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From the Selected Works of Mary-Jane Rubenstein

2010

Review of Papanikolaou and Demacopoulos
(eds), *Orthodox Readings of Augustine* (St.
Vladimir's, 2008)

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/mary_jane_rubenstein/23/

Beyond the Philosopher's Fear is powerful and closely argued. I note only one possible oversight, or, better, path for further discussion. What light might an explicitly theological discussion shed on these matters? I mean, what if Viefhues-Bailey turned not just to Kristeva, but to the Gospels? There is a moment in Cavell's Lear essay where he says that Cordelia is a reflection of Christ. In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell modifies the Wittgensteinian dictum that the body is the picture of the soul with "the crucified human body is the best picture of the unacknowledged human soul." Cavell seems to think that Jesus is a victim of skepticism in the same way that Cordelia, Desdemona and the unknown women are. Cavell proclaims Jesus as the male exception to his gendered account of the skeptic. By complicating the matter in this way, Cavell also, it seems to me, announces the possibility of a whole new way of conceiving the relationship between philosophy and theology.

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Orthodox Readings of Augustine, edited by Aristotle Papanikolaou and George E. Demacopoulos (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008) + 314 pp.

It is a little-discussed truth that the last few decades of western theological fascination with "the East" have been fairly non-reciprocal. While countless Roman Catholic and Anglican thinkers have adopted parts of the Cappadocians, Dionysius, and even Gregory of Palamas, one would be hard-pressed to find equal zeal among contemporary Orthodox scholars for Aquinas, Anselm—or Augustine. In fact, Orthodox theologians have with increasing regularity named Augustine as the wellspring of a host of theological errors, which have given rise to all manner of political, sexual, and ecclesiastical disasters.

It is said, for example, that Augustine's denial of post-lapsarian free will amounts to an early formulation of "double-predestination," which delivers the western and westernized world over to Calvinism. It is said that his privilege of God's essence (*ousia*) over the trinitarian persons (*hypostases*) exalts the impersonal over the personal, the philosophical over the practical, and the singular over the relational. It is said that his equation of God's essence and energies bars the way to theotic participation in the divine life, sundering creature from creator and rendering them mere objects of one another's cognition. This leads to a general overvaluation of intellect, which evacuates apophaticism, renders impossible the mystical union apophaticism engenders, and leads the West to equate God disastrously with Being. God becomes monadic, essentialized, and known, while the knowing human becomes solipsistic and capitalist. This worldview finds its consummation in Descartes and its demise in Nietzsche, whose "will to power" marks the destruction of the natural and interpersonal world through untrammelled technology and warfare. Finally, infamously, Augustine attributes the Spirit's procession to the Son as well as the Father, a move that paves the way for the western imposition of the *filioque*, compromises the *monarchia* of the Father, and of course, shatters Christendom forever.

Profound thanks, then, to Aristotle Papanikolaou and George Demacopoulos for offering us this volume, which historicizes, clarifies, and in many cases undermines

such perceptions of Augustine in service of a broad ecumenical effort “to see,” in the words of one contributor, “what East and West have in common, which is surely far more than what divides them” (p. 99). In their rich and remarkably clear introduction, Papanikolaou and Demacopoulos begin to unsettle the antipathy between Augustine and Orthodoxy by tracking its fairly recent evolution. As they demonstrate, medieval Orthodox authors tended to separate Augustine from his more radical descendants, attributing his “errors” to editorial and interpretive corruptions (p. 14). Anti-Augustinianism only really emerged in the nineteenth century, when Ottoman and Tsarist Russian efforts to westernize provoked anti-colonial sentiments among church leaders and intellectuals (p. 20). Even among Orthodox modernity’s theological giants (Bulgakov, Lossky, Florovsky), however, Augustine still remained an ambiguous ancestor, often defended against the West’s tendency to read Aquinas back into him. He only becomes “unapologetically condemned” in the mid-twentieth century “post-colonial” work of John Romanides, Christos Yannaras, and John Zizioulas, whose suspicions of Augustine focus primarily on “theological epistemology, sin and grace, and trinitarian theology” (pp. 20–21).

