

2017

## The Ontological Nature of Theology: On Heidegger's "Phenomenology and Theology"

Casey Garrett Spinks

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses)



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Spinks, Casey Garrett, "The Ontological Nature of Theology: On Heidegger's "Phenomenology and Theology"" (2017). *LSU Master's Theses*. 4493.

[https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_theses/4493](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/4493)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Master's Theses by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [gradetd@lsu.edu](mailto:gradetd@lsu.edu).

THE ONTOLOGICAL NATURE OF THEOLOGY: ON HEIDEGGER'S "PHENOMENOLOGY AND  
THEOLOGY"

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Louisiana State University and Agricultural and  
Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of  
Arts in Philosophy

in

The Department of Philosophy

by

Casey Garrett Spinks

B.A., Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2016

May 2017

What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?  
—Tertullian

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my father and mother, my siblings, my local church, my professors at Louisiana State University, and my teacher Clint Barron, who has mentored both my mind and my spirit since I was young.

To these people, I can only speak of a wisdom Heidegger rightly taught: the kinship between *denken* and *danken*, thinking and thanking.

And above all, to Creator, Redeemer, Reconciler.

*S.D.G.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
HEIDEGGER’S “PHENOMENOLOGY AND THEOLOGY” .....	8
THE EXISTENTIALITY OF FAITH.....	33
THE ONTOLOGICAL-DETERMINITIVE CHARACTER OF THE CROSS.....	40
EPILOGUE: A PATH FORWARD IN THE APPENDIX.....	50
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	78
VITA.....	79

## ABSTRACT

Following his newfound celebrity upon publication of *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger delivered a lecture in 1927 and 1928, titled “Phenomenology and Theology,” where he discussed how his recent groundbreaking work in existential phenomenology relates to Christian theology. Far from offering his philosophy as a method for theology, he instead attempted to utterly separate the two, setting the former as fundamental ontology and the latter as a positive science more akin to history, with the Christian faith as its positive object of study. The lecture was left unpublished until 1969, when Heidegger added an appendix, a piece exemplary of the later Heidegger’s thought.

The point of this thesis is to properly expound the lecture and provide critique regarding his classification of theology as a positive science. Due to his existential description of Christian faith, his formula of theology as the study thereof sets that science as an ontology more akin to philosophy than he allows. Rather than correct this problem, it is more fitting to let stand Heidegger’s existential definition of faith and elucidate its consequences for Christian theological praxis. This leads to Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s *Act and Being*, a dissertation on the role of ontology in Christian theology which addresses Heidegger’s phenomenology. Bonhoeffer claims that the Cross event in Christianity requires a Christian existential analysis independent of Heidegger’s own analytic of pre-Christian Dasein. Here I conclude that this provides an opening for theological work in ontology, one which theologians must take if they wish to assert independence from and fruitfully engage with philosophy. I then provide an epilogue concerning the appendix, where I suggest the later Heidegger himself recognizes this need for theology, though only in a subtle manner.

## INTRODUCTION

The question of God and the question of being are two mysteries which remain ever as mysteries, even and perhaps especially within our attempts to answer them. It is fitting, then, that the investigations into these two mysteries often meet and intertwine with each other. And since Martin Heidegger has brought the question of being back to its due prominence through phenomenology, this engagement has only intensified further.

It is not at the height of its fame, nor within its recent years, but rather since the beginning, that phenomenology has found itself locked in dialogue with theology. Indeed, it has been happening since Heidegger first made phenomenology famous with his appropriation of his mentor, Edmund Husserl, and publication of *Being and Time* in 1927. Even before then, Heidegger had already given lectures on Christianity and the possibility of a phenomenology of religion as early as 1919. And his upbringing in theology, both Catholic and Protestant, had profoundly influenced his path into philosophy and eventually phenomenology. We can thus trace the relationship between phenomenology and theology all the way back to the beginning of existential phenomenology itself, almost one hundred years ago.

If the relationship between phenomenology and theology is attached to Heidegger's own philosophical engagement with Christianity and theology, we do well to look into his attempt at clarity on their relationship: "Phenomenology and Theology," a lecture first given in Tübingen in 1927 and then in Marburg in 1928, but left unpublished until 1969, when it was published together with an appendix that had been added in 1964. While Heidegger had discussed both Christianity and theology earlier—indeed, he even called

himself a “Christian theologian” in a 1921 letter to a Karl Löwith<sup>1</sup>—and after this lecture, commenting on religious topics throughout *Being and Time* and most of his other essays—this particular lecture is by far his most explicit treatment of the questions concerning phenomenology and theology.

Given his personal and scholastic origins in Christianity, one might expect Heidegger’s reference to theology to be amicable and cooperative. His close friend and colleague, the theologian and biblical scholar Rudolf Bultmann, thought just as much; so much so that he persuaded Heidegger to give this lecture, but only after repeated failed attempts at bringing him to discuss theology explicitly.<sup>2</sup> Heidegger’s reluctance to do so illustrates that his opinions towards theology are much more complicated than the sweeping embrace Bultmann and other contemporaries had expected. We will find that his task in “Phenomenology and Theology” is to clearly define the boundaries between the two sciences and free them from each other’s influence, rather than to bring them together into cooperation—a far different goal than the one for which Bultmann had been hoping.

Few commentators in the English-speaking world have analyzed this lecture. The most explicit treatment is Joseph Kockelmans’ “Heidegger on Theology,” a basic summary of the essay. Jean-Luc Marion, Timothy Stanley, and Judith Wolfe each engage with the essay at various points throughout their work as well. All mostly agree in their understanding of Heidegger’s basic argument that theology is a positive ontic science—a study of a specific being, the Christian—and philosophy a wholly independent, ontological

---

<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, August 19, 1921. In *Protestant Metaphysics After Karl Barth and Martin Heidegger*, Timothy Stanley, 62.

<sup>2</sup> As Judith Wolfe states, Heidegger had a “warm” affection but also an “intellectually ambivalent quality” towards his friend Bultmann. Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology*, 152-153.



one—the study of being-itself. While the reactions to Heidegger’s argument certainly vary, there seems to be little debate over the text itself or the consistency therein.

In spite or perhaps because of this basic agreement, however, most have given little thought to “Phenomenology and Theology.” Dominique Janicaud states in *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn”* that “perhaps not enough attention has been lent, either on the phenomenological or the theological side” to the text, as it is “little known” in France and assumedly elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Most of the commentators just mentioned confine their discussion to chapters within larger works, at best, or mere footnotes, at worst. Even Hans Jonas’ 1964 lecture, “Heidegger and Theology”—one which is contemporary with Heidegger and accuses him of paganism, incidentally at the same conference where Heidegger added the appendix—devotes only a couple sentences to this essay he “recently had occasion to read.”<sup>4</sup> This passing reference is quite undeveloped for such a fiery polemic as Jonas’ contention that Heidegger is a pagan.

Even less attention has been given to the lecture’s appendix. For his part, Kockelmans passes over it after only a quick summary, holding that the addition is “in complete harmony with the ideas he had expressed earlier on the nature and function of theology.”<sup>5</sup> In a footnote, Stanley suggests that the later Heidegger’s appendix “differs somewhat” from his arguments in the original lecture, but crucially “[t]he two issues [that is, the original essay and the added appendix] speak in conjunction with each other.”<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Dominic Janicaud, *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn,”* 100.

<sup>4</sup> Hans Jonas, “Heidegger and Theology,” 226.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Kockelmans, “Heidegger on Theology,” 89.

<sup>6</sup> Stanley, *Protestant Metaphysics After Karl Barth and Martin Heidegger*, 48.

A close reading will reveal that this text is much less simple, and therefore much more worthy of discussion, than its sparse commentary has so far assumed. Heidegger shows inconsistencies in his analysis of theology as a positive science, ones which either call for revision in order to better make theology into an 'ontic' science or—and this will be my position—an embrace and drawing out of these inconsistencies in order to illuminate the ontological nature of theology by Heidegger's own analysis. I will argue that Heidegger himself takes this second path, though only subtly, with his addition of the 1964 appendix. The relationship between the original lecture and the appendix is not simply continuous, and the two pieces are certainly not in 'complete harmony,' as Kockelmans assumes. The difference between them, rather, is just as great as any other gap between the earlier and later Heidegger, and I will argue that this particular difference acts as an example of the later Heidegger's openness to the divine, and in this case the Christian, in his thinking.

I do not personally hold that Heidegger's 'Turn' is necessarily a break between the author of *Being and Time* and the 'obscure' thinker of the notorious 'later works'—and such scare quotes are necessary to illustrate the mood of that common disposition. It is much more helpful rather to take Timothy Stanley's advice: by thinking Heidegger's development in terms of "a series of twists and turns along a consistent pathway which also recovers and returns to lessons learned from previous journeys."<sup>7</sup> Heidegger himself always emphasized that his thought was the 'single question of Being.' Nevertheless, this 'consistent pathway' obviously consists of many changes, the very 'twists and turns' which lend to the common

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 88.

interpretation of *the* Turn, and one of these twists is the difference we will find between the lecture and the appendix in "Phenomenology and Theology."

Another misunderstanding, one which seems to have been corrected by the time of the writing of this thesis, is the notion that Heidegger does not think much at all about God throughout his questioning of being. In the summary which was written in 1973, Kockelmans concludes that "taken materially, the question of theology does not seem to occupy a privileged position within Heidegger's thought as a whole," even if his "few brief remarks often made in passing" do reveal a "great depth" of insight.<sup>8</sup> Nothing could be further from the truth, for the topic of theology haunts Heidegger throughout his entire career. And this is evidenced firstly by his material: his early lectures on phenomenology in Christian life, this lecture at the height of his career, his concept of the 'death of the gods' during the forties,<sup>9</sup> and the remarks concerning theology and onto-theology penetrating all his later works. Secondly, we find within the material itself more than only passing remarks. In this lecture alone Heidegger gives theology an independence far more distinct than other positive sciences, which distinguishes it from both philosophy and history or psychology. His analysis of faith is a very special one that causes trouble for both theology and philosophy as sciences. If Heidegger did not have any 'privileged' thoughts concerning theology, he would not have discussed theology in this strange way or perhaps even delivered this lecture in the first place. While Kockelmans does see that Heidegger provides

---

<sup>8</sup> Kockelmans, "Heidegger on Theology," 104-105.

<sup>9</sup> For Heidegger's concept of the death of the gods, see "The Age of the World Picture" in *Off the Beaten Track*.

remarks “of great depth and of utmost importance”<sup>10</sup> concerning theology generally, he underestimates the importance of theological questions in Heidegger’s thought itself. More than Kockelmans’ basic summary is needed regarding this lecture.

The goal of this thesis is to provide for that need with ample discussion of Heidegger’s thoughts on theology in this lecture and in its appendix, in hopes that it will open up further discussion to this topic under-discussed in the case of both philosophers and theologians. I will expound the original 1927 lecture and then critique Heidegger’s definition of Christian faith. Heidegger defines faith as an ontic-existential object of study—thus making theology, as the study of faith, a positive science. I will contend that his definition of faith is so ontological that it resembles the special being of Christianity more than any positive object, which turns theology, as the study of this faith, into a much more ontological science, a science concerned with the fundamental question of existence, than Heidegger originally allows. After arguing for theology’s better-suited role as an ontological science, I will discuss how this theology would conduct ontological investigations and what ways it would compare and contrast to Heidegger’s own phenomenology. In this discussion I will refer to Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s *Act and Being*, his 1931 dissertation concerning ontology’s role in systematic theology which engages explicitly with Heidegger’s work. Due to his definition of Christian revelation as a free act of God which comes from outside of Dasein’s existential possibilities, Bonhoeffer finds Heidegger’s phenomenology inadequate to theology as a grounding ontology. Here I will conclude with discussing an opening path for theology to contribute its own ontological investigation, one theology will have to take if it wishes to truly engage with philosophy—specifically Heidegger. This path is also

---

<sup>10</sup> Kockelmans, “Heidegger on Theology,” 105.

necessary, first, to ground Christianity's own theological investigations in an independent understanding of being and Christian revelation, rather than allow itself be commandeered by alien philosophies which may dilute the Christian faith into something less than Christian.

While my arguments will conclude with this opening for theology's place in ontology, the strange structure of Heidegger's essay requires further discussion. He saw fit to add the 1964 letter to this essay, so I must expound this letter in an epilogue. Here Heidegger makes a point concerning theology similar to my own, though only in a subtle manner. The later Heidegger is no longer interested in setting ontology as a more primordial, grounding science before theology, and he is open instead to theology as its own originary investigation which may touch on the realm of being that he had previously closed off to it. Because of this, I will contend that Heidegger himself matures into a deeper regard for the possibility of theological thinking concerning the question of being.

## HEIDEGGER'S "PHENOMENOLOGY AND THEOLOGY"

Heidegger's goal in this lecture is to carefully designate the range of study in the separate sciences of philosophy and theology. This investigation then discerns whether these sciences occupy the same range, whether they have different foundations but overlapping themes, whether one stands prior to the other, and finally, whatever their differences or similarities, how they may interact with each other in a fruitful communication.

His driving thesis is the distinction between theology and philosophy, as that of an ontic science (theology) contrasted with the ontological science (philosophy). His "formal definition" of "science" is "the founding disclosure, for the sheer sake of disclosure, of a self-contained region of beings, or of being."<sup>11</sup> A science either studies beings, or being. The distinction between ontic and ontological lies in whether the science discloses beings-as-such or being in general. An ontic science "thematize[s] a *given being* that in a certain manner is already disclosed *prior* to scientific disclosure [emphasis mine]" (PT 41), i.e. an ontic science studies a specific being with an already-assumed notion of being. The specific being studied by this science is what Heidegger calls the *positum*, thus making any ontic science a *positive science*. Botany, for example, studies the specific scientific being of plants, and so in that field plants act as the *positum* of botanic study.

In contrast, ontology "demands a fundamental shift of view: from beings to being" (PT 41). Ontology makes no specific being its *positum*, but rather studies being itself. The two methods of scientific inquiry—positive science and philosophy—no matter the possible similarities on the surface, are "*absolutely*, not relatively, different" [emphasis his] (PT 41).

---

<sup>11</sup>Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 41. All further references to "Phenomenology and Theology" will be parenthetical as (PT *n*), where *n* is the page number in this edition of *Pathmarks*.

Based on this distinction between the ontic and the ontological, Heidegger puts forward the thesis “*that theology is a positive science, and as such, therefore, is absolutely different from philosophy* [emphasis his]” (PT 41), which Heidegger classifies as *the* sole ontological science.

In order to argue this, Heidegger must first prove both the *positive* and *scientific* nature of theology. He chooses specifically Christian theology for investigation. (He admits that there can be a different theology besides a Christian one, although he simply defers the question in this essay.)

Heidegger begins with a discussion of the specific object, or *positum* of Christian theology which makes it a positive science. Heidegger examines a range of possibilities for this *positum*, starting with Christianity itself. Here theology would be the science of Christianity “as something that has come about historically, witnessed by the history of religion and spirit and presently visible through its institutions... as a widespread phenomenon in world history” (PT 43). Essentially, it would be church history. This *positum* would be wrong, however, because “theology itself belongs to Christianity” (PT 43). An analysis of Christianity “as something that has come about in world history” would not be theology, for theology “belongs to the history of Christianity, is carried along by that history” (PT 43). Theology cannot consist in the form of a detached, objective observation. There must be a self-awareness of theology’s place *within* Christianity in order for it to be fruitful.

Proceeding from this it would seem that theology is then a “historical development of its consciousness of history,” and thus the *positum* would then be the self-consciousness of Christianity in world history (PT 43). This classification would also be inaccurate, however, because “theology does not belong to Christianity” (PT 43) as mere historical self-awareness carried along by its Christian context. Rather, it is a “knowledge of that which initially makes

possible Christianity” (PT 43); that is, the practice of theology is not only influenced by the history of Christianity but is also that which makes that history come about as an event in the first place. While theology is bound to Christianity as a study within it and carried along by it, theology no less also produces a knowledge which reciprocally affects Christianity, in fact makes it possible. There is no theological knowledge without Christianity, and there is no Christianity without theological knowledge. This knowledge is “what we call Christianness.” Therefore, the *positum* of theology is *Christianness*, or what Heidegger also calls *faith*.

