

## HEIDEGGER AND HIS ORIGINS: THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

THOMAS F. O'MEARA, O.P.

*University of Notre Dame*

**H**EIDEGGER IS a thinker for whom an origin—something different from a beginning—is of the highest import. Aphorisms like *Herkunft bleibt . . . Zukunft* (“Origin remains future”) point to a philosophical conviction that ultimate reality (*Sein*) discloses itself within key moments of culture and existence, and that the beginning of a life or of an epoch contains somehow its reality and destiny.

The following pages bring together recent research on Heidegger's origins with its new information on the proximate influences and early directions of his intellectual life: on Freiburg and his years there as a student of theology and philosophy, and as a young teacher. This time lies before the publication and fame of *Sein und Zeit* and the stimulating society of Marburg with Rudolf Otto, Rudolf Bultmann, and Paul Tillich. After viewing the depth and perdurance of Heidegger's origins, we will see how his thinking, after the direction of *Sein und Zeit*, reassumed the theme of his beginnings. Finally, I will indicate the impact which this profile of Heidegger as a thinker of Being rather than of existence has for theology.

Only recently has research opened up this early world of Heidegger. His beginnings reach surprisingly deep into the worlds of the 19th century and of medieval thought. A dissertation on Scotus, a lecture on time in the humanities, Eckhart and Aquinas—these rather than Nietzsche and Kierkegaard characterize the young Heidegger.

Before 1963, English-speaking philosophers and theologians believed they knew who Heidegger was: a creator of existentialism who advocated agnosticism and even nihilism, a thinker attractive to avant-garde theologians. Germans were less erroneous in their appreciation of Heidegger, for they understood better his intellectual milieu and evocative language. They grasped that he remained a thinker of metaphysical philosophy in the line of Aristotle and Kant, that he was the idiosyncratic heir of Rickert and Husserl, an inspirer but not a partner of Sartre. Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* in 1947 explicitly rejected the designations of existentialist, humanist, and nihilist.<sup>1</sup> If he declined to be identified with a single work (or with a single decade's denomination of his work), even

<sup>1</sup> *Über den Humanismus, in Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit* (Bern: Probleme, 1947) 117 ff.

with the “existentialism” of *Sein und Zeit*, he also intended to stand apart from any one philosophical direction. The complexity of his origins helps to explain this stance.

William Richardson’s study of the full course of Heidegger’s thinking revealed in 1963 to the English-speaking world that the motif giving continuity to his thought was to be found not in existence or history but in the disclosure of Being in thought.<sup>2</sup> Whatever change there might be in his thought comes not from a new direction but from a newly seen and more deeply pursued fundamental issue which was the matter-for-thought of the opening of Heidegger’s first major work. How he came to the life work of pondering Being, which currents led to the program of *Sein und Zeit*, and why certain realms appeared anew after World War II—these questions point back to the origins upon which I would cast some light.

My purpose in drawing attention to Heidegger’s career as student and professor before 1919 is theological. In the world of theology Heidegger’s name became known first through theologians of prominence such as Tillich and Bultmann, who confessed a significant debt to him; later, Heinrich Ott argued for links with Karl Barth, and it was known that Karl Rahner had studied with Heidegger. Nevertheless, by identification with an existential hermeneutics of the biblical text developed after 1950 by Protestant theologians in Germany and the United States, even the later Heidegger appeared in such a format that his thought was obscured. His origins question any monoform use of Heidegger in theology but suggest other perspectives and illumine his own attitude towards religion and theology.

The philosopher’s first attempted vocation was the Roman Catholic priesthood; his first position, teaching seminarians. The critique of every theological Christianity, as well as the deconstructional view of the history of metaphysics, is the work of the man who spoke at his nephew’s installation as pastor, and at whose own funeral the theologian Bernhard Welte spoke.<sup>3</sup> The following pages, then, offer some historical understanding of what was the “theological origin” of Heidegger’s thought. They explore some sources of the man who more and more appears to be for theology the outstanding thinker of this century, and who observed of his career: “Without this theological origin I would never have reached the path of thinking.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1963) 16.

<sup>3</sup> B. Welte, “Seeking and Finding: The Speech at Heidegger’s Burial,” *Listening* 12 (1977) 106 ff.

<sup>4</sup> “Gespräch über die Sprache,” *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959) 96.

## HEIDEGGER'S ORIGINS

Only recently have writings on Martin Heidegger unlocked the complexity and perdurance of his origins, showing that he emerged into a world of original philosophizing from neo-scholasticism and other schools of philosophy flourishing in the early 20th century. In 1978 John Caputo published *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, and in 1983, *Heidegger and Aquinas*.<sup>5</sup> The first book, on Eckhart, documents not only Heidegger's employment of the 14th-century Dominican mystic (a direction present in his earliest writings) but also offers a convincing reinterpretation of Heidegger as Eckhartian in some fundamental forms; the book on Aquinas describes the attitude of the young student of philosophy and theology towards scholasticism, as well as his interpretation of Aquinas as a thinker within the decline of metaphysics. Richard Schaeffler presents in detail the reception by Roman Catholic thinkers over 50 years of the philosopher's thought, while Bernhard Casper and Bernhard Welte, theologians at Freiburg, offer new information on the years before Husserl and the 1920s.

*Catholicism and Metaphysics*

Heidegger grew up in the Catholic world of the Black Forest; his father was *Mesner*: caretaker, sacristan, sexton of Messkirch's parish church of St. Martin. This world Heidegger has sketched in the popular "The Pathway"<sup>6</sup> and in the lesser-known but more explicitly familial and ecclesial "Concerning the Mystery of the Bell Tower."

There was a mysterious fugue in which the Church's feast days, their vigils, the course of the seasons along with the morning, noon, and evening hours of each day came together, so that there was always *one* ringing going through the young hearts, dreams, prayers, and games . . . the tower bestowing that mystery, constantly changing and yet always unrepeatable, up through its last sound into the mountain range of Being.<sup>7</sup>

From 1903 to 1909 Heidegger was educated by the Jesuits: first at Constance and then at the Berthold Gymnasium in Freiburg in Breisgau. In the summer of 1907 Conrad Groeber, native of Messkirch and future archbishop of Freiburg but at that time pastor in Constance, gave him Franz Brentano's study on the manifold meaning of being according to

<sup>5</sup> Respectively, Athens: Ohio University, 1978 (abbreviated *HME*); New York: Fordham University, 1982 (abbreviated *HTA*).

<sup>6</sup> "The Pathway," tr. T. O'Meara, *Listening 2* (1967) 88–91.

<sup>7</sup> "Vom Geheimnis des Glockenturms," in *Martin Heidegger zum 80. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1969) 10.

Aristotle.<sup>8</sup> In this world the young Heidegger conceived the idea of entering the Jesuits to study for the priesthood, but he remained in the novitiate in 1909 for only a few weeks.

