded it or that it will be past with respect to what is future to it; rather God sees the time in which each thing is present and the thing to be present at this time, which cannot happen in us because our intellectual acts are successive and temporal. And hence it is clear that nothing prevents God from having certain knowledge of what is contingent because God's gaze bears upon a contingent thing insofar as it is presently in act and when the contingent thing's existence is thus already determinate, it can be known with certainty."

<sup>40</sup> See, for instance, "From the Virtue of a Fragile Good to a Narrative Account of Natural Law," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 37, 4 (1997) 459-47; "Etica narrativa e la conoscenza di Dio," *Dio e il senso dell'esistenza umana*, ed. Luis Romera, Roma, Armando, 1999, 189-202; and my "Narrative and Legal Philosophy: A Thomistic Proposal," a paper given at St. John's University Law School, September 14, 1999.

<sup>41</sup> *ST*, I-II, 91, a. 1, ad 2: "Promulgatio fit et verbo et scripto; et utroque modo lex aeterna habet promulgationem ex parte Dei promulgantis, quia et verbum divinum est aeternum, et scriptura libri vitae est aeterna. Sed ex parte creaturae audientis aut inspicientis, non potest esse promulgatio aeterna."

in heart are Thy dwelling-place; for Thou raisest up those that are bowed down, and they whose exaltation Thou art fall not."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> I am grateful to Robert Wielockx, John Cavadini, and Vito Reale for helpful suggestions and to David Twetten for both his encouragement and challenging criticism. A more robust response to Twetten's criticism will have to wait for a more extensive paper.