What is the nature of this faith? The common understanding is belief in a certain set of tenets or doctrines. Heidegger, however, defines faith in a very Kierkegaardian—indeed, existential—manner. His preliminary conception of faith is “a way of existence of human Dasein that, according to its own [way of existence] ...arises... from that which is revealed in and with this way of existence, from what is believed” (PT 44). The thing “revealed” to the Christian case is “Christ, the crucified God” (PT 44). Thus the existence of Christian Dasein conveys the crucified Christ. But this revelation cannot happen through detached knowledge but only “*in believing*.” This revelation “is not a conveyance of information about present, past, or imminent happenings; rather, this imparting” is the event in which one *part-takes* “in the event that is revelation itself,” “which is realized only in existing” (PT 44). This part-taking of existence in revelation is the event in which Dasein “*places one’s entire existence— as a Christian existence, i.e., one bound to the cross—before God*” [emphasis mine] (PT 44).

The event of this placing oneself before God is also a realization of past, pre-Christian existence in a state of “forgetfulness of God.” The realization of this pre-existence places one at “the mercy of God grasped in faith,” which then requires a new existence in which Dasein “becomes a slave, is brought before God, and is thus born *again* [emphasis his]” (PT 44). Again,



this faith and event of *rebirth* is “not some more or less modified type of knowing” (PT 44). It is a constant “appropriation of revelation that co-constitutes” the continuing existence of the Christian Dasein. Here, Heidegger arrives at his formal definition of faith:

*the believing-understanding mode of existing in the history revealed, i.e., occurring, with the Crucified* [emphasis his] (PT 45).

This faith is Heidegger’s *positum* for theology. As a positive science of faith, theology then is the disclosure of the “totality of this being that is disclosed by faith” (PT 45).

It is not enough that theology has a *positum*, however, as Heidegger must also prove theology’s scientific nature. This scienticity is not given, as there is always the possibility that “faith would totally oppose a conceptual interpretation,” making theology a “thoroughly *inappropriate* means of grasping its object, faith” [emphasis his] (PT 45). Heidegger must therefore prove theology as a science.

As a science of faith, theology is the science of “that which is believed,” which is “not some coherent order of propositions about facts or occurrences which we simply agree to” (PT 45). As we have already discussed, this science of faith is one of a Christian existence, not simply one of tenets or doctrines. In this way, theology seems unscientific in that it is by no means systematic. Theology, as a science of a Dasein-encompassing faith, is itself a product of that faith which it studies, and it is a science only for the purpose of cultivating faithfulness itself (PT 46). Here theology again seems circular and unscientific, if approached from a *Naturwissenschaftlich* (natural-scientific) perspective.

What makes theology scientific, however, is that it is a member of the *Geisteswissenschaften* (the “spiritual sciences,” the humanities). Faith as “the existing relation to the Crucified is a mode of historical Dasein, of human existence, of historically being in a history that discloses itself only in and for faith” (PT 46). That is, faith exists only as human existence in

history, even if this history is a special one revealed only through revelation accepted in faith. Faith is historical, so—as that which makes faith its *positum*—theology is “intrinsically *historical*... to the very core a *historical* science [emphasis his]” (PT 46). This is what makes theology scientific: that it is historical as a study of the being of Christian Dasein throughout history. However, it is not merely a specific realm of the “profane historical sciences,” for it is guided systematically beyond a mere analysis of the past. It is systematic in that it grasps “*the substantive content and the specific mode of being of the Christian occurrence... solely as it is testified to in faith and for faith* [emphasis his]” (PT 45). It grasps Christian existence as it acts throughout history, *not* as it is historically determined. This systematic grasping occurs primarily through study and exegesis of the scriptures, then secondarily through church history and history of dogma (PT 46). Thus, theology is “systematic not by constructing a system, but on the contrary by *avoiding* a system” that “first breaks up the totality of the content of faith” into a series of unhistorical propositions and axiomatic statements (PT 45). The goal of historical, systematic theology is “to place the believer who understands conceptually into the history of revelation” (PT 47). This goal is what gives theology its historically scientific nature.

While many might not be convinced of theology’s scientific nature due to its complete dependence upon faith and revelation within scriptures and the church, Heidegger sees this dependence as what gives theology its *independence* from the other sciences, and thus what makes theology a true science. An analysis of Christianity, God, or religion in general without this dependence upon faith would only be a concentration in one of the profane sciences, whether it be a history of Christianity or a philosophy or psychology of religion. It would simply be derivative of one of these ‘profane’ disciplines. Theology is a “fully autonomous ontic science” as long as “all theological knowledge is grounded in faith itself, originates out of faith, and leaps

back into faith” (PT 50). While this fact might not satisfy the unfaithful, only through this independence from other fields by reliance on faith does theology have anything new to say to the other sciences. True interaction with biology or philosophy comes only through theology’s acceptance of its complete dependence upon faith and revelation.

This idea, on Heidegger’s part, is quite warm towards theology. He does not assume that theology is simply a specific area of one of the ‘profane’ sciences or a combination of all these sciences into one general reference point. He sees in theology, rather, a wholly independent subject matter which the other humanities—e.g. history, psychology, or anthropology—do not address nor even can address by their nature. This subject matter, as we have discussed, is the Christian faith. It is that ‘totality of Christian existence’ which arises completely of its own power, not as a result of political or social causes. Heidegger gives this faith its own power to speak from itself, and he states that the goal of theology is to let that faith, as its positive object, to speak from itself independently of the other positive sciences.

Now that Heidegger has classified theology as a positive science, he contrasts it with the ontological science, philosophy—and specifically phenomenology. He gives no special definition of what ontology is in this text beyond the passing classification as “the study of being” already mentioned earlier in this essay. Instead, he moves straight to discussing the relationship between philosophy and theology. This lack of clarification is due to the lecture being given in 1927, shortly after the publication of his *Being and Time*, which wholly concerns philosophy’s role as fundamental ontology. In the actual lecture, Heidegger did in fact discuss it, but during the revision process he “eliminated the first part of the lecture because it consisted of a brief summary of his conception of hermeneutic phenomenology... [that] had [already] been

dealt with in section 7 of *Being and Time*.<sup>12</sup> We may assume his ideas about ontology are the same in this lecture as the one put forth in *Being and Time*. Therefore, we will look to his ontological definition of philosophy in that text.

Ontology is the study of being, being itself—not any being in particular nor any method of being—but the being of all beings. Heidegger defines ontology as such in *Being and Time*: “the task of ontology is to explain Being itself and to make the Being of entities stand out in full relief.”<sup>13</sup> The methodology of studying being is phenomenological. That is, methodologically we must investigate being by investigating the only being for whom being is an issue: Dasein. Ontology is bound to Dasein’s own investigation, simply because our experience of being-in-itself is bound to our own experience with other beings. Heidegger’s formal definition of phenomenology is “to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself” (BT 58). Thus, the goal of ontology, via phenomenology, is “to grasp entities in their *Being* [emphasis his]” (BT 63), which then reveals being-itself, which is “in every case the Being of some entity” (BT 61). Contrasted with the ontic sciences—and Heidegger makes sure to list theology as the example in paragraph 35—that “give a report in which we tell about *entities*” (BT 63), i.e. those sciences concerned with specific beings, ontology deals with “no specific class or genus of entities” but rather the general being of all entities (BT 62). Ontology has no specific object beyond being itself, so it has no positive object which constitutes its phenomenological investigation.

---

<sup>12</sup> Kockelmans, “Heidegger on Theology,” 85.

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*, 49. All further references to this work will be parenthetical as (BT *n*), where *n* is the page number in this edition of the text.

While ontology has no specific being as its object of investigation, it does have a specific method and orientation towards beings. For being is in every case the being of a being. As we have already touched upon briefly but must now develop further, the proper orientation is phenomenology. As defined in *Being and Time*, phenomeno-logy is properly a combination of *phenomenon* and *logos*. Heidegger defines the *phenomenon* as, simply, “that which shows itself in itself, the manifest” [emphasis his] (BT 51). While this definition may at first resemble the traditional notion of an appearance of a thing, that is precisely what Heidegger does not want. The “mere appearance” does *not* mean “showing-itself; it means rather the announcing-itself by something which does not show itself” (BT 52). That is, the appearance is a covering-over of the thing which the appearance is supposed to represent. In this case, the thing-in-itself remains hidden and unknowable (BT 56). Rather, “that which shows itself in itself” is the more primordial showing upon which the varying ‘appearances’ of something else are based. Heidegger defines *logos* as the “letting be seen,” or the making “manifest” that “lets us see something from the very thing which the discourse is about” (BT 56).

Heidegger combines the phenomenon, the that-which-shows-itself-in-itself, and the logos, the letting-be-seen, into his formal definition of phenomenology: “to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself” (BT 58). The goal of phenomenology is to let the beings which show themselves to us show themselves in the way they reveal themselves. Whereas metaphysics views the appearance as a manifestation of something which lies ‘behind a curtain,’ so to speak, and thus engages with the appearance only from the basis of that which lies behind this curtain,

phenomenology wants to allow the appearing of this appearance itself to show itself in its own truth, free from presuppositions or systematic assignments.

Phenomenology is most importantly a *performative* engagement with beings as they are in their own being: “The problem of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself” (BT 33). Through authentic engagement with beings, starting from the phenomenological orientation of letting-be towards these beings, Dasein comes to the fundamental understanding of being-as-such. In this way, phenomenology, as the method of ontology, is a fundamental ontology itself.

Now that Heidegger has defined philosophy and theology as two independent sciences separated by their objects of investigation—for theology, the ‘positive’ mode of existence in faith, and for philosophy, the phenomenological, non-objective investigation of being—he devotes section C to how these two sciences may relate to one another.

While Heidegger is careful to allow Christian faith’s independence from philosophy, he does not allow quite as much for theology: “If faith does not need philosophy, the *science* of faith as a *positive* science does [emphasis his]” (PT 50). That is, even if Christian faith stays true to its own revelatory nature, the *scientific* investigation of this revelation is nevertheless bound to some form of dependence upon philosophy, which is the primordial ontological science. However, even this dependence is “uniquely restricted,” only needed in regard to theology’s “scientific character” and not its primary disclosure (PT 50). For theology’s “founding and primary disclosure of its *positum*, Christianness,” is wholly independent due to its existence in faith alone, which happens “in its own manner” (PT 50). Heidegger admits a tension here between allowing Christian faith its own independence while still grounding the scientific investigation of it positively upon philosophy.

Heidegger sees this tension clearly, again, in theology's strange place as a 'science.'

Since it is a study of faith—a faith that happens only in the event of revelation—is not theology therefore a study of

something essentially inconceivable, and consequently something whose content is not to be fathomed, and whose legitimacy is not to be founded, by purely rational means? (PT 50)

Heidegger sees that theology's subject matter is, by its own definition, 'inconceivable.'

However, there can still be a scientific study of even that which cannot be conceived in a rational capacity. In fact, such a scientific investigation is needed if we are to properly to describe anything as 'inconceivable,' for "only by way of the appropriate conceptual interpretation" arriving at "its very limits" does anything reveal itself as inconceivable in the first place (PT 50). If not for this conceptual study by use of *ratio*, faith's inconceivability would remain "mute" (PT 50).

One of Heidegger's religious influences, Søren Kierkegaard,<sup>14</sup> comes to a similar notion in his pseudonymous *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. The appropriate role of *ratio* within the task of gaining selfhood is the "constant holding fast of the paradox."<sup>15</sup> Since subjectivity, and therefore truth, can only be apprehended by holding infinitely to the absolute paradox (the Christ as God-man), reason must constantly arrive at and admit its own inability to grasp this paradox. Without reason's being pushed 'to its very limits,' to quote Heidegger, the paradox could not reveal itself as paradox; and since subjective truth is dependent on the revelation of the paradox

---

<sup>14</sup> For further reading into Heidegger's relationship to Kierkegaard, *Heidegger and Theology*, *Heidegger's Eschatology*, by Judith Wolfe, and the concluding chapter of *Being in the World*, by Hubert Dreyfus. Heidegger is shy to credit Kierkegaard for his influence—he refers to him minimally in *Being and Time*—but many philosophers agree that his extensive reading of Kierkegaard's works shows that the Dane profoundly influenced Heidegger.

<sup>15</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript Philosophical Fragments*, 233.

as paradox, there would then be no subjectivity, and no truth. In the case of faith for both Kierkegaard and Heidegger, *ratio* must conceive its own inability to grasp revelation, so that the inconceivability of revelation shows itself in full.

Thus we have theology's rational-scientific task of "interpretation of faithful existence" (PT 50). Where does philosophy come in? Given the thesis that theology is an ontic science, theology as an ontic science is grounded upon a "preliminary (although not explicitly known), preconceptual understanding of what and how such a being is" (PT 50). This "preconceptual understanding" is an ontology. Christian theology is an ontic interpretation, and every "ontic interpretation operates on the basis, at first and for the most part concealed, of an ontology" (PT 50). Because of this, theology is ontically dependent on the ground of fundamental ontology, and thereby upon philosophy.

Heidegger immediately qualifies this ontic dependence. Notions such as "the cross, sin, etc." are specifically Christian concepts, and they "manifestly belong to the *ontological* context of Christianness [emphasis mine] (PT 50). Christianness, Christian faith, is only disclosed in faith and through faith. How then could concepts only disclosed through faith—it is important to note that Heidegger goes so far as to declare that they are disclosed *ontologically*—have any ontic dependence upon a more fundamental ontology? Heidegger suggests that, perhaps, either "faith" is "to become the criterion of knowledge for an ontological-philosophical explication," or that "the basic theological concepts [are] completely withdrawn from philosophical-ontological reflection..." (PT 51). In the first case, Dasein would practice the specifically Christian mode of existential analysis from the directive of faith. It seems at first glance that theology would indeed be its own 'Christian philosophy' driven by faith, a 'worldview' in contrast to the secular philosophical 'worldview' which lacks revelation. In the second case, theology would be a



strangely independent practice, neither ontological due to its revelatory nature nor ontic due to its complete lack of an ontological basis or even reference. It would be a wholly independent and consistent, yet closed system.<sup>16</sup>

What disallows these two possibilities, however, is the fact that the “explication of basic concepts... is never accomplished by explicating and defining isolated concepts with reference to themselves alone and then operating with them here and there as if they were playing chips” (PT 51). That is, it is impossible to analyze theological concepts such as the cross, sin, resurrection etc. only in reference to themselves. If such were the case, the closed theological system would simply be an abstract construct with no relation to anything else, not least the reality or truth which is theology’s goal to disclose. Such a theology would be no more than a game, with theological concepts as its ‘playing chips.’ Any correct explication “must take pains to envision and hold constantly in view in its original totality the primary, self-contained ontological context to which all the basic concepts refer” (PT 51). Theology, no less than any other science, must always make reference to the actual world, the ‘original totality’ to which all ‘basic concepts’ must refer if they are to disclose anything. This necessity proscribes the second option for theology’s practice—though Heidegger does not at this point necessarily proscribe theology’s first option, a possibility he will discuss later.

How does theology as a whole, then, make reference to the ‘original totality’ to which all its concepts of the cross, sin, resurrection, or salvation refer? We must again look to the “essential constitutive element of Christianness,” which is faith: and this faith is *rebirth* (PT 51).

---

<sup>16</sup> Marion seems to undertake this form of theology by completely separating talk of God from talk of Being in his *God Without Being*. This is not to say that he completely divorces God from being; he simply argues that God’s *agape* (divine love) is more basic than his existence, in contrast to the theological-philosophical tradition which holds that God must first of all exist before having any other characteristic. It is an interesting, creative project, one which requires extensive evaluation.