To be a Catholic intellectual at this time (and for decades after) meant to live more or less within the atmosphere of the Thomistic and neo-scholastic revival which began in Italy in the 1830s and flourished after the 1840s in the German universities of Mainz and Münster (but less so at Tübingen and Freiburg). This revival assumed in 1879 a new and world-wide impetus with Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. As Caputo observes, "Heidegger's relationship with scholasticism was never conventional."<sup>9</sup> Heidegger stood apart from the scholastic schools; he was not interested in the argumentative self-assertions of the Thomists, Suarezians, or Scotists. While admitting the utility of philosophical and historical research (which became an innovative part of German neo-scholasticism after Heinrich Denifle), he strove not for a historical contextualization of a medieval thinker but for a contemporary interpretation by confronting the medieval text with the current philosophical problems.

For information on the student's life at Freiburg, we can turn to a valuable study by Bernhard Casper.<sup>10</sup> When Heidegger came to Freiburg University in the winter semester of 1909, he enrolled as a theological student in the archdiocesan seminary and remained with theology and some philosophy until the fall of 1911, when he gave up the idea of being a priest and concentrated on philosophy. His course of study, however, was for that time surprising: courses on the OT and NT and on church history complement courses on "theory of religion" and "hermeneutics"; there are few lectures on scholastic theology, although the basic courses in theology of God and moral theology presented neo-scholastic material. This weak scholastic orientation in Heidegger's theology courses mirrors the lack of scholasticism at Freiburg. Welte has documented how little the scholastic monopoly penetrated into this university. F. A. Stauden-

<sup>8</sup> In what his publisher says were his final written lines, Heidegger referred again to Archbishop Groeber: "Grüßwort von Martin Heidegger," in *Denkerfahrten* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1983) 167.

<sup>9</sup> *HTA* 17.

<sup>10</sup> "Martin Heidegger und die Theologische Fakultät Freiburg, 1909–1923," in *Kirche am Oberrhein* (Freiburg: Herder, 1980) 534 ff. The first look at the early writings of Heidegger with their relationship to Christianity is that of Karl Lehmann, formerly professor and now bishop at Mainz. Prior to his doctoral work in theology as Karl Rahner's assistant, Lehmann published two summaries of his doctorate in philosophy from the Gregorianum: "Metaphysik, Transzendental-Philosophie und Phänomenologie in den ersten Schriften Martin Heideggers (1912–1916)," and "Christliche Geschichtserfahrung und ontologische Frage beim jungen Heidegger," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 71 (1963) 331 ff.; 74 (1967) 126 ff.

maier and then Friedrich Werter (a disciple of J. Ev. Kuhn and Staudenmaier) were professors of dogmatics through the second half of the 19th century. Welte observes that E. Krebs and Carl Braig continued the lineage of Staudenmaier up to the First World War. Where neo-scholasticism was present in Freiburg, it was in men who were nonetheless open to contemporary philosophy, art, and science, men who were never exclusivistic scholastics in the form common after 1914.<sup>11</sup>

With Heidegger's third semester of theological study, he is the pupil of Carl Braig, who is lecturing on God, creation, and preservation.

The decisive, and therefore ineffable, influence on my later academic career came from two men who should be expressly mentioned here in memory and gratitude; the one was Carl Braig, professor of systematic theology, who was the last in the tradition of the speculative school of Tübingen which gave significance and scope to Catholic theology through its dialogue with Hegel and Schelling. . . .<sup>12</sup>

Braig (1853–1923) studied at Tübingen under Kuhn and F. X. Linsemann (who wrote a book on Eckhart). Teaching at Freiburg from 1893 to 1919, Braig wrote theological essays on topics controversial in that age of modernism (it was said he coined the term “modernism”) and, while fending off both Harnack's history and dogmatic scholasticism, he planned large metaphysical systems which took seriously the creative role of the self developed by earlier German idealism. Braig appreciated the thought of Aquinas but never considered it to be complete and solitary. Heidegger said that Braig's *Vom Sein* gave him access through texts to the thought of Aristotle, Aquinas, and Suarez.<sup>13</sup> In personal conversations with Braig, Heidegger saw how behind neo-scholastic Catholicism paths opened up to a richer Middle Ages and to the world where Staudenmaier and Kuhn wrote systems which drew upon Jacobi, Schelling, and Hegel.<sup>14</sup> Braig and the other thinker acknowledged by Heidegger, the historian of art W. Vögel, indicated complementary worlds: metaphysics and art.

<sup>11</sup> B. Welte, “150 Jahre Theologische Fakultät Freiburg als Exempelfall theologischer Entwicklung,” in *Zwischen Zeit und Ewigkeit* (Freiburg: Herder, 1982) 152 ff. Casper lists the courses Heidegger took during these years; “Martin Heidegger” 536 ff. Thomas Sheehan mentions that Heidegger said he read M. Blondel's *L'Action* as a young student and was acquainted with the French Schellingian Felix Ravaisson (“Heidegger's Early Years: Fragments for a Philosophical Biography,” in *Heidegger, the Man and the Thinker* [Chicago: Precedent, 1981] 5).

<sup>12</sup> “A Recollection,” in *Heidegger, the Man* 22.

<sup>13</sup> *HTA* 48 ff.

<sup>14</sup> *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1969) 82–83; cf. T. O'Meara, *Romantic Idealism and Roman Catholicism: Schelling and the Theologians* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame, 1981) 195.

*Scholasticism Challenged*

In the winter semester of 1911 the Freiburg student turned to courses in science and mathematics as well as to philosophy, but he had attended one vastly influential theological course in the winter semester of 1910–11: Joseph Sauer lecturing on “The History of Medieval Mysticism.” Although the influence upon him of the neo-Kantian Heinrich Rickert (and through him of Emil Lask) grew,<sup>15</sup> Heidegger did his philosophical doctorate under Artur Schneider. Author of a history of metaphysics in the 12th century and a study of the epistemology of Scotus Eriugena, the neo-scholastic Schneider was capable of lecturing on Kant’s view of the human person.<sup>16</sup> The doctorate thesis argued that both Greek and medieval as well as post-Kantian philosophies, contrary to psychologism and late idealism, pushed towards reality.

With the Scholastics, Heidegger rejects the absorption of reality into consciousness (idealism); but with the transcendental thinkers, he rejects naive realism. And with both movements he rejects psychologism, which had the combined wrath of both Scholasticism and neo-Kantianism called down upon itself. Heidegger wants to affirm reality while at the same time giving an account of the subjective life in which reality is reached.<sup>17</sup>

In 1912, at 23, Heidegger published his first article in the Catholic philosophical journal of the *Goerresgesellschaft*. In “The Problem of Reality in Modern Philosophy” he notes that neo-scholastic realism can learn from post-Kantian philosophy and develop a renewed engagement with reality which is more than categories or phenomena. Between 1912 and 1914 six book reviews appeared in *Literarische Rundschau für das katholische Deutschland*, whose editors included Joseph Sauer and Carl Braig. The most interesting review concerns a book on Aristotle and Kant by Charles Sentroul, a student of Mercier at Louvain. Anticipating J. Maréchal’s *Le point de départ de la métaphysique* (1922–26) and the independent work of Pierre Rousselot (Heidegger seems not to have known the work of either Jesuit), Sentroul compared not simply the texts of Kant and Aristotle but the presuppositions and problematics, the underlying methodological approaches of each. Heidegger thinks Sentroul neglects the distinctive milieus of Kant and of scholasticism, but he praises this opening of the dialogue between scholasticism and Kant.