While this collection is not explicitly divided by topic or chronology, it seems to proceed in three main sections. The first tracks Augustine’s textual interpenetration with patristic and medieval Greek authors. It begins with Elizabeth Fisher’s detailed analysis of Maximos Planoudes’ thirteenth century translation of the *De Trinitate*, commissioned as part of Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos’s effort “to secure union with the western church” (p. 41). Reinhard Flogas goes on to show that traces of this translation appear throughout the work of Gregory Palamas, whom modern scholars have tried energetically to keep “pure” of Augustinian influence (p. 73). Joseph Lienhard tracks Augustine’s own scattered references to Gregory Nazianzen and Basil of Caesarea, culminating in his appeal to Basil’s insight “that the sin of Adam and Eve affected all their descendants” (p. 98). In other words, Augustine’s highly contentious doctrine of sin and grace is not simply a “Latin” invention. In a similar spirit, Brian Daley explores the parallels between Maximus the Confessor’s and Augustine’s post- and pre-Chalcedonian christologies, concluding rather anti-climactically that their (somewhat strained) resonances are probably accidental.

With Lewis Ayres’ piece on comparative pneumatology, the volume takes a turn from the textual-historical to the philosophical and theological. This section is more constructive, more thematic, and faster paced than the book’s first third. Most of these essays focus on one or two Augustinian “errors,” addressing most of the concerns with which this review opens. Lewis Ayres, for example, challenges the claim that Augustine prioritizes an impersonal divine essence over the personal relations, demonstrating that the communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constitutes the divine essence in the first place (p. 132). John Behr’s piece goes on similarly to argue that the purportedly “impersonal” divine essence *is* the persons (p. 160). Marking one persistent division, Ayres stops short of a fully perichoretic reading of Augustine, admitting (unapologetically) that “the language of persons *as* relations is alien to Augustine” (p. 135).

Another cluster of concerns is addressed through Jean-Luc Marion’s exploration of Augustine’s apophaticism (which, in an exciting moment of discord, David Bradshaw will proclaim to be nonexistent [p. 240]). Offering an extraordinarily close reading of the *Confessions*, Marion traces the limits of Augustine’s purportedly omnipotent “intellect,” reminding us that when faced with the impossibility of speaking of God, Augustine speaks *to* God (p. 169). In a familiar Marionian key, predication gives way to praise. Augustine’s God, then, is no mere object of cognition; he is not *ipsum esse*, but rather *idipsum*; not being but rather immutability, “beyond the scope of being” (p. 183). While I am not yet convinced that God’s immutability delivers God from ontology, Marion’s interpretive overhaul of Exodus 3:14 here is nothing short of masterful, and will doubtless become central to the ongoing post-Heideggerian theological project.

Orthodox Readings of Augustine comes to a climax with the contributions by David Bentley Hart and David Bradshaw, whose chapters are arguably the most spirited and most compelling in the volume, and whose positions could not be in starker conflict with one another. Hart's gem of a chapter stands out primarily because of its vibrant tone (candid, witty, a bit fed-up) and its persistently *reasonable* approach to the debate in question. Hart admits that there are a number of reasons to dislike Augustine, including "his increasingly intransigent extremism regarding the creature's 'merit,' his hideous theology of predestination and original guilt . . . the eternal damnation of infants who died unbaptized—in short, the entire range of his catastrophic misreading of Paul's theology." That having been said (here comes the persistent reasonability), this air of "tragic moral idiocy" surrounding Augustine's late works should "probably be disregarded as the product of intellectual failure" (p. 194). In other words, we should stop making such a big deal about it. Hart takes a similar approach to the De Régnon paradigm, which he dismisses as "dauntingly imprecise" (p. 195); to Lossky's and Zizioulas's charge of essentialist impersonalism, which (as Ayres and Behr pointed out more delicately) cannot be justified by "a single sentence" in Augustine's work (p. 196); and to Augustine's alleged conflation of the divine essence with the divine energies, which Hart calls a "sublimely pointless argument" (p. 211). The bottom line for Hart is that whether the fathers claim that illuminated souls see the divine essence or participate in God's energies, or whether they call God "Being" or "beyond being," they are saying the same thing, which is that God is "the transcendent source and end of all things," who "reveals ever more of himself and yet always infinitely exceeds what he reveals" (pp. 197, 212). To insist that this position can only be attained by means of a strict separation of essence and energies is little more than "pious nonsense" (p. 212). Nonsense, presumably, because to distinguish the knowable part of God from the unknowable part of God would be to presume *some* sort of knowledge of the unknowable that one demarcates from the knowable.