Heidegger's sense of Christian "rebirth" is that "Dasein's prefaithful, i.e., unbelieving, existence is sublated [*aufgehoben*] therein" (PT 51). Heidegger uses the German *aufgehoben* to describe this sublation—the Hegelian term that any synthesis contains its previous historical thesis and antithesis within itself and brings both to the fore through their sublation. In this case, all theological concepts and notions, even if they appear ontological, are positively dependent on a pre-ontic and already-assumed understanding of being contained therein. Just as historical concepts already have an unstated ontology of what Dasein is as a being, so does theology have an assumed, pre-Christian ontology of what Dasein is as a being. While the Christian Dasein is existentially—concretely, ontically—a "new creation," this 'new' Dasein still ontologically includes the pre-Christian Dasein in its faithful existence. This sense is illustrated best by hyphenating *re-birth*: while there is a new existence which requires the addition of 're-', the original 'birth' still stands within the new existence just as before.

Here I must challenge Heidegger's terms of ontic vs. ontological sublation. He claims that the Christian Dasein is a new ontic-existential creation, but this assertion seems inconsistent with his usual usage of the term. The ontic-existential always deals with the *what* of a specific being. Surely no one would suggest that Christian Dasein, upon rebirth, "enter into his mother's womb and be born" again,<sup>17</sup> literally becoming a new and completely different being than the one he was previously. To quote Bultmann in a way somewhat unrelated to his original intent: "believing Dasein is still Dasein, in every instance."<sup>18</sup> It is much more fitting to describe the re-

---

<sup>17</sup> John 3:4 (English Standard Version).

<sup>18</sup> Bultmann, Rudolf. "The Historicity of Man and Faith." *Existence and Faith: The Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann* (1930), 94.

birth of the Christian Dasein as an ontological-existential change, one in regards to the *how* of a being, to how this being exists in the world.

Heidegger most likely, however, has in mind the specific, concrete life situation, or *mode* of existence, in which a Dasein finds itself—this is another way he typically defines ontic-existential. The very specific *how* Christian Dasein exists could then fit into this ontical category. But Christian re-birth still does not fit into this definition. While Christian re-birth is always concrete in every instance to a specific human being and his or her life, it varies in so many ways that we cannot describe it as so concretely existential. One may become a Christian quite suddenly after a life of vanity, while another is a Christian seemingly from the beginning of their childhood. One may live one's Christian existence as a missionary in a hostile country, while another may live just as Christianly as a pastor in a country church in a free land. What underlies all these very different existences and binds them into similarly *Christian* existences, however, are the existential structures inherent in whatever a Christian re-birth means. (We admit here for the time being that the question of what these Christian-existential structures actually are remains open; these structures so far have not been investigated, at least as explicitly existential structures.) The states of being-in-sin and being-in grace, for example, are not merely ontical—specific only to each situation—but more primordially ontological ways of being in the world, with the existential structures of sin and grace undergirding each mode of existence. It is more fitting to describe Christian re-birth as an *ontological* change concerning the existential structures that govern *how* the Christian exists in any concrete situation, rather than an ontic one that is only a concrete mode governed by more primordial structures inherent in every Dasein's existence. We would then reverse Heidegger's distinction: in the event of re-birth, Dasein's pre-

Christian existence is *ontologically*, not *ontically*, overcome in faith, while *ontically* the pre-Christian existence is included in faith and the new life.

But let us now return to Heidegger's argument. Because, for him, pre-Christian Dasein is ontologically present in the new Christian Dasein, all theological concepts "necessarily contain *that* understanding of being [emphasis his] that is constitutive of human Dasein *as such*, insofar as it exists at all" [emphasis mine] (PT 51). Here we apply Bultmann's statement in its original intent, that 'believing Dasein is always in every case still Dasein.' Philosophical concepts are fundamental structures of all human being; so theology, as a specific mode of human being, is dependent on these more primordial structures. Thus theology is dependent upon philosophy, simply because its concepts are grounded in the fundamental, ontological understanding of Dasein 'insofar as it exists at all.'

Heidegger uses the example of sin to illustrate this dependence. Sin is specifically Christian, "manifest only in faith, and only the believer can factically exist as a sinner" (PT 51). But since sin is the Christian interpretation of pre-Christianness, and this pre-Christian Dasein is a basic "phenomenon of existence," the "*content* of the concept *itself* [emphasis his]... calls for a return to the [ontological] concept of guilt" (PT 51). Thus the theologian must "originally and appropriately" bring this "basic constitution of Dasein" to light "in a genuine ontological manner..." (PT 51). And the better the theologian commits to this task, the better he is served in using ontological guilt "as a guide for the theological explication of sin" (PT 52).

Heidegger again, however, tows a fine line in this illustration. According to his analysis of the relationship between sin and guilt, "it seems that it is primarily philosophy that decides about theological concepts" (PT 52). Again, Bultmann's maxim concerning believing Dasein as firstly dependent on the concept of Dasein comes to the fore. The theologian simply appropriates

philosophical concepts from fundamental ontology into a certain ontical mode, in this case Christian existence.<sup>19</sup> If such were the case, Heidegger asks, “is not theology being led on the leash by philosophy?” (PT 52). Such leading around on a leash endangers the independence Heidegger aims to give theology as a science, so his answer is a resounding No. Because sin, as a theological concept, is based upon revelation in faith, it is “not to be deduced rationally from the concept of guilt” (PT 52). The fact of sin cannot be found via rational inspection into Dasein’s basic state of ontological guilt, for sin is not identical to nor even “in the least bit evidenced” (PT 52) by pre-Christian guilt. Instead, the basic philosophical concept of guilt can only help the theological concept of sin as a ‘correction’ or ‘co-direction’ that relates the revelation (in this case, sin) to pre-Christian content (in this case, guilt). A more fitting interpretation of the original German might be ‘general orientation,’ rather than the stronger term of ‘co-direction,’ because the original ontological concept of guilt really gives no ‘direction’ beyond a fundamental clarification of the region of sin. Even with guilt’s general orientation, the *primary* direction, “the source of [sin’s] Christian content, is given only by faith” (PT 52). Faith is still the primary directive of the theological analysis of sin, and the ontological concept of guilt can only offer a general orientation of the pre-Christian state of Dasein.

Here Heidegger roughly formulates the relationship between philosophy and theology:

*Philosophy is the formally indicative ontological corrective of the ontic and, in particular, of the pre-Christian content of basic theological concepts [emphasis his] (PT 52).*

---

<sup>19</sup> An example might be Thomas Aquinas adopting Aristotle’s basic metaphysic to his theological system in *Summa Theologica*. The Thomist-revivalist Jacques Maritain assumes as much: “St. Thomas was a theologian, that is, someone who uses his reason to acquire some understanding of the mysteries of faith. And what instrument does such a task call for? A philosophy,” and Aquinas adopted Aristotle as his philosopher. Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 132.

Theology keeps its independence through the use of faith as its directive for conceptual analysis. Ideas of sin or the cross spawn only from the revelation of faith. But philosophy guides theology in helping it clarify the pre-Christian state of Dasein as Dasein—which in every case the Christian Dasein always remains, obviously, as Dasein.<sup>20</sup> Philosophy is “formally indicative” by helping theology locate the starting ontological “regions” of its concepts. If sin is going to be a “*concept of existence*,” then it must locate itself first within an ontological region of pre-Christian Dasein, and this region is guilt (PT 52).

Heidegger is careful to note that philosophy does not lead theology on a leash through this relationship, because it does not “serve to bind but, on the contrary, to release and point to the specific, i.e., credal source of the disclosure of theological concepts” (PT 52). Philosophy only acts as a basic starting point, where theology can clarify beginning pre-Christian ontological concepts—e.g. guilt, time, death—and then depart from these basic concepts once theology clarifies its own “credal” sources, i.e. its revelation, in contrast to the basic pre-Christian Dasein’s form of existence.

But while theology may make use of philosophy in this basic, co-directive way, philosophy does not have much at all to do with theology. Even philosophy’s role as ‘co-directive’ of theology is not apparent to philosophy itself: “it can never be established by philosophy itself or for its own purpose, that it must have such a corrective function for theology” (PT 52-53). Philosophy cannot, on its own accord, assume its place as a directive for theology, even as a modest co-directive. This is in contrast to philosophy’s assumptive authority towards all the other ‘positive’ sciences—such as Heidegger’s example, physics— where “philosophy... *does* of its essence have the task of directing... with respect to their ontological

---

<sup>20</sup> Again, here we note Bultmann’s maxim.

foundation” [emphasis mine] (PT 53). Philosophy can offer the *possibility* of use for theology, but this use can never, for philosophy, go beyond mere possibility.

The relationship between the two sciences, then, is wholly up to the theologian’s discretion. Heidegger gives good reason for the theologian to make use of philosophy, because if theology wants “to be factual with respect to the facticity of faith,” then we would assume a basic ontology would be useful with respect to theology’s discussion of man’s basic “facticity” (PT 53). But, again, the theologian and not the philosopher must decide whether this is so. Only “insofar as [theology] understands itself to be a science” (PT 53)—that is, a positive, ontic science with a specialized realm like all other positive sciences—does theology decide to use philosophy as its ontological corrective.<sup>21</sup>

Heidegger now concludes with this formula as a summary of his position:

*Philosophy is the possible, formally indicative ontological corrective of the ontic and, in particular, of the pre-Christian content of basic theological concepts. But philosophy can be what it is without functioning factually as this corrective* [emphasis his] (PT 53).

Philosophy is a wholly formal guide, one only concerned with ontologically correcting basic ontic concepts in theology, and this concern is one-sided, having to do only with theology’s task and not at all with philosophy as such.

We should note here that, since Heidegger restricts philosophy’s involvement to only some basic *ontic* theological concepts, he is implicitly assuming there to be some *ontological* concepts within theology—or at least within Christian faith, which would then still be part of theology’s subject matter. This hint is somewhat clearer in his earlier mention of the “ontological context of Christianness” (PT 50), but he does not explain himself here, either. This neglect is

---

<sup>21</sup> This apparently minor phrase—“insofar as [theology] understands itself to be a science”—will become very important once we reach the appendix, where the later Heidegger concludes that “presumably [theology] should not be a science at all.”

understandable, once we see Heidegger's position that the philosopher, at least in the role of a philosopher, should shun any role in this discussion.

The "peculiar relationship" between philosophy and theology, Heidegger here asserts the most forcefully in the entire text, "includes the fact that *faith*, as a specific possibility of existence, is in its innermost core the mortal enemy of the *form of existence* that is an essential part of *philosophy* and that is factually ever-changing" [emphasis his] (PT 53). That is, Christian faith, as rebirth of Dasein's existence which is theology's positive object of study, is a 'mortal enemy' of the pre-Christian Dasein's form of existence, which the Christian Dasein calls the state of sinfulness. And this state of sinfulness is precisely the object of philosophy's—and specifically Heidegger's—existential analytic. This is an "*existentiell opposition*" (PT 53) between faithfulness and the practice of philosophy, one which is not simply a fight between theology and philosophy but rather primordially between Christian faith as a whole and the practice of philosophy. And this opposition is so dire that "philosophy does not even begin to want in any way to do battle with [faith]" (PT 53).

However, at this point we should also note that, if we keep to our reversal earlier of Christian existence as a new *existential* rather than *existentiell* re-birth, then the opposition between Christian and pre-Christian Dasein would be an *existential* rather than *existentiell* opposition. The opposition is not between the beings as beings (their ontic nature) but instead concerning how these beings exist as human beings. If we remain with my reversal, then the opposition between theology and philosophy is better classified as perhaps the most fundamental opposition—an opposition between two ontological interpretations of what it means to be as Dasein.



Here we see why Heidegger the philosopher does not comment much at all on any ontological notions in Christian faith: by keeping rigorously to its non-revelatory dimensions, philosophy finds existence in faith so absolutely foreign—indeed, combative—that it cannot speak on it. And so Heidegger, insofar as he is speaking from the perspective of a philosopher, cannot speak to the ontological concepts within faith or theology. At best he can only respond fixedly from the standpoint of pre-Christian Dasein. It is thus up to theologians to discuss any ontological structures within faithful existence; but, let us ask briefly, how can the theologian discuss these ontological structures, if he is by Heidegger’s own classification a positive, ontic scientist?

Only from this fixed opposition between faith and philosophy can there be any fruitful relationship between philosophy and theology. Heidegger exhorts both the theologian and the philosopher to free themselves from “illusions and weak attempts at mediation” between the two (PT 53), and instead assert themselves as opponents. Once they arrive at these combative positions, the two actually find a “*possibility of a community of the sciences*” and come “to communicate in a genuine way” [emphasis his] (PT 53). Theology via revelation actually has something new to announce to the natural Dasein in philosophy, and philosophy via restriction to the natural man reminds theology of its revelatory and miraculous—and therefore impossible—nature. But this genuine community must, for Heidegger, exclude muddling between them: “there is no such thing as a Christian philosophy; that is an absolute ‘square circle’” (PT 53). Here Heidegger finally comes out against the possibility mentioned earlier of a philosophy driven by the directive of faith. Heidegger now seems to allow only an anti-philosophical theology as a proper practice for the Christian. Likewise, the philosopher cannot conceive of a “neo-Kantian, or axiological, or phenomenological theology...” (PT 53). Since theology is

grounded in revelation given only by faith and is not at all accessible to the natural Dasein, philosophy has not even the slightest ability to speak theologically of the divine.<sup>22</sup>

Heidegger also makes sure to add that ‘phenomenological’ especially cannot apply to theology,<sup>23</sup> much in the same way it cannot apply to mathematics (PT 53). That term can only refer to the method of ontology, “a procedure that essentially distinguishes itself from that of all the other, positive sciences” (PT 53). Heidegger does not accept the possibility of a phenomenological method in any other science besides first philosophy, ontology—whether it be a directly derived ontic science like mathematics or an indirect and combative one such as theology.

Heidegger concedes that, of course, one may “master” phenomenology “in addition to his own positive science,” or at least make himself familiar with “its steps and investigations” (PT 53). However, the way he presents the tension between the Christian faith and the philosophical perspective of ‘free Dasein’ hints at a difficulty for Christians to be able to actually do phenomenology. How could the Christian place himself as a free-thinking, pre-Christian Dasein in order to properly follow the phenomenological method, without thereby ridding himself of his faith?<sup>24</sup> Of course, the Christian may “follow [phenomenology’s] steps and investigations” like

---

<sup>22</sup> Marion contests this position, holding instead that philosophy can and indeed already has spoken of the divine insofar as it discusses the *summum ens*, the highest being. This is theiology, the study of the divinities, in contrast to Christian theology, which Marion asserts is the study of Gød, the Gød of the Cross. For further reading, see *God Without Being*.

<sup>23</sup> Here he is clearly responding to the enthusiasm the phenomenological method had been generating in theologians of his time, not least in Bultmann.

<sup>24</sup> Heidegger fully knows this conundrum, as he discusses it only a few years later: “...anyone for whom the Bible is divine revelation and truth already has the answer to the question, ‘Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?’ ...One who holds on to such faith as a basis can, perhaps, emulate and participate in the asking of our question in a certain

he may follow any other human enterprise, but can he truly involve himself with it beyond the combative role Heidegger's formula has given him?

But even without the specific problem philosophy presents to theology and vice versa, philosophy can only aid any positive science in a restricted way:

Philosophical knowledge can become genuinely relevant and fertile for his own positive science *only when...* he comes upon the basic concepts of his science and, furthermore, questions the suitability of traditional fundamental concepts with respect to those beings that are the theme of his science (PT 53).

The ontic scientist comes to philosophy only when he finds the "basic concepts" in his own science to be no longer sufficient to properly analyze the *positum* of his investigation. In this case, the scientist looks further into the ontological grounding of these ontic concepts and judges whether he is using the proper ontology to ground them. He "can search back for the original ontological constitution of those beings," clarify or change this grounding ontology, and then either renew the basic ontic concepts of his science into a more ontologically correct manner or create new ontic concepts entirely (PT 54). Any relation between philosophy and a positive science is essentially a questioning and reevaluation of the positive science's foundation.