<sup>15</sup> Lehmann analyzes the influence of Rickert and Lask (1875–1915); cf. “Metaphysik” 334 ff. One notices the similarity between the titles of Lask’s works—*Logik der Philosophie und die Kategorienlehre* (1910), *Lehre vom Urteil* (1911)—and Heidegger’s dissertations.

<sup>16</sup> *Die abendländische Spekulation des 12 Jh.* (Münster: Herz, 1913); *Die Erkenntnislehre des Joh. Eriugena* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1921); *Kants Auffassung vom Wesen in der Bestimmung des Menschen* (Cologne: Miller, 1924).

<sup>17</sup> HTA 24.

"We on the Catholic side have no surplus of thoroughly scientific studies of Kant which can be taken seriously."<sup>18</sup>

While Heidegger set aside scholastic themes in his doctoral dissertation on the theory of judgment, in his second dissertation he turned to a medieval theory of categories. His appreciation of the transcendental dimension in the question of being led him to formulate the issue as the question of the meaning of being. Scotus seems to invite an approach which is more creative than that of the sources of Thomism, one which has a place for both logic and real existence. Caputo observes:

The Scotus book affords us a close-up look at the way Heidegger in fact dealt with medieval Scholasticism. The theory of categories is only implicit in Scotus, Heidegger says. Indeed, he has set it out more clearly and sharply than it was to Scotus himself. But that is only as it should be: for the point is that everything which is said here "belongs to the circle of thought of the philosopher and this alone is decisive". . . . Heidegger wanted to dialogue with the Scholastic tradition, which meant to shake loose its stoup riches. This is what he means by the ill-chosen term "destruction" of the Western tradition, an effort which began for Heidegger in the dialogue with Scholasticism.<sup>19</sup>

The dissertation was written amid thinkers and currents of neo-Kantianism. The issue is the real; the relationship of experience and thought is the point of departure. Both naive realism and idealism exaggerated into psychologism must be surpassed. The future does lie with fundamental philosophy but not with scholasticism; with aspects of experienced life as well as with thinking, with the personal as well as the temporal, but not explicitly with the mystical.

While Heidegger studied the theologians and the mystics of medieval thought, he stayed aloof from the arguments of the schools. Caputo states that the famous medievalist Josef Geyser ignored Heidegger in Freiburg and that the Franciscans neglected to review his book on Scotus. In fact, *Franziskanische Studien* reviewed it twice; there were other reviews, and Martin Grabmann commented several times on the book, noting that Heidegger had moved the discussion of medieval linguistics and logic "into the spotlight of modern thought . . . linking them with related modern issues, clothing them with the flesh and blood of living, contemporary philosophy."<sup>20</sup> Yet, for all his distance and broader perspective,

<sup>18</sup> *Frühe Schriften: Gesamtausgabe* 1/1 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1978) 53.

<sup>19</sup> HTA 40.

<sup>20</sup> *Die Entwicklung der mittelalterlichen Sprachlogik* (Fulda: Hempf, 1922) 32; cf. "Die geschichtliche Entwicklung der mittelalterlichen Sprachphilosophie und Sprachlogik: Ein Überblick," *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben* 3 (Munich: Huber, 1946) 249. In the *Einleitung* to his study on Scotus, Heidegger sees himself freed by the "height" of historical research on medieval thought so that he can move to a philosophical evaluation of the past in light of new problems. Erich Przywara (who, like Heidegger, drew from but stood outside medieval

Heidegger's dissertation in its ahistorical approach was in a way typical of neo-scholasticism from 1880 to 1950. He stayed apart from a scholasticism claiming to be timeless and total, but he nonetheless wrote a study on Scotus which was philosophically valuable apart from historical considerations (the text he chose was not by Duns Scotus). In this sense Heidegger's philosophy and its scholastic roots represented the essentialist stream, so strong in some Dominicans and Jesuits, which seriously needed the historical perspective of Grabmann, Gilson, and Chenu to vitalize it. Heidegger's early genius, we can conclude, transcended both neo-scholasticism and neo-Kantianism, and he used both currents as mutual correctives; both were incomplete constructions pointing ahead.

*Eckhart and Hegel, and Beyond*

Having moved to the University of Cologne, Artur Schneider was succeeded by E. Krebs, who employed the officially qualified Heidegger to teach philosophical courses to the future priests. Heidegger lectured on ancient Greek philosophy, on Parmenides, on Kant's *Prolegomena* and Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, on German philosophy in the 19th century, and (with Krebs) on Aristotle.<sup>21</sup> He received from the *Kultusministerium* at Karlsruhe a commission to hold lectures "in the area of Catholic philosophy."<sup>22</sup> In 1917, however, with the observation that Heidegger was too complicated for beginners, this mandate was given to Josef Geysler, and Heidegger's lectures were intended for the wider university audience. This early philosophical lecturing was interrupted by periods of military service.

Let us interrupt this narrative of Heidegger's relationship to medieval and Catholic neo-scholastic thought from 1907 to 1919 by turning to Heidegger's positive relationship to Meister Eckhart. He was convinced that medieval thought should be understood as a philosophical dynamic where thinking was not constrained by ontology. Its objectivity and interest in intentionality avoided psychologism and subjective idealism and anticipated Husserl, but one must push into medieval literature with its various genres to find what remains *lebendiges Leben* for our era.<sup>23</sup> Toward the end of his *Habilitationsschrift* Heidegger wrote:

If one reflects upon the deeper, world-viewing essence of philosophy, then the view that the Christian philosophy of the Middle Ages is a scholasticism in

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thought in his attempts to develop a philosophy of religion between the World Wars) noted that Heidegger's choice of Duns Scotus was symptomatic: Scotus thinks dynamically, questions an ontological hierarchy culminating in a divine being, and introduces the mystical and the actively human (*In und Gegen* [Nuremberg: Glock and Lotz, 1955] 60).

<sup>21</sup> Lists of lectures can be found in Richardson, *Heidegger* 663.

<sup>22</sup> Casper, "Martin Heidegger" 539.

<sup>23</sup> *Frühe Schriften* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1972) 352 f.



opposition to the mysticism of the same time must be recognized as in principle false. In the medieval world view, scholasticism and mysticism belong together. The two pairs of "opposites"—rationalism/irrationalism and scholasticism/mysticism—do not coincide. And where their equivalence is sought, it rests on an extreme rationalization of philosophy. Philosophy as a rationalist construct, detached from life, is powerless; mysticism as an irrational experience is purposeless.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, in 1915, when the pioneering work of Denifle and Pfeiffer was making an impact, Heidegger promised that his first major writing would "show how . . . in connection with the metaphysics of the problem of truth . . . Eckhartian mysticism first receives its proper philosophical interpretation and evaluation."<sup>25</sup> This work was never written, but Heidegger's inaugural lecture as a qualified professor, "The Concept of Time in the Science of History," begins with a quotation from Eckhart. It is a tragic lacuna in Heideggerian research that his lectures of the winter semester 1919–20, "The Philosophical Foundations of Medieval Mysticism," have not survived. Nevertheless, one of Heidegger's doctoral students, Kaete Oltmanns, published in 1935 her doctorate on Eckhart, a thoroughly Heideggerian interpretation of the 14th-century theologian.