It would be hard to find a worthier opponent to this highly agreeable position than David Bradshaw, who insists that the difference between Augustine and the Greek fathers is both irreducible and significant. *Contra* Marion, Bradshaw claims that Augustine's God is *not* "beyond being," or "beyond Intellect" (p. 239), and *contra* Hart, he insists that the distinction does matter. Bradshaw concedes that from *Confessions* to the sermons to the commentaries, it is clear that Augustine's God exceeds speech and thought. But, he argues, God remains an object of *noesis*—an object of intellect—rather than a source of mystical union (p. 245). Two errors lead Augustine to this abandonment of mysticism: his rejection of apophaticism (which Marion contests), and his conflation of God's essence and energies (which Hart dismisses). Without a distinction between the knowable manifestation of God and the unknowable *ousia* of God, Bradshaw suggests, Augustine renders humanity both too far and too close; God is mystically unattainable yet (in principle) fully intelligible. To round up these three pivotal essays, then, Marion would insist that Augustine's God is beyond knowledge and being, Bradshaw would insist he is not, and Hart would deny that the difference makes any real difference at all.

After this heated discussion, the volume cools off considerably. The last three essays turn from the Augustine of the *Confessions*, the *City of God*, and the *De Trinitate* to the Augustine of the sermons and commentaries. These reveal, in welcome contrast to Augustine the polemicist and Augustine the Defender of Orthodoxy, Augustine the priest and Augustine the pastor. Carol Harrison suggests that this Augustine is far less dogmatic than his overanalyzed counterpart; his sermons and letters betray a complex and "unavoidable undercurrent of ambiguity, difficulty, and obscurity" (p. 254). David Tracy also examines this "dark side" to which Harrison turns, revealing the Augustine who "stared into . . . the ultimate terrifying Void" (p. 285) and never quite recovered, who was "always a Christian in convalescence" (p. 270). Andrew Louth confirms the

importance of this Augustine, whose “ideas are more often tentative, not definitive” (p. 293).

In short, this is a strong and important collection. In addition to offering consistently learned re-readings of Augustine, it goes a long way toward pushing ecumenical dialogue in new and productive directions. This is not to say it comes to any consensus; at its most interesting, in fact, it serves more to clarify the breach than to repair it. Persistent divisions notwithstanding, these authors open out a number of places of unexpected confluence between the architect of the essentializing West and the great minds of the anti-essentialist East. Perhaps not surprisingly then, the volume’s most significantly absent voice (I skip here too quickly over its silence on issues of gender and sophiology—which perhaps could have been addressed together) is one who might claim that Augustine can give Orthodoxy something it doesn’t already have. At worst, Augustine is the source of most of the world’s ills. At best, he can be reconciled with many of the East’s most stringent theological standards. But there is no moment in which he is turned critically upon the Orthodox tradition itself—to question, for example, the ethical and theological value of the Father’s uninterrupted *monarchia*, or the philosophical integrity of the essence/energies distinction. In other words, perhaps the Greek fathers themselves could have stood something akin to Harrison’s, Tracy’s, and Louth’s focus on Augustine’s uncertainty and changeability. This, in any event, seems to me a crucial place to end the volume—not simply for the sake of understanding Augustine more authentically, but also for the sake of ecumenical dialogue, and (small-o) orthodoxy itself, which could stand as strong a dose of modesty and uncertainty as contemporary scholars care to administer.

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Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music by Jeremy S. Begbie (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007) + 413 pp.

Professor Begbie, who since this book’s publication has joined the faculty of Duke University Divinity School, has contributed significantly to theological reflection upon Christian faith and the arts, and especially to theology and music. In this excellent book, *Resounding Truth*, Begbie complements and extends his previous work. As the author notes, in other works such as *Beholding the Glory: Incarnation Through the Arts* (Baker Academic, 2000) and *Theology, Music, and Time* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), he has explored what music can bring to theology (p. 311 n26). In *Resounding Truth*, however, while still engaging the distinctive features of music, he also asks what theology can bring to music (p. 19). In all of these books he works from a distinctively Christian worldview, rather than from generalities about “religion” and “religious experience.” Yet in this volume he gives a more detailed account of features of Christian faith as they shape what he calls an “ecology” of central Christian beliefs for engaging the world of music.

Begbie is amply qualified for this task, combining thorough knowledge of musicology and the history of music, theology, and not least training and experience as a practicing musician. His overall goal is to display how theology and music might interact, how God’s truth might “sound” and also, as the title indicates, “re-sound” in