In the last few sentences of his lecture, Heidegger shirks from demanding that this restriction be absolute: "scientific communication... cannot be tied down to definite rules..." especially since the concepts of both philosophy and the positive sciences change so often as to make an orderly, systematic clarity of these concepts impossible (PT 54). However, he still implores scientists in both fields to guide their discussions by "an instinct for the issues and by the certainty of scientific good sense," which he no doubt means the ontological distinction between beings and being, the ontic and the ontological, the directives of each science and the

---

way, but he cannot authentically question without giving himself up as a believer, with all the consequences of this step" Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 8.

primordial foundation of ontology for all other ontic sciences (PT 54). Finally, he exhorts philosophers and theologians involved to allow “all the questions about dominance, preeminence and validity of the sciences” to “recede behind” the practices and objects of the sciences themselves (PT 54).

In regard to philosophy and theology, Heidegger most likely has in mind the “questions about dominance, preeminence and validity” theology had been chasing since the beginning of the modern era: is theology a true science at all, let alone the queen of the sciences it previously was in the Middle Ages, and what ‘true’ knowledge can theology find, when its subject matter is revelatory faith? This discussion famously climaxed with Kant’s critique of true metaphysical knowledge—‘restricting knowledge to make room for faith’—in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to which the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher had given the fullest response in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, which remained until Heidegger’s contemporary, Karl Barth, arrived in the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Heidegger and Barth shared a distaste toward one another’s personal convictions and scholarship. Barth once wrote to Bultmann “that he regarded his adherence to Heidegger as a ‘return to the slave house of Egypt’.”<sup>25</sup> For his part, Heidegger wrote to Bultmann in 1932 that he

found Barth’s forward to the newly published second edition to *Church Dogmatics I* so vainglorious that he had no desire to read the book itself, and there is no evidence that he engaged with any part of Barth’s *magnum opus*.<sup>26</sup>

But they also, oddly enough, seemed to share the attitude that theology should simply be content to do its work, rather than justify its place and prestige among the humanities. Heidegger’s closing exhortation to ignore all the questions about preeminence between sciences is very

---

<sup>25</sup> Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology*, 155.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

similar to Barth's remarks in *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*. In the second chapter of this work, Barth states:

Ever since the fading of its illusory splendor as a leading academic power during the Middle Ages, theology has taken too many pains to justify its own existence. It has tried too hard, especially since the nineteenth century, to secure for itself at least a small but honorable place in the throne room of general science... [Theology] will always stand on the firmest ground when it simply *acts* according to the laws of its own being.<sup>27</sup>

He also remarks harshly on philosophical theology:

If ever there was a pure fantasy, really 'too beautiful to be true,' it would be the idea of a philosophical theology or a theological philosophy in which the attempt would be to reason 'theonomously.' ...Theological knowledge, thought, and speech cannot become general truths, and general knowledge cannot become theological truth.<sup>28</sup>

Such words would perhaps find a home in Heidegger's "Phenomenology and Theology" just as well as in Barth's work. For both men agree that theology is determined solely by its own domain, the revelatory acts of God in faith, and nothing else.

Or so it would seem. While we have seen that Heidegger is careful to stress theology's independent place within the realm of faith distinct from the other sciences, with his priority of the ontological over the ontic, and thus the philosophical over the theological, he cannot help but create a hierarchy which relegates theology to being 'led on the leash' by philosophy in some respect. Heidegger clearly asserts that "[e]very ontic interpretation operates on the basis, first and for the most part concealed, of an ontology" (PT 50). *Every* ontic interpretation—and since theology is, for Heidegger, an ontic science, it therefore operates from the foundation of a more primordial ontology, no matter how much it wishes to break free from that ontology. If theology is to remain an ontic science, it cannot assert a true independence from philosophy.

---

<sup>27</sup> Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, 15.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 113-114.

No doubt the theologians present at this lecture might have been a little confused to hear Heidegger conclude with this exhortation to avoid all discussions of hierarchy and priority, since Heidegger himself had just spent the previous minutes setting philosophy before theology. Even so, we cannot ignore the fact that Heidegger attempts to free theology from the role of a secondary philosophy shrouded in pretty Christian language, a role many theologians of his time had been pursuing. Instead, he sees in theology an independent enterprise, to the point of offering it the role of ‘mortal enemy’ in battle against philosophy. For someone who holds philosophy as the most fundamental, primordial questioning of being, that role is a notable (though certainly antagonistic) place to put theology.

Heidegger himself was unsatisfied with the lecture. He wrote to Elizabeth Blochmann that the topic he was asked to discuss—how philosophy might be of use to theologians—perverted his thoughts into an apologetic for Christianity and theology, rather than what he truly wanted: a confrontation.<sup>29</sup> Part of this may be due to his placing theology as an ontic science, rather than a competing ontology, which I will assert is a more fitting classification below. In this way I hope to better discuss theology and philosophy as the authentic ‘confrontation’ which Heidegger desired.

---

<sup>29</sup> Wolfe, *Heidegger's Eschatology*, 113.

## THE EXISTENTIALITY OF FAITH

I have already mentioned some critiques of Heidegger's thoughts throughout our exposition of the essay. Specifically, I challenged Heidegger's idea of Christian re-birth as an ontic-existential change rather than an ontological-existential one. Rather than marking Christian existence as a specific mode of concrete Dasein, it is more fitting to describe it as a worlding, existential structure underlying concrete Dasein's existence in the world. I also noted his implicit hierarchy of philosophy over theology, one which endangers his goal to utterly separate theology and philosophy from each other. I will now offer a deeper critique and a possible solution to these problems in Heidegger's argument.

These problems just mentioned are symptoms of Heidegger's true and most basic difficulty, which goes back to his definition of theology itself, as the 'science of faith.' If theology is a positive science, then the 'faith' of which it is a science is, as discussed, its *positum*, its positive object of study. But Heidegger's definition of faith is so ontological that it hardly makes sense to call the science of this faith ontic and positive. This requires either a reformulation of theology's object of study into something more positive—e.g. God, the history of Christianity, the Church, the Bible—which would thus set theology back in place as a positive science, or an acceptance of Heidegger's very ontological definition of faith and a re-categorization of theology as an *ontological* science side by side with philosophy.

First, let us discuss Heidegger's characterization of faith in more detail. He defines faith as: *the totality of Christian existence*. This totality is historical in that it applies to everything Christian, from exegesis of Scriptures to Church history and dogma. It is also essentially practical and everyday, since, "because [theology] is an interpretation of Christian existence, the content" of this interpretation is always "related to Christian occurrence as such" (PT 47). Faith

is always the totality of a Christian Dasein. Essentially, faith is existential fidelity to “the Crucified,” as Heidegger states, and thus faith is Christian existence and a specifically Christian being. As the study of faith, then, theology is the study of Christian being, Christian existence. This is no study of an ordinary *positum*, like the human brain in psychology or a specific culture in history. Rather, this is a phenomenological study of a *new* totality of Dasein’s existence brought about by its acceptance of revelation.

This problem is illustrated best by Heidegger’s description of Christian existence as ‘re-birth.’ While the ‘re-’ suggests a positive study built upon the foundation of that more primordial *birth*, the combination of the two into one word, *rebirth*, creates something entirely different from either the original *birth* and the simple prefix ‘re-.’ The sum of the two is greater than its parts. And yet, the presence of *birth* within the new word suggests that it retains the ontological, existential, keeping with the original existential analytic required of Dasein but also needing either modification or even totally new analysis due to the ‘re-.’ In this manner, Heidegger’s definition of faith as rebirth muddles the difference between the ontic and ontological to such an extent, indeed with a preference towards the ontological rather than the positive character of Christianity, that it challenges his own formula of theology as a positive science.

This muddling explains the subtleties within “Phenomenology and Theology,” where he touches briefly on the ontological realms of Christian faith but never develops them further. One pointed example is when Heidegger suggests briefly that “things such as the cross, sin, etc.” “manifestly belong to the *ontological* context of Christianness” [emphasis mine] (PT 50). He never develops what this ontological context of Christianness means further—is this context simply the way the Christian exists in the world as Dasein? But since this way of being-in-the-world is a very special case, does it not have its own specific ontological structure? And then



would we not then be in an independent ontological investigation, rather than a positive-ontic one—that is, in the realm of being?

Heidegger even goes so far as to state that Dasein's appropriation of faith, in the relating of faithful history (revelation) and faithful occurrence (Christian existence), arises from the "possibilities of a faithful existence [Dasein]" (PT 48). 'Faithful existence'—that is, Christian life—possesses its own 'possibilities'—existential structures—which allow Dasein to appropriate revelation. Again, he goes no further into discussion of these structures, but he suggests that they do exist, distinct from the primordial existential structures of non-believing Dasein.

He claims this being-in-faith is a positive object of study, but then defines it in terms of being, including even existential possibilities. This is the realm of ontology and the phenomenological structures therein. Thus by Heidegger's own definition of faith, theology is the science of Christian-being with other beings, be they God, other Christians, the unfaithful, the world, etc. Faith cannot be a *positum*. As defined by Heidegger, it is similar to the being-of-entities which is the goal of ontology to reveal. And thus theology is, according to his own definition of it as the science of faith, an ontology.

There are two paths to remedy this problem: 1) to reformulate theology's *positum* into a more positive object, and thus better position theology as a positive science, or 2) to accept faith, in its Heideggerian definition, as theology's area of study and therefore discuss its ontological character similar to philosophy. While the first path may be in better keeping with the theological and philosophical tradition, I will argue the merits of the second path.

Some theologians may take the first route. A Catholic Thomist would probably rather define theology in its etymological sense: the science of God. In a similar way the Protestant

Barthian may condemn Heidegger's definition as too anthropocentric. Barth himself prefers theology's study as simply the study of God, but with the added caveat that it is a study of God *with man*.<sup>30</sup> In this case, the theologian refers to theology as the study of *the Being*, Christ or God, which does give theology an object of study and makes it a positive science.

Heidegger himself challenges this classification of theology as the science of God (PT 48). Theology misunderstands itself when it thinks it concerns its study of God as a positive object over which it speculates. It cannot assume a detached role of observer, but can only place itself as faithful practice underneath the yoke of its supposed 'object' of study. Theology concerns being-*with*-God, not being-with-*God*. The emphasis here in a proper theology is on the subjective participation with God and not the objective nature of God himself. While part of theology might discuss the nature of God objectively or theoretically, this discussion is always for the purpose of the Christian's being-*with* this Being. It is always for the purpose of "homiletics and catechetics" (PT 48)—cultivation of faithfulness that puts the Christian Dasein in better position to accept its faith. In the words of the mystic poet, Angelus Silesius, "If Christ were born in Bethlehem a thousand times and not in thee thyself; then art thou lost eternally." Even a pure appreciation of the objective glory of God is done phenomenologically from the side of Dasein. The Christian theologian must always guard against thinking theonomously—as if he can think of God as noumatic object rather than as the Lord to his discipleship. Christian theology is always done as a *Christian*, not as a detached scientist and certainly not as God himself. Heidegger is correct: "Theology is not speculative knowledge of God" (PT 48). And in

---

<sup>30</sup> See *Evangelical Theology: an Introduction* for this clarification. Barth's caveat brings his formulation of theology much closer to Heidegger's definition than to the Thomist one.

the realm of theology, Kierkegaard is right that ‘truth is subjectivity’<sup>31</sup>—that is, in the sense of making oneself a subject and servant before God, as Kierkegaard means it. Thus, we cannot escape the fact that theology is a study of Christian being-with, Christianness, Christian existence, even in its most objective case of being-with-God.

We thus see that the theology of faith, as Heidegger defines it and as I have defended against its more positive classification, has an ontological character rather than a positive-ontic one. It is much closer to philosophy than to biology or mathematics, or even history or psychology. The second path is therefore more apt: to pursue the consequences of Heidegger’s mistake of defining theology in a too ontological manner and thus draw out the phenomenological-ontological character of theology.

This does not mean that theology is simply another philosophy; the differences between the two are still evident, and Heidegger’s own definition shows this. “*Theology in its essence has the character of a practical science*” [emphasis his] (PT 48). That is, theology’s essential work is exegesis of scriptures, catechetics for pastors and preachers, and analysis of dogma—and all of this is for the purpose of homiletics, a cultivation of faithfulness. Heidegger illustrates this fact best by the statement: “*Theology is systematic only when it is historical and practical. It is historical only when it is practical and systematic. And it is practical only when it is systematic and historical*” [emphasis his] (PT 48). Theology does not come closer to philosophy by becoming like a philosophy, but rather only by becoming more explicitly theological. Heidegger himself makes this quite explicit as well: “The more unequivocally theology disburdens itself of

---

<sup>31</sup> We should note that “Barth himself happily affirmed this claim in his 1924 dogmatics lectures precisely when discussing revelation! ...Barth—citing the *Philosophical Fragments* (pp. 267-322)—writes that ‘Kierkegaard is only too right. No matter how we look at it, one of his most profound insights is that the subjective is the objective.’” Ziegler, Philip, “Barth’s Criticisms of Kierkegaard: A Striking Out at Phantoms?”, 440.

the application of some philosophy and its system, the more *philosophical* is its own radical scientific character” [emphasis his] (PT 48).

So how are theology and philosophy to interact, if theology does best by simply being a theology and, likewise, philosophy a philosophy? Their relationship would be an almost diametrically opposed one according to Heidegger’s formula, the very ‘mortal enemies’ Heidegger characterized but was reluctant to develop further.<sup>32</sup> This comes as they are, in essence, two competing ontologies. If Christian faith and the study thereof is ontological, then philosophy and theology cannot help this difference. The difficulty is that the pre- or non-Christian philosophy begins from the orientation of a non-revelatory ‘free-thinking Dasein,’ while the Christian theology begins from its founding disclosure of revelation in faith, which requires it be ‘re-born’ and reorient its entire existence. It seems that, since they operate from these diametrically opposed orientations, there may be little common ground upon which they can interact.

There is also the problem that theology, by the characterization we have discussed, is *not* an apologetic science. It is not meant at all to confront and battle philosophy through ideas and concepts. One becomes a Christian by engaging with revelation, not by reading theology. If theology attempted to wrest that power away from revelation and assume its own ability to convert or engage the world, it would become something less, not more. Theology must be simply a practical, catechetical, homiletic science. It does not create faith through the power of its ideas but only makes more explicit the faith upon which Dasein relies. Therefore it is not theology’s purpose nor in its interest to think itself as an opposing ‘worldview’ that opposes the

---

<sup>32</sup> As we have already noted, Heidegger wrote to Blochmann that he desired ‘confrontation’ rather than an ‘apologetic.’

‘secular worldview’ of philosophy.<sup>33</sup> Even though they may be different or even oppositional ontologies, it does not follow that they act in opposition.

What then of theology and phenomenology/ontology? If they are not to interact as competing worldviews, and indeed it seems difficult to imagine a fruitful discussion anyway, what is the role of theology in ontology and vice versa? I am unsure what the philosopher may think of theology or its uses, but for my part I can speak to a need in theology regarding ontology and phenomenology, which may provide a path forward for theologians in their thinking concerning the meaning of being.

---

<sup>33</sup> See Heidegger’s “The Age of the World Picture” in *Off the Beaten Track*, where he discusses the problems in the notion of a ‘worldview’ or ‘world picture.’ He does not want philosophy to think itself as a worldview, let alone suggest theology do the same. On theology’s side, Barth despised the idea of any ‘Christian worldview’ for the theology to take (see *Evangelical Theology: an Introduction*).

## THE ONTOLOGICAL-DETERMINITIVE CHARACTER OF THE CROSS

For our discussion of the need of a specifically Christian ontology, I will take Dietrich Bonhoeffer's statement in *Act and Being*, his dissertation which engages explicitly with Heidegger's phenomenology, as our guide: "With the knowledge, gained in revelation, that finitude is creatureliness—that is, open for God<sup>34</sup>—all concepts of being must be formed anew."<sup>35</sup> That is, due to the event of revelation which brings about the realization that man is before God and God is before man, this requires a completely new formal analysis of being. Indeed, Bonhoeffer's critique of Heideggerian phenomenology and its relationship to Protestant theology is exactly where we find a demand for theology's role in an existential analytic of Dasein.