Were Heidegger's citations of Eckhart only gestures of a youthful enthusiasm? Caputo takes us through *Sein und Zeit* and other works to show that for both men human existence is a place of disclosure. There in temporality and process something comes to pass which is both greater than and constitutive of the human person. Eckhart coined the word *Gelassenheit* to describe the stance in the midst of the divine birth of the word; Heidegger's work of that title gives a phenomenology of the human person before the event of Being. "Letting-be" is more than an attitude of will. While Heidegger applies the Eckhartian phrase to thinking, Eckhart concentrated upon the deepest orientations of the grace-converted will.

In 1949, to help Messkirch celebrate an anniversary, Heidegger composed his meditation "The Pathway." Set in his boyhood town and its Black Forest environs, the pathways of the thinker's life and of his homeland crisscross through a past and present marked by two world wars.

. . . Whether a harvesting wagon sways homeward in the pathway's tracks, whether children are gathering the first flowers at meadow's edge, whether fog for days moves its gloom and burden over the fields—always and everywhere the

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. This motif of the unity of the mystical and the speculative in medieval thought is found in the writings around 1920 of Martin Grabmann, who also links such a harmony to the discovery of the Latin texts of Eckhart: "Forschungen zur Geschichte der ältesten deutschen Thomistenschule des Dominikanerordens" (*Mittelalterliches Geistesleben* 1, 392).

<sup>25</sup> *Frühe Schriften* (n. 23 above) 344, n. z.

message of the same rests on the pathway: . . . The breadth of all growing things which rest along the pathway bestows world. In what remains unsaid in their speech is—as Eckhart, the old master of letter and life, says—God, only God.<sup>26</sup>

This surprising devotion to Eckhart (almost unnoticed after the 1920s until Bernhard Welte pointed it out decades later)<sup>27</sup> indicates that Heidegger does not fully abandon the unified and purified scholasticism-mysticism of the Middle Ages. Scholars believe that in the years between the composition of *Gelassenheit* (1945) and *Satz vom Grund* (1957) Heidegger's attitude towards Eckhart became more appreciative and he came to realize more keenly the inner likeness of his thought to Eckhart.<sup>28</sup> In his studies on Nietzsche and following the event of Nazism, the overcoming of objectified will loomed large. Accompanying this is the return (the *Kehre*) to the larger issue of Being. How strange it is to realize that Heidegger's "nihilism" had roots not only in Nietzsche but in Eckhart; for the latter, the godhead beyond the active god, the absolute within the birth of divine words, was such a mysterious Being that it could be named "nothing."

Obviously, Eckhart and Heidegger differ on the reference and content of their thought. Eckhart is concerned with the graced birth of a Son of God in the soul of the detached Christian; Heidegger is describing human existence as the temporal event of Being. Yet, in the self-disclosing laying-bare of *Dasein*, the philosopher of the 20th century finds not only terms but a formal similarity to Eckhart's detached ontology of the breaking-in of graced birth.<sup>29</sup>

If the next-to-last paragraph of the dissertation on Scotus was given over to the primal union in medieval thought of philosophy and life represented in scholasticism and mysticism, the final words of that work asserted the same theme to be found in a second, later figure, Hegel.

The philosophy of living spirit, of active love, of reverent interiority of the divine, whose most general points of orientation can only be indicated (particularly a doctrine of categories drawn out from its basic tendencies), stands before the great task of a fundamental study with that system which in depth, richness of experience, and conceptual construction is the greatest system of a historical world view . . . one which has assumed into itself all prior, fundamental, philosophical problematics: with Hegel.<sup>30</sup>

Neither Eckhart nor Hegel is summoned forth to be mentor or castoff;

<sup>26</sup> "The Pathway" 89.

<sup>27</sup> HTA 13.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 142.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 172; cf. R. Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher* (Bloomington: University of Indiana, 1978).

<sup>30</sup> *Frühe Schriften* (n. 23 above) 253.

rather, the insight emerges that living spirit and conceptual construction, the interiority of the divine and the vital system, belong together, not apart. In this direction lies a future filled with novelty, challenge, and richness.

THE "PROTESTANT TURN": TOWARDS *SEIN UND ZEIT* AND MARBURG

Heidegger had finished his doctoral studies and his *Habilitation*. Thomas Sheehan sums up how Heidegger sought from Husserl's changing philosophy an approach to reality and being.

From his first semester at the university, Heidegger began reading, with little enough success, Edmund Husserl's *Logical Investigations*. The reason, he recalls, is that "I expected a decisive aid in the questions stimulated by Brentano's dissertation," and Husserl, he knew, had been a student of Brentano in Vienna. But the "realist" Husserl of the *Logical Investigations* (1900–1901) had already begun to give way to the "transcendental" Husserl who would write the *Ideas* (1913), and from early on, the young Heidegger seems to have understood that whereas phenomenological method might help him to "articulate the whole region of 'Being' in its various models of reality," Husserl's turn toward transcendental subjectivity could only bar the way.<sup>31</sup>

In September 1916, six months after his arrival, Husserl helped the aspiring professor with the publication of his work on Scotus. In September 1917 Husserl received a letter from Paul Natorp at Marburg inquiring as to whether the young Heidegger might be suitable for a position in the history of medieval philosophy. Natorp asked pointedly whether he was confessionally narrow, and Husserl replied: "It is certain that he has confessional ties, because he stands, so to speak, under the protection of our 'Catholic historian,' my colleague Finke. Accordingly last year he was proposed in committee meetings as a nominee for the chair of Catholic philosophy. . . ."<sup>32</sup>

By 1917 the synthesis of philosophers, theologians, and mystics suggested by Eckhart and Hegel had become questionable, and Heidegger read a paper to a private circle on the problem of the religious dimension according to Schleiermacher.<sup>33</sup> Heidegger's world was changing and five years later, in a letter in 1919 to Rudolph Otto, Husserl wrote:

My philosophical effect has something remarkably revolutionary about it: Protestants become Catholic, Catholics become Protestant. . . . In arch-Catholic Freiburg I do not want to stand out as a corrupter of the youth, as a proselytizer, as an enemy of the Catholic Church. That I am not. I have not exercised the least

<sup>31</sup> Sheehan, "Heidegger's Early Years" 5.

<sup>32</sup> Cited in T. Sheehan, "Heidegger's 'Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion,' 1920–21," *Personalist* 55 (1980) 313 f.

<sup>33</sup> O. Pöggeler, *Heidegger und die hermeneutische Philosophie* (Munich: Alber, 1983) 355.

influence on Heidegger's . . . migration over to the ground of Protestantism.<sup>34</sup>

Soon in 1920, writing to Natorp and referring to his first response, Husserl mentions that in fact, when their correspondence began, "Heidegger had already freed himself from dogmatic Catholicism. Soon afterwards he drew all the conclusions and has cut himself off—clearly, energetically and yet tactfully—from the sure and easy career of a 'philosopher of the Catholic worldview.' In the last two years he has been my most valuable co-worker."<sup>35</sup> Caputo summarizes the change succinctly:

Sometime around 1920 Heidegger's attitude toward medieval thinkers began to change: he chose, not to seek out the depth dimension in the medieval experience of Being, but to take the thinkers of the Middle Ages at their face value, to take them at their word, whereas by his account, one ought to listen to what they do not say. At this point, Heidegger ceased to heed his own good advice in the *Habilitationsschrift*: that one ought not to heed medieval scholasticism and medieval mysticism to be opposites and that one ought not to try to understand scholasticism apart from its mystical and moral underpinnings, its rootedness in the mystical life of the soul with God. In 1916 Heidegger possessed the key with which to unlock the depth dimension in scholasticism; sometime after 1919 he threw the key away.<sup>36</sup>

Recently Bernhard Casper has published an important letter: in it Heidegger, as he resigned from teaching philosophy to future priests, stated that his philosophical path had taken him to a point where the "system" of Catholicism must be left behind. "Insights from epistemological theory touching upon the position of historical knowing have rendered for me the system of Catholicism problematical and untenable—but not Christianity and metaphysics (this latter, nevertheless, in a new sense)."<sup>37</sup> This letter expressed a shift in Heidegger's thought and intellectual world leading to Marburg. This new world includes Scripture but also those thinkers seen by many as the forerunners of existentialism: Augustine, Luther, and Kierkegaard. The concreteness of the self, finite experience, and temporal identity—these could not be found in the

<sup>34</sup> T. Sheehan, "Heidegger's 'Introduction'" 314.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. In curious pieces of prejudice, W. Beyer's "Heideggers Katholizität" (*Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 12 [1964] 193 ff.) argues that Heidegger's errors and arrogances flow from a Catholic "clerical fascism," while others see Heidegger's origins in Catholic medieval and mystical thought not only as outdated but as providing a "rustic, reactionary" background to Nazism (R. Minder, "A propos de Heidegger," *Critique* [1966] 237); P. Hühnerfeld claims that Heidegger had the negative characteristics of both Jesuit and Black Forest Catholicism, even though he soon came to resent them (*In Sachen Heidegger* [Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1959] 20).

<sup>36</sup> *HTA* 251.

<sup>37</sup> Casper, "Martin Heidegger" 541.

medieval mind, whether that of the 13th or the 19th centuries.

Sheehan has researched how sections and ideas for *Sein und Zeit* appeared early in the lectures on the phenomenology of religion (winter semester 1920–21). These lectures were original: they presented a phenomenology of life (drawing upon but going beyond Husserl) and of experience (drawing upon the early Christianity of Paul's letters to the Galatians and the Thessalonians). Truth, temporality, history, the self were examined in quite new ways, and their realization in being and event offers a novel framework for interpreting Paul.<sup>38</sup>

Nonetheless, if Heidegger had come to view religion and Christianity from the point of view of a phenomenological but personally creative approach, drawing on Kant, Schelling, and Nietzsche, he did not brush aside the Greeks and the scholastics. Following Husserl, he would present great philosophers not so much as authorities but as guides to what had been said or left unsaid by them. Heidegger had looked first for the concretization of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology in natural science and mathematics and then in the theory of cultural life; with *Sein und Zeit*, metaphysics and phenomenology would find their point of departure in human existence, where Being presents itself. This theme came proximately from a new reading of Paul, Augustine, and Luther, but a faint influence of Eckhart could still be glimpsed in the background.

A particularly curious observation on the Heidegger of *Sein und Zeit* in 1927 came from his mentor. Husserl attributed the move from transcendental phenomenology to *Daseinsanalytik* by his pupil to the experience of the war and "ensuing difficulties which drive men into mysticism. . . . Unfortunately, I did not determine his philosophical formation; he was obviously already into his own interests when he studied my writings."<sup>39</sup> Heidegger's "own interests" had included medieval thought with its mystical side.

Heidegger's lectures in 1919 on "the philosophical foundations of medieval mysticism" were soon replaced by the phenomenology of religion and by a course on Augustine and Neoplatonism.

It was in Freiburg in the years immediately after World War I in which Heidegger studied Kierkegaard and, in a way unusual for the times, the young Luther. Also there is evidence of an early reading of Schleiermacher. What became effective through Schleiermacher and Dilthey as a hermeneutical reacceptance of religion in the life of faith was radicalized in Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation*, which in 1921 Heidegger worked into his lectures on Augustine and Neoplatonism.<sup>40</sup>

Heidegger's appreciation of the structure (not the religious content) of

<sup>38</sup> Sheehan, "Heidegger's 'Introduction'" 313.

<sup>39</sup> *Briefe* 14 (cited in Sheehan, "Heidegger's Early Years" 8).

<sup>40</sup> O. Pöggeler, "Heidegger und die hermeneutische Theologie," in *Verifikationen*, ed. E. Jünger (Tübingen: Mohr, 1982) 492.

Eckhart would perdure, but the philosopher's attitude towards Aquinas was different. The philosopher-theologian was less preferred than the mystic; Aquinas was a representative of the forgetfulness of Being, of the preference for beings. Thomism had hastened the declining history of Western ontology. John Caputo writes:

By 1927 everything had changed. The dialogue with Scholasticism had been broken off and the mature author of *Being and Time* had emerged. Indeed, after the appearance of his work, the popular impression grew up that Heidegger was an atheist. . . . In reaching his maturity, Heidegger appeared to have rejected not only Scholasticism but Christianity itself.<sup>41</sup>

Let us look more closely at this theological turn in Heidegger, a turn away from origins and yet a turn not unrelated to the more famous *Kehre*, that move from the analysis of existence to the presence of Being. At Marburg from 1923 to 1928, Heidegger was excited by his theological contacts, particularly with Bultmann. He gave a lecture, first at Freiburg in 1927 and the next year at Marburg, on the nature of theology; *Phänomenologie und Theologie* treated faith's and theology's relationship not to one philosophy, phenomenology, but to philosophical thinking itself. In this rare essay on theology, Heidegger does not hide his hauteur towards theology and what Christians have made out of it: the facticity of faith, the cross and a rebirth, the "positivism" of Christianity have been obscured by an uncritical employment of philosophies. Theology's traditional positivism (and he means here any reflection on the data of Christian faith) lies closer to chemistry than to philosophy. While Bultmann could elucidate key concepts of the NT out of existential insights, Heidegger saw the relationship differently. The "Christian enterprise" is faith and Heidegger interprets faith as rebirth in a Lutheran and Pauline (but not an Eckhartian) way: what appears is not the cosmic birth of the Word and words of God but a mode of "factual believing in history."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> HTA 62. "The past year at a colloquium in Hoechst a woman said to Heidegger that she understood what he was saying about the forgetfulness of being but wouldn't one, at least, say that Luther was not subject to this process. Heidegger answered: How many Catholics do you think have come up to me asking wouldn't Thomas Aquinas be excepted from this destiny of the forgetfulness of being?" (cited in A. Jäger, *Gott: Nochmals Heidegger* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1978] 120). *Sein und Zeit's* theological but Lutheran anthropology was noted early. "Temporality as the essence of the human being, fallenness in the world in which one curses oneself to escape guilt, the call of conscience which the law in Paul calls forth—these are things whose central meaning is explicable only from Christian presuppositions. The 'authentic' existence of Heidegger seems to be the same as Luther's anxious conscience—both ready for the Gospel" (Gerhard Kruger's review in *Theologische Blätter* 8 [1929] 62). Sympathetic early Catholic evaluations of *Sein und Zeit* were by two Jesuits: E. Przywara, *Christliche Existenz* (Leipzig: Hegner, 1934), and Alfred Delp, *Tragische Existenz* (Freiburg: Herder, 1935).