The most basic issue which requires a specifically Christian existential analytic is that of revelation. I define revelation here as an essentially impossible event that arises out of God's free act and not from any natural or human capabilities. Heidegger agrees roughly with this definition in his lecture. For he states that the "essence" of faith does not arise "*from* Dasein or spontaneously *through* Dasein, but rather from that which is revealed..." (PT 43-44). That is, the essence of faith, as faith, cannot arise from within Dasein's capabilities but can only come from

---

<sup>34</sup> Here the utmost precision is required, even if it results in slight disagreement with Bonhoeffer's wording. By 'open for God' we cannot mean that the human being is naturally capable of receiving God or his revelation; such would mean that revelation is among man's natural capacities and is therefore, as a natural capacity, decidedly *not* revelation. Rather, by 'open for God' we can only mean that the human being 'has been made open' solely by God's free act to reveal himself. While this distinction may seem small, the difference is so large as to distinguish Catholic and Protestant theology (and ontology, for that matter), which we will discuss later. For further reading, see Bonhoeffer's Protestant critique of Thomist ontology in *Act and Being*, pp. 73-76.

<sup>35</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 73. All further references will be parenthetical as (AB *n*), where *n* is the page number in this edition of the text.

without. Since revelation can only come from without, it can only be believed according to testimony of existence (PT 43), or proclamation of revelation in existence, which is faith.

In Heidegger's phenomenology, as he mentions briefly in this lecture, every interpretation of existence, whether ontic-scientific or everyday, "operates on the basis, at first and for the most part concealed, of an ontology" (PT 50). Dasein always exists with a pre-conceptual understanding of being, no matter how concealed. This is what makes the investigation into being possible in the first place—if there was no primordial understanding of being hidden within Dasein's capabilities, then we could not ever hope to find it.<sup>36</sup> Therefore all fundamental existential structures already exist in Dasein, and any event of being happens within the boundaries of these existential structures. Being happens as a possibility only within Dasein's existentiality. As Bonhoeffer interprets it, Dasein is "the window on being" (AB 72).

How does this regard revelation? Because Heidegger ties the understanding of being so intrinsically to Dasein's capabilities, the concept of being "remains self-contained" (AB 72). Heidegger's phenomenology is avowedly a-theistic: any event of revelation would have to 'flash within the realm of being,' and any encounter with God or the divine would have to happen within Dasein's possibilities to-be in its existential structures, especially that of temporality. Bonhoeffer calls this result an "atheistic philosophy" of "closed-in finitude" (AB 72).

As a result, revelation in Heidegger's phenomenology cannot happen as revelation. Any event of being is essentially closed in by Dasein's existential structures. Revelation, according to its own definition, is an im-possibility. While it nevertheless does 'flash within the realm of being'—and in that sense it does happen as a 'possibility'—it happens as an event that, according to the fundamental existential structures of being, *cannot* happen, which requires us to

---

<sup>36</sup> For in-depth discussion, see the introduction of *Being and Time*, where Heidegger discusses all of this at length.

call it an ‘*im*-possibility.’ *Revelation does not come from within Dasein’s possibilities but only from without.* But if all being is reduced to Dasein’s possibility to-be, then even the most miraculous revelation would be reduced to Dasein’s possibility, simply because of the fact that it happens in the realm of being. In this way revelation is reduced to Dasein; God’s act is reduced to Dasein’s possibility.

If a Christian theology wants to accord revelation its due place, it must accept revelation’s “essential character of an event, one that comes from God’s freedom” (AB 78). But if revelation only happens as a possibility *within* Dasein’s existential structures, it no longer comes from *without* as an act of ‘God’s freedom’ and therefore is not revelation. Here we arrive at the theologian’s conundrum: if he wants to engage with Heidegger, he must either reject revelation’s status as revelation or reject Heidegger’s framework of closed-in finitude.

We have already discussed Heidegger’s formulation of re-birth. Christian faith is re-birth (PT 51). In re-birth Dasein is “placed before God” and, due to this, “existence is reoriented in and through the mercy of God grasped in faith” (PT 44). In that manner, re-birth is ontological-existential—not existentiell, as we have argued already—in that it brings about Dasein’s reorientation of the totality of all Christian existence. But this reorientation comes only through faith, and faith only comes through revelation, and this revelation is “Christ, the crucified God” (PT 44). But the crucifixion “is a historical *event*...” [emphasis mine] (PT 44). The crucifixion of Christ is existentiell as this concrete life situation which happened in history. But it is also an event which, as the death of God, goes beyond the account which Dasein’s possibilities can give. The crucifixion *breaks into* history from *without*; it is an *event* in the truest sense, as the very irruption of history. Christian re-birth, which is an *existential* reorientation, is given only on the



foundation of the *existentiell* event of the crucifixion.<sup>37</sup> The existential reorientation, founded upon the *existentiell* event, then further leads to *existentiell*, concrete existence—the Christian life. Here Bonhoeffer rightly notes that in “revelation, the ontic-existentiell and ontological-existential structures coincide” (AB 78). Christian existence, because it is based on a revelatory, *existentiell* event, receives direction from this event rather than constitutive existential possibilities of Dasein. In this way revelation “supersedes and challenges also the existential-ontological possibilities of Dasein” (AB 78). Here “revelation claims to be the initiator of the unity of Dasein and have *the sole right to do so*” [emphasis mine] (AB 78). What has been implicit in our analysis of Christian existence now becomes explicit: revelation and faith, *not* Dasein’s primordial-fundamental ontological constitution, directs and constitutes the unity of Christian existence. Where Heidegger claims that in every instance Dasein already has a fundamental understanding and unity of being hidden within itself, Christianity asserts that this unity absolutely *does not* lie within its own capabilities, but rather comes from *without* and then directs all Dasein’s existence. Not even the “existential structure of Dasein” acts as “second mediator” between the Christian and his experience of revelation (AB 78). At this point “the deepest root of philosophy, the one from which it derives its claims, is cut” (AB 78). Fundamental ontology, even one so originally and impressively constitutive of pre-Christian Dasein as Heidegger’s phenomenology, cannot suffice as a proper existential analysis of *Christian* Dasein. Instead, an existential analytic from the basis of revelation—specifically the event of the crucifixion—is required of Christian theology.

---

<sup>37</sup> The resurrection event also deserves its own account, one which is conspicuously absent from both Heidegger’s and Bonhoeffer’s analysis. However, since the resurrection is an eschatological event (that is, one which acts as a promise of futural resurrection of all creation), it may not have a place in *existential* discussion of *this* temporal world beyond that of hope—though such hope is also defining of the Christian life.

This calls for a totally new Christian concept of being. Whatever similarities these concepts share with philosophical language are nevertheless wholly unique, as they are directed by the crucified God through revelation in faith to Christian Dasein and received in faith and perpetuated further in faith through the study of theology. Christian faith, due to its founding disclosure of revelation which claims all existence and the existential structures therein, is ontological, determinative of all of Christian existence.

By grounding all Christian ontic concepts in the foundation of pre-Christian ontological concepts, Heidegger sets theology as positively dependent on philosophy. However, as we have shown, by Heidegger's own assumption of faith as the totality of Christian existence, theology and its theological concepts are not *merely* ontic but instead ontological, and therefore cannot be merely dependent on pre-Christian ontological notions. This requires, as Bonhoeffer states, that 'all concepts of being must be formed anew.' Therefore theology has a responsibility within its own systematic praxis to provide an existential analytic of being.

Here, however, the utmost precision is required. For it seems that theology, because of its avowed dependence on Christ for direction of all existential structures, now enters into the realm of neo-Thomist ontology, which begins its ontology from the *summum ens* (God) and then relates being and beings to it via the *analogia entis*. Man is in becoming, and God in being. Therefore man can relate to God as becoming to being. "The relation between God and human beings takes the form neither of pure exclusivity... nor of pure identity... both wholes can be considered, rather, in a relation of 'likeness' to one another, as being is like becoming" (AB 73). Within this system, both philosophizing and theologizing—the difference between them never becomes clear—begin from the starting point of God as *prima causa* and then related to man in

analogy. This is what we will call roughly the ‘scholastic’ tradition, which has had contributions from both Protestants and Catholics.

But this framework cannot suffice as answer to Bonhoeffer’s claim for a specifically Christian ontology. The first reason is that the scholastic tradition begins from God as the *prima causa* and *summum ens*—that is, from a philosophical premise of creation, whereas Bonhoeffer requires an ontology beginning explicitly from the Christ event, the crucifixion.<sup>38</sup> A second reason is that such an ontology opens itself to the effective critiques of onto-theology Heidegger has already famously given. The third, most radical reason is that, as Barth has already so forcefully polemicized throughout all his work, the scholastic tradition sees a continuity between God and man in the realm of being and reason. ‘The natural light of reason,’ which guides theological and ontological investigation, bridges the gap between God and Dasein. As standing in becoming but also in relation to being, Dasein “must already bear within themselves, as a possibility of existence, the possibility of beholding the ‘is’” (AB 75)—that is, God. Dasein has access to God in its own capabilities. Though man is fallen and needs divine grace to achieve access to God, he still has an original capability to do so. The essence of revelation—the complete miracle outside of man’s existential capabilities—is cheapened. Here again, while coming from the opposite direction, “human existence is, once again, comprehensible through itself and also has access to God” (AB 75); in effect, the same result of Heidegger’s phenomenology. While in the former case of Heideggerian phenomenology man comes to being but never to God, in the case of scholastic ontology man comes to an immanent God but never to

---

<sup>38</sup> While the crucifixion certainly is no free standing event, all prologue and epilogue to the cross is found in the history of Israel and the history of the Christian church, all of which is contained in the Bible and subsequent church history. Therefore, any prologue and epilogue to the cross must be done from *that history*, rather than the philosophical conception of God as first cause of being or the being-beyond-which-no-greater-can-be-conceived.

true being. While the first case is auto-nomous in that it bases all knowledge on Dasein's inherent (though concealed) understanding, the second is theo-nomous in that it bases all knowledge on God's own understanding of being as derived from human capacity to behold the *esse*. Both are illusory: for man is not alone with himself with being enclosed in his understanding—contra Heidegger—but even less is man capable of understanding God as a continuity between his becoming and God's being—contra Aquinas.

What is needed instead is a hetero-nomous ontology, an *ontologia crucis*. By this I mean a theological account of being in which Dasein encounters the divine—specifically in revelation of the cross in faith—and lets all ontological investigation be led by this revelation, all while still remaining as Dasein and not attempting to 'think God's thoughts after Him,' in keeping with the respect of absolute ontological difference between God and man. This ontology will refrain from founding its investigations on an account of the *summum ens* and then deriving all concepts of Dasein's being from the absolute being of God. Instead it will accept its account of being as coming wholly from the side of Dasein rather than from God. In this way, this heteronomous ontology will resemble phenomenology more than scholastic ontology. It will be phenomenological in the sense that it can only encounter beings as Dasein encountering beings. In agreeing with Heidegger, it recognizes that Dasein is the only being for which being can be an issue as investigated by Dasein. This ontology will be decisively existential. But it will also resemble scholastic ontology more than phenomenology in that it founds its investigations on revelation of God rather than the free-standing Dasein. It would allow the revelation of the cross to stake its claim as 'initiator and unity of Dasein' and guide all ontological investigation from the cross.

Because it would found all ontological investigation on the event of the crucifixion, it would serve as an explicitly *evangelical* ontology—by ‘evangelical’ we mean the original term in the New Testament, *euangelion*, the ‘pronouncement’ of Christ. It would differ from scholastic ontology in the same way that Luther differentiates the *theologia gloriae* and the *theologia crucis* in his Heidelberg Disputations:

That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened (Rom. 1:20; cf. 1 Cor 1:21-25), he deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross... A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.<sup>39</sup>

Whereas scholastic ontology, via Greek metaphysics, calls ‘the thing’ according to metaphysical assignment derived from the thought of Aristotle, evangelical ontology would call ‘*the thing what it actually is*’—as that which is ‘seen through suffering and the cross,’ as existence marked by the crucifixion event. Evangelical ontology, like the evangelical theology which is a *theologia crucis*, would be an *ontologia crucis*.

How would such an ontology relate to phenomenology? Luther’s remark, the implications of which still has yet to be appreciated, may provide answer: ‘a theology of the cross calls the *thing* what it *actually is*.’ Any theology of the cross, far from being secluded in a closed, non-ontological system, ‘calls the thing what it actually is.’ It engages with things as under the shadow of cross, claiming this as their true ontological nature rather than what simply appears before us. Phenomenology, the discourse of letting the *thing* show itself in its own self-showing,

---

<sup>39</sup>Martin Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation," 39-70. Stanley discusses this section of Luther’s work in detail in *Protestant Metaphysics After Karl Barth and Martin Heidegger*. I owe him an intellectual debt for his work in this area, as his book has guided me towards a direction I find very similar to his: the opening of a Protestant ontology, marked by the cross, enmeshed in deep engagement with Heidegger.

has a similar aim—that is, to properly find the name of the thing and to engage with beings properly according to their truth. While the differences could be vast (and I have no doubt they are), both Heidegger’s phenomenology and an evangelical ontology work in the same realm of proper engagement with beings—the realm of being. Both are, again, decidedly existential.

It should be noted that the theological claim of an *ontologia crucis*, while merited on the side of theology, has no strictly formal merits on the side of philosophy. The only answer an atheistic ontologist can give to Bonhoeffer’s claim is, in turn, a demand that the Christian actually present this ontology which he is claiming only the Christian can give. The claim of an independent Christian ontology (specifically in our case an *ontologia crucis*) rests entirely on such an ontology *actually* existing.

It is unclear whether this ontology would formulate completely new existential categories, or if it would add existential categories to the already-existing ones Heidegger has given, or some combination of the two, with revision of Heidegger’s categories in light of revelation but still keeping his starting points in place. There is evidence of support in Bonhoeffer and others for any of those routes. But such determination can only happen, again, in the actual theological-ontological investigation.

A full construction and analysis of such an ontology is far too large a project for this thesis. However, I have provided grounds why a Christian theologian—due to the somewhat problematic but still fruitful formulation of theology as the science of Christian faith as presented by Heidegger, as well as his own commitments to revelation as revelation, which restricts theology from founding its inquiry on a strictly a-theistic phenomenological ontology—*must* commit to searching for and explicating an *ontologia crucis*. If theology wishes to truly engage

with Heidegger as *theology*, in keeping with its own rigorous independence—but still with an interest in the analysis of being—then this path is what it must take.

The stakes are high, since the success of the theological critique of Heidegger depends on theology actually producing its own phenomenological ontology and uncovering further existential structures unique to Christian faith. A critique from the side of revelation can only succeed if that revelation actually has something to say. But this path is also an exciting prospect for the future, as it places ontological investigation between the strictly phenomenological and the strictly theological, and it defies the strict separation between these two while still doing best to hold to each science's rigorous methods and distinctions.

To borrow one of Heidegger's idioms, I hope to have cut an opening into a section of the forest which calls for a new path to be cut and explored. We stand at the edge, not yet cut into the forest—but we do stand at the edge, with opportunity to meet fellow pathfinders, re-discover old paths carved by thinkers before but which have become overgrown,<sup>40</sup> and finally the chance to traverse further and carve our own path into the forest of being.