<sup>42</sup> *Phänomenologie und Theologie* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1970) 32.

Looked at from the point of view of Eckhart and Aquinas, however, Heidegger has reduced the reality for the science of theology to an analysis of the solitary believer's concepts. He has done this in order to claim for his thought the totality to be explored: all of reality being thought through. His thinking was "a possible, formally indicated ontological correction of the ontic and indeed pre-Christian context of theology's basic concepts."<sup>43</sup>

Theology faces a severe alternative: either self-recognition as a limited science forgetful of Being (and the holy) or a new participation in a "nonobjectifying" thought similar to poetry. His new discipleship to Luther and Schleiermacher (and, in another way, his original interests in Eckhart and Hegel) explains why Heidegger (though commissioned once to do so by Husserl) could not do justice to the claim of Christianity to be about history and reality. Were not Catholic theologies, past and present, particular ontologies separate from history? Theology, even Christianity, is a phenomenon in the declining history of Western thought. Christianity (and his theological associates unwittingly contributed to this view through their identification of revelation with anthropological-existential renewal) could only be a facet of *Existenz*.<sup>44</sup> The conclusion of the essay—philosophy is the corrective for theological concepts—is as patronizing as it is domineering. The philosopher at Marburg ends by proclaiming an "enmity" between philosophy and theology, an idea quite foreign to the medieval and modern syntheses Heidegger originally prized. The originally promised "fundamentally new kind of treatment of medieval scholasticism"<sup>45</sup> turns out to be Heidegger's own thinking (which is not a philosophy).

Heidegger in 1928, after *Sein und Zeit*, still lectured on medieval theories of existence in Aquinas, Scotus, and Suarez. He finds all three inadequate, but Suarez' view lies closer to his position. In this work from the Marburg years he makes the interesting observation that "people have said that my philosophical work is Catholic phenomenology; apparently because I am convinced that thinkers like Thomas Aquinas or Duns Scotus have understood something about philosophy, perhaps more than the moderns. But the concept of a Catholic phenomenology is even more contradictory than that of a Protestant mathematics."<sup>46</sup> In 1924

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 19.

<sup>44</sup> On Bultmann and the shift in Heidegger's thought, cf. M. Zimmermann, "Heidegger and Bultmann: Egoism, Sinfulness and Inauthenticity," *Modern Schoolman* 57 (1979) 1 ff.; *Eclipse of the Self* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University, 1981). Lehmann describes Bultmann's exegesis of Heidegger as "Fichtean" ("Christliche Geschichtserfahrung" 146 f.). Cf. A. Gethmann-Siefert, *Das Verhältnis von Philosophie und Theologie im Denken Martin Heideggers* (Munich: Alber, 1964) 77 ff., 140 ff.

<sup>45</sup> *Frühe Schriften* (n. 23 above) 204.

<sup>46</sup> *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1975) 28. At Mar-

for Hans-Georg Gadamer, a new edition of Aquinas was “the symbol of the entrance of Heidegger into Protestant Marburg.”<sup>47</sup>

In the enthusiasm of the middle 1930s, in the feeling of being that thinker in whom the best of the 19th century intersected with a new postmetaphysical method and teaching, Heidegger came close to dismissing his medieval roots. In the following text he immaturely reduces the *summa* of high scholasticism to a textbook:

Also the so-called “*summae*” of medieval theology and philosophy are not systems but a form of pedagogical communication of some discipline’s content. Certainly, in contrast to other scholastic presentations, commentaries, disputations, and questions, there is in a *summa* an order of the material independent from the objects to be treated and the occasional demands of teaching and argumentation; nevertheless, the *summae*, first of all, are aimed at teaching—they are textbooks. . . . Even the famous *Summa theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas is a textbook—one for beginners. . . .<sup>48</sup>

Comparing *summae* with medieval cathedrals, Heidegger says, is impossible, for the cathedral begins with its broad base and moves towards its towers, while the medieval *summa* starts with its pinnacle, God. True systems arrive only with Schelling and Hegel (forecast by Plato and Aristotle), for “system” is the inner construction of the knowable itself, the grounded unfolding and formation not simply of knowledge but of the structure of Being. These passages from the lectures on Schelling’s *Essay on Freedom* indicate a vertiginous independence from his past which Heidegger enjoyed—but for a short time. The slow reappropriation of earlier currents lay ahead.

#### THE PATHWAY BEFORE BEING

It was Heidegger’s genius to grasp a special unity and dynamism in medieval thought and then to confront it with the philosophical currents of the first decades of this century. This voyage led after 1919 into a different philosophical and religious world, one seemingly unconnected

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burg in 1925, viewing the state of philosophy at the end of the 19th century, Heidegger described, over against the contemporary theory of science, psychologism, and neo-Kantianism, an “Aristotle tradition,” but he avoided any reference to its primary bearer, Catholic neo-scholasticism, and presented it as the offspring of Trendelenburg and Schleiermacher, with disciples in Brentano and Dilthey (*Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* [Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1979] 23).

<sup>47</sup> *Philosophische Lehrjahre* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1977) 19 f. An observation by Karl Jaspers shows that Heidegger by no means entered Marburg simply as a representative of an avant-garde. “He pretended to belong to a traditional world from which we had set ourselves apart” (cited in E. Hirsch, “Remembrances of Martin Heidegger in Marburg,” *Philosophy Today* 23 [1979] 162).

<sup>48</sup> *Schellings Abhandlung über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit (1809)* (Tübingen: Feick, 1971) 33 f.



with the past. *Sein und Zeit* remained a torso; the famous *Kehre* (a turn into the center of the lighting process of *Sein*) was a return to origins. Even in *Sein und Zeit* the problematic was set up outside the sphere of subjectivism and apart from anthropology and psychology. "It will become strikingly clear," Heidegger wrote, "that the being into which *Sein und Zeit* inquired cannot long remain something that the human subject posits. It is, rather, Being stamped as Presence by its time-character which concerns *Dasein*."<sup>49</sup> A careful reading of *Sein und Zeit*'s programmatic pages indicates that the lighting process of truth comes not out of struggling existence or mind's logos but out of the self-showing of Being.

The time for turning away from an exclusivistic format of *Dasein* had certainly begun with the first lectures on Holderlin in 1934–35. Otto Pöggeler has worked with a manuscript whose expression of this shift may be linked to the political reversal of 1933; this large, unpublished work from 1936, *Die Beiträge zur Philosophie* (also titled by its author *Vom Ereignis*, "The Event"), offers existential ontology as an openness for *Sein*.<sup>50</sup> The forgetfulness of being permeates all the sciences: the terminologies of politics and philosophy are employed as tools, while Christianity makes God into a human need. In the twilight of technological machination, one watches for a sign from the last but now absent God. Being determines reality not by sustaining things but by bestowing the configuration of beings. "Heidegger moved off on to new ways where a conversation with the works of Husserl, Jaspers and Misch, of Becker and Bultmann no longer accompanied him."<sup>51</sup>

Heidegger's entire thinking is a setting aside of the conception (the pretension) of philosophy to be a science, and this must involve theology. In this sense he does stand at the end of the heritage of Aquinas' *scientia* and of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. Theology beyond its Protestant and Catholic systems needs his warning, but the warning was confused in the 1920s, since theology as Heidegger then understood it would have been released not only from rational ontology but also from history. As his thinking became more and more a reflection upon an aesthesis of cultural presence, theology too could have been viewed not as an epistemological phenomenology (nor as a linguistic psychology) but as an interplay of the aesthetic and the mystical. To this Heidegger only pointed.

The philosopher at the end of his life no longer bothered with the

<sup>49</sup> Heidegger, "Vorwort" to Richardson, *Heidegger* xix; cf. *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1961) 35.

<sup>50</sup> "Heidegger und die hermeneutische Theologie" 481 ff.

<sup>51</sup> Pöggeler, *Heidegger* 14. A. Jäger concludes: "Heidegger's understanding of theology corresponded best to Bultmann's theology of existence" (*Gott* 78), but he also agrees with Lehmann that "Bultmann's problematic *from the very beginning* abandons Heidegger's real enterprise" ("Christliche Geschichtserfahrung" 147).

faults of Western theology nor did he concern himself with how faith differs from understanding. The small poetic pieces which Heidegger wrote in the last 20 years of his life are instructive in both form and theme. Usually set in his homeland, occasioned by a local celebration or a personal anniversary, concrete in their evocation of nature and times past, they sketch in a page the great thematic of Being and time. "The breadth of all growing things which rest along the pathway bestows world. In what remains unsaid in their speech is—as Eckhart, the old master of letter and life, says—God, only God."<sup>62</sup> A contemplative expresses in prose-poetry history and human life in the light of experienced times. Being has remained the theme of thought, but that absolute horizon (which faith and theology also ponder, but also not as their object) is not demythologized gods and transcendental sacrality but a realm made intimate by constant gift and bestowal. Heidegger had justified his claim that he had a single task and goal, the cultural lighting process of Being-in-time, but that thinking had its fragments and times.

#### HEIDEGGER AND THEOLOGY: NEW PERSPECTIVES

Let us distinguish between Heidegger (1) the critic of Western metaphysical Christianity, (2) the provider of a new existential anthropology for a new liberal theology, and (3) the thinker of the historical event of reality. Precisely because of his origins in Catholicism and neo-scholasticism, Heidegger needed to separate his thought from Catholic and Protestant theologies. The numerous studies which myopically focus upon a few texts touching religion fail to distinguish between (1) the critique of theology viewed as Hellenistic metaphysics, (2) the scattered observations on the sphere of the gods and on the holy (neither of which is central to Christian revelation), and (3) the stimulus which Heidegger's path of thinking might give to contemporary theology apart from his own thought on the religious realm. The first framed the dialogue at Marburg between liberal theologians and the newly-famous Heidegger; the second is the topic of many studies over the past 25 years; the third is the concern of these concluding remarks.

Heidegger's return to Being as an event bestowing the realizations of a cultural epoch has considerable import for how theologians view his thought today.

#### *Event As Theological Pattern*

Fifty years after *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger can still inspire with new insights those who ponder faith and religion. Not religious forms and things but that presence which is called "revelation" or "grace" is central

<sup>62</sup> "The Pathway" 89.

to Christianity; it is the active presence of the divine in history. Apart from the psychologies of liberalism and the fundamentalisms of an easily miraculous salvation, there is a deep disclosure within people, history, and cultures—ordinary but divine.

Theologians from Troeltsch to Tillich and Rahner agree that the Judeo-Christian tradition is not, ultimately, about Israel or Jesus but about an underlying presence whose unperceived dynamic expresses itself as grace in human lives. *Sein* is not *charis*. Heidegger's thinking makes us reflect about expressing transcendent divine action and presence in history, and the thinking of Being casts light on faith's distinct, if not separate, realm. The extent of the kingdom of God is wider than any structure but subjects itself to personality and time. In Roman Catholic traditions, faith perceives grace as nonempirical but real, never fully encompassed by metaphysical categories or by psychologized faith, pointed to not only by dogmas but by human movements or art. The foremost challenge faced by Christian theology today is the discernment of its role in a single world of religions. Religions (and later, periods of Christian thought and life) are particular "mittences" of their ground whose full import always awaits new explorations. Precisely the Incarnation in Christ, rather than being a call for religious surrender, a scandal of particularity, is the paradigm of disclosure: the divine revealed in the concrete.<sup>53</sup>

A topology of grace perceives and ponders historical incarnations—liturgy, social movements, personal life, varied ministries, and mystical prayer—which continue the provident event. Such a theology removes revelation from the past and from categories of belief or psychology. Fundamental theology is challenged to give a new locus to grace-in-Christ within a long, cosmic, planetary, cultural, and religious history.

To create and to reveal, the divine being must both act and stand back; it must withdraw precisely to influence our subjectivity and temporality, our freedom and search. Concealment, too, is manifestation. "The remaining distinct and apart of Being is Being's very self."<sup>54</sup> Whatever is disclosed is always less than what is hidden. Heidegger asked in 1969: "Is our 'dwelling' a sojourning within a withholding of the All-High?"<sup>55</sup>

A further contribution to theology by the *Ereignis* with its epochs lies in the history of doctrine. The dynamic secret of Being—as well as its gift and place—is history. Every age incarnates anew Christ, belief, sacrament. Suggesting variety in theology and practice, the model of disclosure and hiding explains the emergence of the graced message in

<sup>53</sup> This approach influences the systems of H. U. von Balthasar and Karl Rahner.

<sup>54</sup> *Nietzsche 2* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961) 353.

<sup>55</sup> Cited in B. Welte, "God in Heidegger's Thought," *Philosophy Today* 26 (1982) 98.

different cultural forms. The event of Being can serve as a model— aesthetic rather than logical—for the history of the Church's life and the panorama of Church tradition.

The presence of the Spirit in history, then, is neither devolution nor evolution. As with epochs of art, an ecclesial and doctrinal epoch emerges out of a lighting process where some aspects of the Christ-event are seen sharply and others are forgotten. Theology, far wider than the epistemological introspection of a believing existence, discerns concrete encounters between grace and cultures being born or dying.