---

<sup>40</sup> There are philosophers and theologians who already have or currently are treading this path. Bonhoeffer follows his critique of phenomenology with an explication of what he calls 'transcendent' philosopher-theologians, Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, in the second half of *Act and Being*, where he finds some possible paths forward—especially in the concept of the Church, oddly enough. Gabriel Marcel, a contemporary of Heidegger, is one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's 'Christian existentialists.' While frequently derided by both philosophers and theologians, Heinrich Ott's *Denken und Sein* (not yet translated into English) attempts to reconcile Heidegger and Barth. Jean-Luc Marion's *God Without Being* aims to continue Heidegger's attempt at separation between theology and philosophy, which he found incomplete (as have we), by totally separating God from being, arguing that God's *agape* precedes his existence—perhaps an opposite approach I have taken in this thesis, but one still engaged in phenomenological and ontological inquiry concerning God and being. Timothy Stanley has already called for new investigation into how the cross concerns ontology at the conclusion of *Protestant Metaphysics After Karl Barth and Martin Heidegger*: "[For Barth] The cross simultaneously prohibits and obscures any apprehension of being (*absconditus*), and yet, nonetheless, reveals true being in so far as it arrives for us there (*revelatus*)." Stanley, *Protestant Metaphysics After Karl Barth and Martin Heidegger*, 246.

## EPILOGUE: A PATH FORWARD IN THE APPENDIX

Heidegger added to this lecture a much later letter, which was delivered in 1964 to a group of theologians discussing “The Problem of a Nonobjectifying Thinking and Speaking in Today’s Theology” at Drew University in New Jersey (PT 39). Heidegger himself did not attend the discussion.<sup>41</sup> He then combined these two pieces, publishing them together in *Archives de Philosophie* in 1969 with the addition of a French translation (PT 39).

By this time, Heidegger was already well into his so-called age of obscurity, as he had been questioning the ability of philosophy and ontology to think since at least 1941.<sup>42</sup> This context will clarify his statement in the preface, written in 1970:

This little book might perhaps be able to occasion repeated reflection on the extent to which the Christianness of Christianity and its theology merit questioning; but also on the extent to which philosophy, in particular that presented here, merits questioning (PT 39).

It is clear even from this somewhat vague statement that the later Heidegger is not interested in a polemic against Christianity, nor does he doggedly assume philosophy’s superiority over theology as the ontological over the ontic. Rather, he suggests, just as philosophy offers ‘repeated reflection’ on the merits or lack thereof in Christianity, so too does Christianity offer a reflection on the merits or lack thereof in philosophy.

---

<sup>41</sup> It is unfortunate he did not attend, since he would have had opportunity to answer Hans Jonas’ accusation that he was a pagan and wholly unfit for Christian’s theological use. While I would respond in Heidegger’s defense (at least to the second claim), I am unsure if Heidegger himself would care to offer much of a rebuttal against such accusation.

<sup>42</sup> See “Nietzsche’s Word: God is Dead” in *Off the Beaten Track*. In this text he explicitly describes the Western tradition of metaphysics, climaxing with Nietzsche, as one long path of nihilism, which thus demands a new practice of thinking. One interesting fact for our discussion is that, throughout this lecture, Heidegger shows a strange, almost angered affection for Christian thought: he praises the greatness of explicitly religious writers like Luther and Kierkegaard, shames modern theologians for abandoning those figures’ methods, and suggests a possible opening in the path of Christian theology—if only the theologians would return to their faith.



With this in mind, we will have a better grasp of Heidegger's tone throughout this letter. He no longer aims to clearly set boundaries or close off discussion, but he instead suggests opening up thinking about the divine to ways which go beyond the scientifically objective method of study. We will find that his antagonism is now focused on what I will call the *scientistic* way of viewing the world, and in this letter he will come to theology's defense against this scientism's attack.

The subject of this letter and its surrounding conference is the issue of nonobjectifying language in theology. Is it possible to think scientifically and theologically about God and Christian revelation without thinking of God or revelation as object and ourselves as thinking subjects? And even beyond this, is it possible to think about anything at all without objectifying it as an object and holding ourselves as detached, thinking subjects over and against them?

Heidegger begins the lecture by stating what he calls three major 'themes' to this question, around which he will then frame the discussion.

The first theme: "Above all else one must determine *what* theology, as a mode of thinking and speaking, is to place in discussion" (PT 54). This question is essentially the same one with which Heidegger began the 1927 lecture. That is, what does theology study? or, to use Heidegger's earlier language, what is theology's *positum*, or *object* of study? But here Heidegger no longer uses such language. Rather than assuming theology has a positive object of study, discerning which positive object this is, and then arguing for such an object, Heidegger goes further back and simply asks: what does theology, 'as a mode of thinking and speaking,' discuss?

Heidegger does keep the same answer to this question as before, "the Christian faith, and what is believed therein" (PT 54). But not once does he assert that this is theology's *positum* or object of study. Still, keeping "the Christian faith" as theology's sole responsibility is made no

less essential. Heidegger states that “[o]nly if this is kept clearly in view” can the practice of “thinking and speaking” in theology produce any true theological speaking (PT 54). If theology resorts to an object of study such as history or psychology of religion, then it will return to a derivative form of these other sciences. But if the Christian faith is ‘kept clearly in view,’ then theological thinking and speaking will both successfully answer the “proper sense and claim of faith” and also “avoid projecting into faith ideas that are alien to it” (PT 54).

This is two-fold in a positive and negative sense: theology *positively* frames its discussion and builds original concepts in thinking and speaking about the ‘claim of faith,’ and it *negatively* removes all the ‘alien’ concepts creeping in from the other sciences or the surrounding culture. And in this positive and negative action theology stakes its place.

The first theme concerns only theology, but the second refers to all thinking in general:

*Prior* to a discussion of *nonobjectifying* thinking and speaking, it is ineluctable that one state what is intended by *objectifying* thinking and speaking. Here the question arises whether or not all thinking and speaking are objectifying by their very nature [emphasis his] (PT 54).

Even before we can discuss a nonobjectifying *theological* thinking, or even a nonobjectifying *thinking*, we must first question whether such thinking is desired, or even possible.

Heidegger must answer to Hans Jonas’ critique made at the conference: that “the subject-object *relation*... is not a lapse but the privilege, burden, and duty of man. Not Plato is responsible for it but the human condition.”<sup>43</sup> Jonas holds that objectification is essential to man’s nature, not some barrier to be overcome so as to return to a better, more primal state. He even goes so far as to claim that this subject-object relation “is the condition of man *meant* in the

---

<sup>43</sup> Jonas, “Heidegger and Theology,” 230.

Bible... in Moses no less than Plato” [emphasis his]<sup>44</sup>—i.e., through the idea of “createdness,” biblical revelation *itself assumes* man’s relationship with the world as one between subjects and objects. And so any biblical theologian should deplore an attempt made by a mystical philosopher to close this rift or normalize language as object-less. Heidegger must counter this point, or else his whole project to escape from objectifying or scientific language will fail—or at least fail to be of use to theologians.

If Heidegger can successfully address this second theme, then he can come to the third, which is the theological summation of the two prior themes:

One must decide to what extent the problem of a nonobjectifying thinking and speaking is a genuine problem at all, whether one is not inquiring here about something in such a way that only circumvents the matter, diverts from the theme of theology and unnecessarily confounds it (PT 55).

We must decide whether the “problem of a nonobjectifying thinking and speaking” actually concerns theology, and especially whether the attack that theology is not sufficiently objective is of genuine concern to theology at all. If such an attack is not as problematic as the second question suggests—that is, if we may clearly find that there are other ways of thinking besides scientific objectification—then theology might best avoid even discussing it, since it only ‘diverts from the theme of theology’ and opens it up to a discussion which ‘unnecessarily’ causes theology trouble. At the end of this theme, theology would seem to find that “it was on a path leading nowhere with its problem” (PT 55), and the best thing the theologian could do is simply return to his work.

Even so, a discussion of the third theme offers an apology of sorts for the practice of theology, a defense from the attack of the natural sciences. But the importance of this theme goes beyond a defense against scientism. Heidegger earlier asserts one of theology’s duties is the

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

negative-critical task of removing alien and borrowed concepts from its discourse. In this case, if we come to realize that the objectifying way of thinking and speaking is foreign to faith's own language—quite contrary to Jonas' claim—then this calls for theology's 'major task' to rid itself of objectifying thought—no small enterprise, since that would call for a critical revision of most previous theologies since the influence of the Greeks, and certainly a very critical assessment of most modernist theologies. In this way theology realizes its goal “to think and speak out of faith for faith with fidelity to its subject matter” (PT 55). Heidegger suggests that, if theology is truly successful,<sup>45</sup> then it will “by the power of its own conviction” speak to “the human being as human being in his very nature...” (PT 55). Theology will have no need of borrowed “categories of...thinking” (PT 55), least of all the subject-object relation, and simply speak to the ‘human being as human being.’

Heidegger, as a philosopher, can “give some pointers only with regard to the second topic” (PT 55). The question concerning the possibility of nonobjectifying speaking and thinking can be met by anyone, and is a key question for philosophy, the ‘science of thinking.’ However, only theology can answer the first and the third questions; whether theology should care about nonobjectifying thought is totally up to whether this method of thinking sufficiently approaches the Christian revelation and faith which directs all of theology's matter of thinking. And since this faith is only accessible to the theologian, no other scientist can answer that question for them.

Now that he has set the three themes for discussion, he focuses the rest of the letter on some ‘pointers’ concerning the second theme: what is objective and nonobjective thinking, and is

---

<sup>45</sup> In keeping with his detached position of philosopher to the theologian, he refrains from offering any argument for or against theology's success.

it actually possible to have any thinking at all besides the objective? These pointers, however, are only in the form of some questions, to which Heidegger offers basic answers.

This theme requires the most basic question:

Is objectifying thinking and speaking a particular kind of thinking and speaking, or does all thinking as thinking, all speaking as speaking, necessarily have to be objectifying? (PT 55)

At stake in this question is nothing less than Heidegger's life work. Ever since the publication of *Being and Time*, Heidegger had been battling against what he sees as the inherently nihilistic method of metaphysics which classifies beings as objects and, lying behind their objectivity, 'nothing more.' But if all thinking and speaking is by its nature necessarily objectifying—as in, a placing of beings over and against us as measurable appearances—then metaphysics is correct, and Heidegger's work is only concerned with the 'nothing more' lying behind all objects.

But before broadly addressing this question, Heidegger poses another set of more specific questions:

- a) What does objectifying mean?
- b) What does thinking mean?
- c) What does speaking mean?
- d) Is all thinking in itself a speaking, and all speaking in itself a thinking?
- e) In what sense are speaking and thinking objectifying, and in what sense are they not? (PT 56)

All these questions “interpenetrate” when set into discussion with each other (PT 56). Combined together, they are the heart of the problem of nonobjectifying thought in both theology and philosophy. And the essence of the answers to these questions is the foundational decision over what place language has in human existence, as Heidegger argues according to the most popular positions on language.

The two most extreme positions concerning this problem are the “technical-scientistic view of language,”<sup>46</sup> represented by Rudolf Carnap, and the “speculative-hermeneutic experience of language,”<sup>47</sup> represented by Heidegger (PT 56). The scientistic view sees thinking and speaking as a “sign-system that can be constructed logically or technically...as an instrument of science” (PT 56). Heidegger holds that such a view “desires to subjugate” and “secure” language as this instrument (PT 56)—a critique wholly typical of the later Heidegger’s concern with the modern technological age. The second position, Heidegger’s hermeneutical view, instead arises out of the question: “what is it that is to be experienced as the proper matter of philosophical thinking, and how is this matter (being as being) to be said?” (PT 56). Contrary to the first, which restricts language to that of a constructed sign-system defined by the parameters of use for scientific work, the hermeneutical method simply asks what it means to be as a being, and how this being is to speak and think philosophically.

Both these positions agree in that their philosophy of language is not simply one realm among others, like a philosophy of art or nature, etc. (PT 56). Instead, both agree that language is “the realm within which the thinking of philosophy and every kind of thinking and saying” happen (PT 56). The hermeneutical and the scientistic do not simply have philosophies of language, but instead hold that all philosophy and thought *as* philosophy and thought *are* philosophies of language. The Western tradition has recognized that man *is* man insofar as he is the “living being that ‘has language’” (PT 56)—that is, what makes man human *is* language itself. Therefore, the opposition between the scientistic and the hermeneutical is a debate between the whole “nature of human existence and its determination” (PT 56). Heidegger raises

---

<sup>46</sup> Henceforth we will refer to this as the *scientistic* position.

<sup>47</sup> Likewise, we will refer to this description as the *hermeneutical* position.

the stakes here beyond the question of nonobjectifying thought, elevating this debate on language to a debate over human existence itself.

One would assume Heidegger suggests that theology land on his side of the debate, but again he refrains from immediately prescribing theology's place within this discussion. He instead leaves it "up to theology to decide in what manner and to what extent it can and should enter into this debate" (PT 56). While he is now willing to break silence and explicitly address theologians again, he is not willing to speak for the theologian himself. Here we see that the later Heidegger still respects the boundaries between theology and philosophy he had set those years ago in the lecture.

Now that the debate between the two main poles of hermeneutical and scientific has been set, Heidegger will move on to discuss the questions (a) to (e) in more detail. But before going into more discussion, he prefaces with an "observation" of the "widespread, uncritically accepted opinion that all thinking as representing, and all speaking as vocalization, are already 'objectifying'" (PT 56). This is the assumption made by Jonas, that "[n]ot Plato is responsible for [objectification] but the human condition, its limits and nobility under the order of creation."<sup>48</sup> Heidegger does not go into detail of this assumption's history,<sup>49</sup> but he makes sure to note the "determining factor" in this assumption that all thinking and speaking are objectifying "has been the distinction, set forth in an unclarified manner long ago, between the rational and the irrational" (PT 56-57).

Surely this distinction has affected theology tremendously. Since antiquity there has been the divide between the rational, traditional theologies and the irrational, mystical theologies—

---

<sup>48</sup> Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology," 230.

<sup>49</sup> For a fuller discussion, see "The Age of the World Picture" and "Nietzsche's Word: God is Dead" in *Off the Beaten Track*, as well as his lecture series *The Principle of Reason*.

usually running along the lines of cataphatic (positive) versus apophatic (negative) theology, where the former makes positive assertions about the characteristics and works of God, while the latter arrives at a knowledge of God through a negation of all other positive attributes. And while at times the divide has been bridged through the works of some thinkers like Anselm, Aquinas, Kierkegaard or Barth,<sup>50</sup> the stereotype separating rational theology from irrational mysticism had continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>51</sup>

This distinction has two consequences for theology: first, it assumes that ‘irrational’ theology is not sufficiently rational and in fact shuns all use of reason for the sake of vacuous spirituality; and second, it assumes that ‘rational’ theology is not sufficiently spiritual, that it shuns devotion for the sake of comfort within the bounds of reason. The rational theologian then leaves all spirituality to the mystic, fearful that it may be sentimental, romantic, or heterodox, and the mystic leaves any deliberative reason to the rational theologian, assuming academic rigor is inimical to any true encounter with the divine.

While this distinction may or may not be unwarranted, nevertheless it “is brought to bear in the jurisdiction of a reasonable but itself unclarified manner of thinking” (PT 57)—in the realm of theology especially, as well as in philosophy and in the ‘manner of thinking’ as a whole.

---

<sup>50</sup> While Barth himself eschewed any attempts of ‘mysticism’ or ‘negative’ theology, his use of Kierkegaard’s *infinite qualitative difference*, a term that describes man’s inability to arrive at God by any means (including a *via negativa*) and thus man’s complete reliance upon God’s revelation, suggests a ‘negative’ theology even more radical than the apophatic ones attempted before, while still keep to the positive assertions made in cataphatic theology based upon God’s revelation in Scripture. For further reading, see *Epistle to the Romans*, *Church Dogmatics* II.I.

<sup>51</sup> Heidegger himself always showed a preference to apophatic theology, as he often referred to the works of the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart and the Renaissance poet Angelus Silesius.



The overall assumption that all thinking and speaking are objectifying has come to climax, Heidegger argues here and elsewhere,<sup>52</sup> in the recent “teachings of Nietzsche, Bergson, and the life-philosophers...” (PT 57). These thinkers claim that, whenever we say ‘is,’ which “in modern times has been interpreted as objectivity” and thus as a solid state, we attempt to solidify the “intrinsic flow of the ‘life-stream’” that is really only a continuous flow of existence without permanence or actual presence (PT 57). This “solidifying of the intrinsic flow,” as an attempt to re-present as eternal that which is merely temporal, is “thus a falsifying thereof” (PT 57). And thus all metaphysics, or attempts to represent life objectively, are falsifications. However, even though it falsifies, it “is indispensable for the preservation and continuance of human life” (PT 57). Men cannot escape the necessity of re-presenting their experiences as permanent objects; such is required to have any thought at all. Heidegger quotes the following passage from Nietzsche’s “*Will to Power*, no. 715 (1887/1888)” as illustration for this claim: “The means of expression in language cannot be used to express ‘becoming’; to posit continually a more crude world of what is permanent, of things, etc. is part of our *irredeemable need for preservation*” [emphasis his] (PT 57).

Here in Nietzsche we find a more radical version of Jonas’ stance at the conference: that objectification is the ‘privilege, burden, and duty of man.’ But now the truth of man’s ‘burden’ has come to the fore, since metaphysics realizes that all its attempts at re-presentation and objectification are inherently false, no matter how necessary. Philosophy then is at a moment of crisis, where it must either accept the fate of necessary falsehoods, or attempt the seemingly impossible task of moving to a manner of thinking beyond re-presentation. In giving some ‘pointers’ to the following questions, Heidegger will argue for the latter.

---

<sup>52</sup> See “Nietzsche’s Word: God is Dead” for his analysis of Nietzsche’s concept of will to power as the climax of western metaphysics.

We should note that in the first edition (1970) of this appendix, Heidegger mentions that these “pointers deliberately leave the ontological difference unheeded” (PT 57). If Heidegger were to ignore the ontological difference in this text, it would have huge ramifications for the relationship between philosophy and theology. For their relationship is built on the basis of the difference between the one ontological science, philosophy, and the ontic science, theology. The difference is Heidegger’s driving thesis in the original lecture! While the above phrase was removed from later editions, we cannot ignore that Heidegger is at least considering a revision of his earlier work. The boundary between philosophy and theology, now compromised by Heidegger’s initial disregard for the ontological difference, is less clear than it was before.

Heidegger makes one last point before discussing the questions (a) through (e). Throughout thinking these questions we should emphasize the “mystery of language” as “not a work of human beings: language speaks” (PT 57). Far from being a proclamation of some “fantastical ‘mysticism,’” he argues that it is instead a recognition that language is a “primal phenomenon” which can only be properly grasped in an “unprejudiced experience of language” (PT 57). Humans cannot simply tame and secure language as a technical instrument for scientific use, as the scientists think we do. Rather, the securing of language as a sign system only happens “in reference to and from out of an already spoken language” (PT 57). Language in every case comes before our attempts to master it, and even our technical masteries are derivative from the primordial phenomenon of language. And so we do not simply speak language, but rather ‘language speaks’ to us as well, and indeed in a more originary way.

It is the task of critical thinking to listen to language speaking to us in this deeper manner. To “think critically means to distinguish constantly between that which requires proof for its justification”—that is, the objective, scientific truth which requires empirical verification—“and

that which, to confirm its truth, demands a simple catching sight of and holding in view”—that is, the more primordial truth which requires a witness, rather than a judge. The second demand for a ‘simple catching sight of’ harkens back to the earlier Heidegger’s phenomenological method, which he defines as ‘to let that which shows itself in itself, show itself in its own self-showing.’ But the phenomenological has shifted now from the rigorous scientific language of *Being and Time* to a simple, colloquial ‘catching sight of and holding in view.’

Now Heidegger moves on to the questions in more detail:

(a) *What does it mean to objectify?* “To make an object of something, to posit it as an object and represent it only as such” (PT 57). It is important to emphasize that to objectify is not to interact with an object, as if the object is already there to be interacted with. Rather, it is to *make* an object out of *something* already there, to *posit* this thing as an object, and then finally—and this is most important—to re-present it *only* as such an object. In this process of objectifying, we turn something we witness into an object, re-place it in front of us as an object, and then treat it *as if* it is *only* an object. The thing recedes behind the objectivity of its re-presentation, leaving only the object to be encountered.

But what is an object? In the Middle Ages the “*obiectum* signified that which is thrown before, held over and against our perceiving, imagination, judging, wishing, and intuiting” (PT 57-58). It is that which, as ‘thrown’ before our abilities to cognate it, appears as the object of perception, imagination, judgment, etc. The *subiectum* in contrast “signified... that which lies present before us from out of itself (not brought before us by representation), whatever is present, e.g., things” (PT 58). The subject, contrasted to the object of perception, is the thing-in-itself which stands independent of our abilities to apprehend it. Yet nevertheless it ‘lies present’ before us. It is not the unexperienced thing-in-itself of Kant, which recedes behind its re-

presentation and does not appear to experience, but rather the thing which shows itself as lying present ‘from out of itself’ and stands over against us in experience ‘as itself.’ The medieval *subiectum* is close to the phenomenon (that which shows itself in itself) Heidegger aims for in his phenomenology.<sup>53</sup>

This medieval conception of the subject and object is “precisely the reverse of what subject and object usually mean today: *subiectum* is what exists independently (objectively), and *obiectum* is what is merely (subjectively) represented” (PT 58). Since Descartes and Kant, the object has taken on new signification as that which “exists as standing over and against the experience of the natural sciences” (PT 58). Now the object is not only that which stands over and against our empirical perception, but more precisely that which stands over and against the natural-scientific method of perceiving. Heidegger does not define here the ‘experience of the natural sciences’ in contrast to simple experience, but he likely has in mind the scientific method—the ‘logical’ and technical’ construction of sign-systems for the use of science—he had already discussed. Essentially, the object since Kant has become that which stands over against us with the capacity to be measured as a natural-scientific object.

If all thinking is objectification, then all thinking is really a measuring of that which stands over and against us according to the rigor of natural science. But our “everyday experience of things, in the wider sense of the word, is neither objectifying nor a placing over against” (PT 58). Heidegger mentions the experience of resting in the garden and “taking delight in a blossoming rose” (PT 58). In this case, our taking in of the rose is not an objectification, since we do not measure it as something present nor re-present it according to our sense perception. Specifically when we “muse” on the “redness of the rose,” we do not see the redness

---

<sup>53</sup> In this sense, Heidegger has much more sympathy for the medieval philosophers than for the moderns.

even as something standing over and against us: “the redness of the rose neither stands in the garden nor can it sway to and fro [like the actual rose]” (PT 58). But nevertheless we “think” the redness of the rose and then “tell of it by naming it” (PT 58). The rose’s beauty is no less present than its objective presence, even though it is not measurable or even, objectively speaking, present. And we think of it and name it when we speak of the rose’s redness. Heidegger also cites the statue of Apollo in the museum at Olympia as another example. Of course, we can measure the statue objectively by calculating the “physical weight of the marble” as well as its “chemical composition” (PT 58). But this scientific measuring surely does not capture the true beauty of the statue, and even less does it grasp the statue as a “visage of the god” (PT 58). With a pre-suppositional ignorance of the surrounding context of the rose and statue—Heidegger would perhaps use the term ‘world’—we remove ourselves from the true thinking and true speaking about them.

(b) *What does it mean to think?* Given the examples of the rose and the statue, it is “clear that thinking and speaking are not exhausted by theoretical and natural-scientific representation and statement” (PT 58). While the redness of the rose and the divinity of Apollo do not give themselves objectively, they nevertheless happen in experience. This should lead us to a broader definition of thinking: the “comportment that lets itself be given, by whatever shows itself in whatever way it shows itself, what it has to say of that which appears” (PT 58). Rather than a representing as an object of that which appears, thinking is more primordially a letting-be-given over to a saying and naming of that which shows itself to us in the way it shows itself. It is the allowing of a ‘true’ saying of the thing itself as it shows itself to us. “Only the thinking and speaking of the natural sciences is objectifying” (PT 58), while all other realms of language think and speak in this more primordial way. This is why we have art, for example; were artworks to

give themselves *only* as objects, the beauty of the works, and thus the artworks themselves, would never appear as art (PT 59).

Therefore, Heidegger concludes that the “assertion that all thinking as thinking is objectifying is without foundation” (PT 59). We obviously think in other ways besides objectification, and to hold otherwise betrays a “disregard of phenomena” (PT 59).

(c) *What does it mean to speak?* He answers this question with several other rhetorical questions. Rather than a mere “converting what is thought into vocables,” is not speaking rather more primordially “a saying, a manifold of that which hearing, i.e., an obedient heeding of what appears, lets be said?” (PT 59). Just as we do not think the blooming of the rose as a measuring of its objective properties, neither do we speak of the rose according to the vocabulation of objective measurement. “When we speak condolence to a sick person and speak to him heart to heart, do we make an object of this person?” (PT 59). The doctor might explain planned treatment or medicine that will soothe symptoms, but not even that most ‘objective’ help can compare to the comfort given by the friend in a ‘heart to heart’ visit. And why? Because in the case of the former, the doctor speaks to his patient as an object of work, while in the case of the latter, one simply speaks to the sick person as a person.

And then Heidegger presents his most radical suggestion:

Is language only an instrument that we employ to manipulate objects? ...only a work of humans? Is the human being that being that has language in its possession? *Or is it language that ‘has’ human beings* [emphasis mine], insofar as they belong to, pay heed to language, which first opens up the world to them and at the same time thereby their dwelling in the world? (PT 59)

Heidegger reverses the common assumption that humans ‘have’ language, as if it is an instrument among others in our toolkit. Instead, language itself is prior to the human being, as it

‘first opens up the world’ to us before we ever grasp hold of it as a tool; language gives us ‘dwelling in the world,’ not the other way around.

(d) *Is all thinking a form of speaking and all speaking a form of thinking?* Heidegger affirms that they do indeed belong together and “form an identity,” for this has been the case since the ancient Greeks’ identity of *logos* and *legein* (PT 59). But like all ancient Greek understandings, this identity has still not been “adequately placed in discussion and commensurately experienced” (PT 59). The problem most relevant to the current discussion is that the Greeks oriented language towards “stating something about things,” whereas the modern concept of language “reinterpreted things to mean objects” (PT 59). The modern notion is a doubly removed concept: to speak is a re-presentation through vocables of the object of thought, which is already a measured re-presentation of the thing-itself. But for the Greeks, to speak is to simply state the truth about things.

Here Heidegger introduces his notion of the poetic into the discussion. If we remember the more primordial way of thinking and speaking (Heidegger would most likely argue the Greek way)—that “thinking is in each case a letting be said of what shows itself, and accordingly a co-responding (saying) to that which shows itself”—then poetizing reveals itself as a way of “pensive saying” no lesser than any other path. Thinking and speaking are most primordially letting things show themselves and then responding to them, all within the realm of language. If poetizing, as put by Heidegger, is a “pensive saying” of that which shows itself, then certainly it would work as a rigorous method of thinking and speaking.

This notion of the poetic also gives us further insight that not all thinking and speaking are necessarily objectifying. We cannot judge poetizing by “means of the traditional logic of statements about objects” (PT 60). In the same way that we cannot simply judge the statue of

Apollo according to its measurements and chemical composition, neither can we judge a poem according to how well it speaks of the rose's objective presence. Instead we judge the poem as to whether it 'truly' speaks of the rose, what this rose 'means' in the colloquial sense. Poetry speaks of things without reference to objectifying, and so the "thesis that thinking and speaking as such necessarily objectify is untenable and arbitrary" (PT 60).

While Heidegger's notion of poetizing may seem strange, crucially it is no different from his earlier, more scientific formulation of the phenomenological method. Even in the most scientific *Being and Time*, he defines the phenomenon as 'that which shows itself in itself,' and he thus defines phenomenology as 'to let that which shows itself, show itself in its own self showing.' Poetizing is no different. For in poetizing, we 'let show' that which shows itself, and then we co-respond to it by 'saying' it. Heidegger here uses almost the exact language of phenomenology in defining what he means by the poetic. The poetic orientation and the phenomenological orientation are essentially the same. Here we find a consistency between the earlier and later Heidegger, however veiled by a difference in his manner of language.

(e) *In what sense do thinking and speaking objectify, and in what sense do they not?* In the natural sciences and in technology, all thinking and speaking have to be objectifying. In this realm, "scientific-technological knowing must establish its theme in advance as a calculable, causally explicable *Gegenstand*..." (PT 60). Scientific thinking must present all thought objectively, as Kant's conception of the object, for that is what scientific thinking is. But outside this realm there is no need for thinking to restrict itself to natural-scientific objectification.

The "growing danger" of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is "that the scientific-technological manner of thinking will spread to *all* realms of life" [emphasis mine] (PT 60). It is not wrong to think scientifically or to view beings as scientific objects. That manner of thinking has its place and



good use. But our time increasingly *only* thinks in the manner of scientific thinking and views beings *only* as scientific objects.<sup>54</sup> And this restricts our thinking and speaking, and eventually even our experience of things and the world, to that of only objectification.

While the solution to this danger might seem easy enough—to simply broaden our thinking to ways resembling times before—the dominance scientific thinking has had in modernity makes a solution more difficult than a return to bygone eras. For the “process of unrestricted technological objectification” has actually “deformed language” itself into “an instrument of reportage and calculable information” (PT 60). Not only does scientific thinking treat language as an instrument, it *transforms* language into something *only* resembling an instrument. Its impulse is naturally totalitarian. The priority of this totalitarian scientism in our era creates the danger of moving to a broad, all-encompassing objectification, without possibility of turning back. We cannot simply return to earlier paths of thinking, because the scientific perversion may have already scorched those paths so as to make them impassible.

Nevertheless, Heidegger’s discussion has shown that language’s nature is much more than “an expressing of propositions *about* objects,” i.e. objectification. Rather, “in what is most proper to it,” language “is a saying *of* that which reveals itself to human beings... and which addresses itself to human beings insofar as they do not... close themselves off [by objective thinking] from what shows itself” (PT 60). Only by keeping to this fact—that language is most primordially a *naming* and *saying* of things, as well as a *letting be said* of that which reveals

---

<sup>54</sup> For a discussion of Heidegger’s concept of the modern loss of the holy, see *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*, by Julian Young. Young explains Heidegger’s position on modernity as mourning the ‘loss of the sacred.’ While a seasoned Heideggerian might find Young’s simplification of the later Heidegger a bit lacking, it is nevertheless a good introduction for those intimidated by the later Heidegger’s difficulty.

itself to us—can we resist the totalitarian impulse to objectify and manipulate existence into a measurement of scientific observation.

But the proponent of the scientistic view of language might object to all these pointers: where is Heidegger's *proof* for this more 'proper' explication of language? We should note that Heidegger does not simply state his position from thin air: in this text (as well as throughout all his work) he buttresses his arguments with extensive etymological tracing of concepts and phenomenological analyses of experiences. But without making use of these grounds, Heidegger counters that the derivative nature of objective thinking "can never be deduced by way of scientific proof" (PT 60). We cannot arrive at the proper explication of language by 'proving' it; if so, then we would still operate under the authority of objective thinking and not yet enter into the more primordial and proper nature of thought. Instead, the true nature of thinking and speaking "comes only by holding phenomena in view without prejudice" (PT 60). Only an attitude which lets things show themselves in themselves as they show themselves—in other words, the phenomenological attitude—leads us to the proper mode of thinking and speaking.

He illustrates this opinion with a quote from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: "It is the mark of not being properly brought up, not to see in relationship to what it is necessary to seek proofs and when this is not necessary" (PT 60-61). Far from exemplifying a mature critical mind, the constant critical demand for scientific proof betrays a critical immaturity, a restriction of experience to only those phenomena that show themselves as objects. This immaturity would perhaps show itself most clearly in the one who analyzes the statue of Apollo only according to the chemical composition of the marble or measures the dimensions of the carving, rather than simply witnessing it for what it is and all it entails—a *statue of Apollo*.