Heidegger was not a major thinker on God or the Christian faith. He is important as a pointer to what lies beneath and beyond all mental constructs; he is a fashioner of suggestions for theology. His project has its limits: historicity lacks an eschatological point; the holy escapes flesh and blood. What the theologian should find stimulating in Heidegger is not a pre-Christian view of a distant god whose voice resembles Rilke's but the mediating phenomenon of *Sein*.

#### *Sein Is Not Sprache*

The discussion of the 1960s over the "later Heidegger and theology" took a false path and has proven to be of modest value. Observing Heidegger's interest after World War II in poetic language as revelatory of Being, theologians recognized there a wider enterprise than existentialism. Fuchs, Ebeling, and their American and British colleagues furthered the identification of the "later Heidegger" with timeless language and mental hermeneutics, in Scripture and elsewhere. If some commentators on Heidegger today still view his thinking as concluding with hermeneutics,<sup>56</sup> this only continues the reduction of the dialogue between Heidegger's thinking and Christian theology. *Sprache* is not *Sein*. For Heidegger (who is neither Gadamer nor Ricoeur), language was one disclosure of Being. The re-turn does not substitute poetic language for all realizations of art and religion. The later Heidegger is not a hermeneutician of belief for whom existence is stimulated by special words. The identification of theology with imitations of German hermeneutics turns theology into a technology where language is opaque, contentless, and nonhistorical (terms and metaphors are ultimately timeless). It is only a short step to theology as a game of shifting terminologies or as an ideology where grammar and logic shackle rather than reveal. The new hermeneutics of the 1960s collapsed before the deconstructionism of the 1970s, because the latter group simply offers a secularized version con-

<sup>56</sup> Cf. R. Schaeffler, *Frömmigkeit des Denkens? Martin Heidegger und die katholische Theologie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978) 148 ff.; Gethmann-Siefert, *Das Verhältnis* 308; Caputo, "Heidegger's God and the Lord of History," *New Scholasticism* 57 (1983) 458 ff.

testing the existence of any special texts and suggesting that such theological hermeneutics are positivist if not fundamentalist, since only an extrinsic acceptance of the text makes it existentially significant. Revelation and faith belong to a purely mental world, but one now deprived even of philosophy and art.

Since thinking is not ontology, Heidegger cannot be summoned to locate revelation solely in text, or theology in fashionable terminologies. Just as electronic media can block out the disclosures of Being, the brittle analysis of linguistics can miss the concrete mediation of revelation. For two decades theology has been in danger of dissolving into a technocracy of erudite conceptualities. Technology, Heidegger thought, renders one deaf to the logos, blind to Being; that is why linguistics and verbal hermeneutics are hostile to mysticism and ambitious to replace art.

*“Origin Always Remains Future”*

The interplay between metaphysics and mysticism which Heidegger precociously grasped in Eckhart contained seeds of all that was to follow, including the bridge from existence to the wider history of Being. Was it not this very thinking which made it difficult to differentiate between philosophy and theology and which called forth a critique of ontic theologies, a death of gods—but later, in the midst of letting Being be, a presence of something more?

Also, Hegel, the second of Heidegger’s imaginatively selected first mentors, appears at the end of his thinking. In *Zeit und Sein* from 1962 we find the importance of Hegel reasserted. “Although Hegel in a certain way is more distant from the concerns of Heidegger than any other metaphysical position, the establishment of the real identity of each and the comparability of their positions are unavoidable. For instance, what does the speculative unfolding of Being (as ‘object’) say to Being (as ‘concept’)? And how does ‘Being’ here relate to ‘presence’?”<sup>57</sup> The historical truth of Being recalls transcendental idealism after Schelling’s and Hegel’s first systems. The existential facets of the analysis of *Dasein* are missing, but a community between Heidegger and Hegel remains. What Caputo did for Eckhart and Heidegger, uncovering basic structures in the two thinkers, has not yet been done for Heidegger and the thinker who emerged at the end of the second dissertation.

The study of the early Heidegger made by figures such as Caputo, Zimmerman, Sheehan, and Schaeffler—largely the work of philosophers—is a new stage of interpretation. Knowledgeable in the history of Christian theology, they grasp the continuity as well as the change in the German philosopher. What might have begun as an academic curiosity

<sup>57</sup> *Zeit und Sein*, in *Zur Sache des Denkens* 28 ff.; cf. 68 ff.

with Karl Lehmann's original research into the first writings of the young Freiburg academic now becomes, with more information on the years before Husserl, unavoidable.<sup>58</sup>

Today we face much the same task Heidegger assumed in the years from 1916 to 1926. Analytical, hermeneutical, and deconstructionist movements (largely mental and temporary) have led to rarified insights but also to a pretentiousness, a sterility, whose service to theology may in the long run be a form of euthanasia. Ultimately it is a question not of the nature of theology but of the existence and nature of theology's object or realm for exploration. Any tradition which intends to survive in the world beyond the seminar and the library cannot live solely by words—no matter how sacred the text or how new the terminology—but must pursue what they mediate. That unnameable but ultimately real mystery (which theology in the West has for centuries called "grace") is itself a history which in its realization ebbs, flows, and breaks through, much as does Being. Robert Munier reports that, during a visit in 1949 to Todtnauberg, Heidegger mentioned that "the fundamental question of theology must be asked anew purely out of the inner reality of Being."<sup>59</sup>

Heidegger brought to generations of theologians a way of thinking which he could not have formed without his theological origins. The expression of gratitude to his teacher Carl Braig is more than a gesture, and the origin perdured. "*Herkunft aber bleibt stets Zukunft.*" "Where you come from remains that to which you tend."<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Lehmann asks: "What does this view of the early writings mean for a total perspective of Heidegger? The early Heidegger already had fashioned for himself in a broad program the retrieval of metaphysics, a task which would employ the results of transcendental metaphysics. So *Sein und Zeit* and the critique of the metaphysical tradition comes out of a dialogue with previous thinking engaged in not through hearsay but from broad emotional and personal contact" ("Metaphysik" 355). Cf. also R. Schaeffler, *Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Philosophie und katholischer Theologie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980) 13: "We now understand why Catholic theologians after the middle of this century hoped through the encounter with Heidegger to win philosophical points of departure needed for the solution of theological issues. From this expectation we can see the specific difference in the reception of Heidegger by Protestant and Catholic theologies. The former perceived Heidegger as the analyst of human existence and through him gained an 'existential interpretation' of the Bible, or they read him as a philosopher of language. . . . The Catholic theologians, on the other hand, followed Heidegger's own express perspective according to which any 'existentialism' or 'language philosophy' could only be preparatory for the adequate exposition of ontological and transcendental approaches, (and) . . . Heidegger's ontological and transcendental perspectives were accessible to Catholic theology out of its own tradition."

<sup>59</sup> R. Munier, "Todtnauberg, 1949," in *Martin Heidegger* (Paris: L'Herne, 1983) 153.

<sup>60</sup> "Gesprach über die Sprache," *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959) 96.