As a summary of all these pointers, the general answers to the questions are as follows:

(a) *objectifying* means to view phenomena as objects and nothing more, and our breadth of thinking is by no means exhausted by this manner of viewing; (b) *thinking* means most properly to let oneself be given over to whatever shows itself in whatever it has to say to us (PT 58); (c) *speaking* means to respond to what reveals itself as a letting-be-said of that which reveals itself; (d) speaking and thinking *do* indeed form an identity, but this relationship has yet to be properly uncovered—one path of investigation might be that of poetizing; and (e) thinking and speaking *only* objectify in the case of natural-scientific study, and in *no* other realms should thinking necessarily restrict itself to only that which follows scientific proof.

Now that he has given all these pointers in a philosophical context, Heidegger turns to how they may be of use to theology, the third theme of the discussion. Based on what we have seen, the original problem stated is not the ‘problem of a nonobjectifying thinking and speaking in theology.’ Instead, the problem is that of a “nontechnological, non-natural-scientific thinking and speaking in today’s theology” (PT 61). The issue is not whether theologians should use supposedly mystical nonobjective language, but rather whether theologians should restrict their thinking and speaking to a technological, natural-scientific objectification that only views phenomena as objects to be measured.

Based on this reformulation of the question, the answer should be evident: the “problem stated is not a genuine problem insofar as it is geared to a presupposition whose nonsense is evident to anyone” (PT 61). Theology by no means should restrict itself to the method of natural-scientific thinking. “Theology is not a natural science” (PT 61)—so why would it take that yoke upon itself? For it would neither produce a genuine theology nor a genuine natural science. In this respect, Heidegger is still consistent with his earlier lecture, in that he places theology as a

member of the *Geisteswissenschaften* rather than the *Naturwissenschaften*. While this may seem obvious enough, Heidegger's context shows that his suggestion is an important reminder for his mid-20<sup>th</sup> century contemporaries. At this time, the followers of Carnap and the logical positivists were hoping to apply technical language to non-scientific disciplines, especially the humanities, as Heidegger describes in this lecture. Heidegger sees in the current state of *Geisteswissenschaften* a pervasive dominance of objective theory, mechanistic language, and technological conceptualization that detracts from the true nature of the humanities. (This is perhaps best illustrated by the term 'political science' which became so popular in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.) Theology, as a member of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, has a responsibility not to succumb to the modern spirit of mechanization in its discourse, i.e. to not turn itself into a 'science' in the most technical sense.

Hans Jonas answers this critique with an acceptance that, of course, "conceptualization and objective language of theory do not do justice, to some extent do violence, to the primary content committed to theology's care..."<sup>55</sup> Of course theory cannot fully grasp the revelation which is its object of study. He admits that there is also non-objectifying language, and it is easily visible in religious contexts such as "in the prophets and psalmists, in the language of prayer and confessing and preaching..."<sup>56</sup> But that is not the duty of the theologian. For when he is practicing theology, he "is neither prophet nor psalmist nor preacher nor poet... but under the yoke of theoretical discourse and therefore beholden to objective thought and language."<sup>57</sup>

Contrary to Heidegger, Jonas holds that while the Christian faith is not theoretical or objective,

---

<sup>55</sup> Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology," 230.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 230-231.

theology, as the *science* of this faith, *is*. And therefore it must be content with objectification as the ‘yoke’ it must take upon itself, if indeed it wishes to remain theology.

First, we must ask whether Jonas and Heidegger argue past each other when discussing objective language and theory. Heidegger is arguing against the scientistic method of thinking and speaking, not against rigorous thinking itself. The poetic existence he describes is not a ‘free-floating mysticism,’ but rather a result of careful analysis of the nature of language. And I doubt Heidegger would argue that this poetic thinking is free of conceptualization or theorizing held to a responsibility of truthfulness towards its subject matter—it is simply a different kind of theorizing that is actually more primordial and true to language than the technistic method which modern theorizing has accepted so uncritically. Heidegger is simply asserting that the thinking and speaking concerning history of a culture or the interpretation of a holy text should look far different than a scientific measuring of a cell. Jonas seems to take Heidegger to be arguing against *all* rigorous thinking and conceptualization, which he labels as ‘objective language of theory.’ But since Heidegger is arguing against restricting *all* thinking and speaking to natural-scientific theory, then Jonas is probably not as opposed to such a notion as he thinks.

Further than this misunderstanding, however, Jonas’ description of theology is perhaps also inaccurate. What is the yoke of theology, except to train prophets and psalmists and preachers? There is a difference between teaching the prophetic word and actually doing prophecy, but the line between them is not as clear as Jonas contends. Barth always held fast that theology is the science for the Church, by the Church, one done by and for the preachers first and foremost. It is always the science of Church proclamation. Theology is in its essence practical and homiletical. And what better task for the theologian than to craft confessions of faith, prayer books, devotionals, hymns, etc.? The Barmen Declaration of 1934—a confession of faith that

protested Nazi ideology's rising authority in the German church—was not drafted by 'prophets' or 'poets,' but by theologians, most notably Barth and the Lutheran Hans Asmussen.<sup>58</sup> Such a document is not removed from theology. In fact, this seems to be a prime example of the practice of theology at its best: a theological corrective of alien concepts trying to gain a foothold in Christian discourse.

It is not evident at all that theologians should refrain from doing the very things Jonas precludes them from. It strikes me that the exact opposite may be the case. In the 1927 lecture Heidegger had already described theology as this practical science, which finds its place best in exegesis of Scriptures and catechetics and preaching, to the point where theology *always* has the character of a homiletical science. If this were so, then these areas of non-objectifying language—the sermon, the confession, the psalm, etc.—are exactly where theology does its work.

Heidegger suggests as much in his conclusion. He states that the whole problem of objectifying versus nonobjectifying language “conceals the positive task for theology” (PT 61), that is, its task beyond simple criticism and towards construction of concepts, analyses, etc. Its true task is “to place in discussion, within its own realm of the Christian faith and out of the proper nature of that faith, what theology has to think and how it has to speak” (PT 61). It is not to analyze its faith according to ‘objective thought and language,’ as Jonas contends, but instead to simply speak within the Christian faith and from out of Christian faith. Theology is simply to let speak the revelation which is its founding disclosure. And this will lead to ‘what theology has to think and how it has to speak.’ Both theology’s thought and its speech is the result of Christian

---

<sup>58</sup> United Church of Christ, “Barmen Declaration,” accessed March 24, 2017, [http://www.ucc.org/beliefs\\_barmen-declaration](http://www.ucc.org/beliefs_barmen-declaration).

faith thinking and speaking, not thinking and speaking as objectification coming to the Christian faith.

We have already discussed at length the founding disclosure of Christianity, upon which both Heidegger and Bonhoeffer agree: the cross. With this in mind, we find Heidegger stating that Christian theology's task is most fundamentally to let the cross speak. If the cross does indeed, as Bonhoeffer argues, claim to be the sole initiator and unity of the human being, then Heidegger would certainly agree that theology's task is to follow this claim in its investigations. Again, such a claim must be followed by the actuality of the cross' ontological basis, but the later Heidegger would at least allow this claim to make its case.

This leads Heidegger to make one last subtle but quite significant suggestion for theology. The task just mentioned finally calls to consider "whether theology can still be a science—*because presumably it should not be a science at all*" [emphasis mine] (PT 61). Whereas Heidegger just asserted that theology is obviously not a natural science—this is in keeping with the earlier lecture and should strike no one as controversial—now he goes one step further and suggests theology is not even a *science*. The domain of theology is faith, and this faith makes no demand for scientific objectification. Rather, it only calls for, as Heidegger had stated in the 1927 lecture, a continuing cultivation of faithfulness, and this faithfulness is Christian existence. Cultivation of Christianness happens not through the scientific method (which is alien and, on Heidegger's account, actually restricts the apprehension of phenomena to that of mere objectification) but rather through the simple speaking from faith. If this is the case, then should theology bother to call itself a science? 'Presumably,' Heidegger suggests, not at all.

We should note here that, at this point in his life, Heidegger does not consider good philosophy (in his terms, true 'thinking') as science, either. Heidegger's goal is that more

primordial thinking lying behind metaphysics and its children in the positive sciences. Whereas in the original lecture, Heidegger still kept to rigorous scientific language according to his concept of the phenomenological-existential analytic of Dasein, now he prefers the most colloquial and seemingly un-scientific of terms and theories. For Heidegger to suggest theology do likewise to philosophy—to discern whether it should even consider itself a science at all—suggests that now Heidegger sees a kinship between philosophy and theology.

Jonas himself sees this, as he contrasts the earlier Heidegger in the case of his lecture—which he quotes incorrectly, stating that theology as a positive science is a science of God and therefore not “primary thinking”<sup>59</sup>—with the later Heidegger, who “as an afterthought, heeding the plea of theologians who wished their discipline freed from the odor of science... (at least orally) [permitted] theology to be added to poetry and philosophy as possible modes of primal thinking.”<sup>60</sup> Whereas the earlier Heidegger placed theology as a positive science, the later Heidegger ‘at least orally’ allows theology a place as one of the ‘modes’ of primordial thinking. Jonas’ skepticism of Heidegger’s sincerity towards theology notwithstanding, we do see that he himself recognizes a shift from the earlier Heidegger to the later Heidegger concerning theology. The later Heidegger sees in theology, not a positive science, but a simple thinking about Christian faith which springs from out of the Christian faith and speaks to name what that faith reveals.

Heidegger closes the appendix with one last addition, an apologetic of sorts for poetry. He remarks that in the poet Rilke’s work we find a phrase— “Song is existence”—which provides an “outstanding example of nonobjectifying thinking and speaking” (PT 61). This

---

<sup>59</sup> Jonas, “Heidegger and Theology,” 227. According to Heidegger, theology’s positive object, as we have already discussed, is the Christian faith and not God.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.



‘song’ as a “poetic thinking” is a “not coveting” and a “not soliciting,” an existence that simply stands “in the presence of... and for the god...” a “simple willingness that wills nothing, counts on no successful outcome” (PT 61). In its essence, this poetic existence is simply “letting the god’s presence be said” (PT 61). Here we find, according to Heidegger, the best phenomenological manner of thinking and speaking about the divine: not coming to it with outside presuppositions or distorting it with metaphysical structures, but simply letting it show itself in itself and allowing it to speak for itself.

But it is important to note that in this manner of language we do not “posit and represent anything as standing over and against us or as an object” (PT 61). There is no “comprehending representation” happening in this thinking. But this is not its defect; it is its privilege to simply stand in the presence of the god and allow the divine to speak. It is an allowance of revelation that makes all later thinking and speaking possible.

And now we are no longer in the realm of objectifying concepts. We are now dealing with that which underlies all these concepts: “the being of whatever is and shows itself in each instance” (PT 62). We are now in the realm of being—that is, to return to a scientific term of which the later poetic Heidegger may be skeptical, ontology.

Heidegger, the philosopher, cannot tell the theologian his place within the sciences. But he does conclude that it is obvious theology is not a natural science. It belongs with the *Geisteswissenschaften*, as it did in the earlier lecture, and these studies have a duty not to succumb to the temptation to think themselves as ‘objective’ sciences like physics or biology. But now he goes further than the original lecture. He suggests that the best way for theology to be theology is to let its own faith speak from out of itself rather than apply some alien philosophical system, which is again consistent with the lecture and even his whole thought

concerning Christianity.<sup>61</sup> But he adds that his notion of poetic thinking might be a good route for theology to take: to simply stand in the presence of its Christian God and let that God speak to the theologian. In this way the theologian allows his faith to speak from out of itself, and certainly without recourse to any alien system—at least, anything beyond the phenomenological orientation to let beings speak from out of themselves. While this poetic orientation may itself be alien to Christianity—there is certainly no talk of a ‘phenomenological orientation’ in the Bible—it is by no means a dogmatic domination from outside. It is only a general orientation towards beings that aims to let them show themselves in their own self-showing, one which seems fruitful for a theologian whose aim is to let his founding revelation speak from itself.

This does not at all mean that theology and philosophy are now one. For theology still only speaks from its faith, from the disclosure of its founding revelation of the cross and not any free-standing orientation, while for its part philosophy remains the free-thinking phenomenological orientation of Dasein towards being-in-general. Theology is to its very core theological, and this may still keep it as the ‘mortal enemy’ of philosophy which Heidegger had earlier formulated. But at least now they occupy the same general region, interacting with each

---

<sup>61</sup> See *Phenomenology of Religious Life*. In his lecture on Paul’s second epistle to the Thessalonians, he states: “Real philosophy of religion arises not from preconceived concepts of philosophy and religion. Rather, the possibility of its philosophical understanding arises out of a certain religiosity—for us, the Christian religiosity.” Heidegger, *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 89.

In notes for a 1918-1919 lecture series on medieval mysticism never held, Heidegger emphasizes the independence of religious experience and its capacity to speak from itself: “[Religious experience] is to be evaluated with elements of meaning and experience of religious consciousness, and not according to extra religious and especially ‘scientific’ standards... No real religion allows itself to be *captured* [emphasis his] philosophically... that which gives the specifically religious meaning [to religious experience] is already found in experience.” Heidegger, *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 244.

other as equals without ‘all the questions about dominance, preeminence and validity of the sciences.’

Being as presence can show itself in various modes of presence. What is present does not have to stand over against us; what stands over against us does not have to be empirically perceived as an object (PT 62).

We have no reason to restrict being—of the divine or otherwise—to that which must ‘be empirically perceived as an object.’ And theology has no reason to keep itself from the ‘various modes of presence’ available to it beyond scientific observation in its explication of the Christian faith, since faith is nothing other than all of Christian existence.

I contend further that Heidegger now subtly allows for theology a space he previously closed off to it: that is, the realm of being, through the phenomenological orientation of poetic existence, which simply stands in the presence of the god and allows it to show itself as it shows itself, in its own self-showing. There is also the poetic responsibility to call back to this god, to ‘name’ it and name the existence marked by the divine presencing—a responsibility now given to the theologian.

But what of the Christian theologian? The Christian God has revealed himself on the cross. Perhaps Heidegger would say to those theologians with Christian commitments that they should stand under the shadow of this cross, in the presence of the crucified God, and, as Luther so pointedly formulated, *call the thing what it actually is*.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barth, Karl. *Evangelical Theology: an Introduction*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Act and Being: Transcendental Philosophy and Ontology in Systematic* . Vol. 2. Fortress Press, 2009.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. "The Historicity of Man and Faith." *Existence and Faith: The Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann* (1930): 92-110.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Harper & Row, 1962.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Yale University Press, 2014.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Pathmarks*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Heidegger, Martin. *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*. Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Janicaud, Dominique. *Phenomenology and the "Theological turn": the French debate*. No. 15. Fordham Univ Press, 2000.
- Jonas, Hans. "Heidegger and Theology." *The Review of Metaphysics* (1964): 207-233.
- Kierkegaard, Søren. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*. Edited by Howard Vincent Hong, and Edna Hatlestad Hong. Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Kockelmans, Joseph. "Heidegger on Theology." *The Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 4, no. 3 (1973): 85-108.
- Luther, Martin. "Heidelberg Disputation." *Luther's Works* 31 (1957): 39-70.
- Maritain, Jacques. *The Peasant of the Garonne: an old layman questions himself about the present time*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013.
- United Church of Christ. "Barmen Declaration," *United Church of Christ*. 2017. Accessed March 24, 2017. [http://www.ucc.org/beliefs\\_barmen-declaration](http://www.ucc.org/beliefs_barmen-declaration).
- Wolfe, Judith. *Heidegger's Eschatology: Theological Horizons in Martin Heidegger's Early Work*. OUP Oxford, 2013.
- Wolfe, Judith. *Heidegger and Theology*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014.
- Ziegler, Philip G. "Barth's Criticisms of Kierkegaard—A Striking out at Phantoms?." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, no. 4 (2007): 434-451.

## **VITA**

Casey Spinks, a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, received his Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy and Religious Studies from Louisiana State University. He was accepted into the Accelerated Master's Program in the Philosophy Department, where he has spent the past year researching and working as a teaching assistant. He anticipates graduating with his Master's Degree in May 2017, and he will enter Truett Theological Seminary's Master's of Divinity Program at Baylor University in the fall of 2017.